

# EXPLOITING THE POTENTIAL OF DIGITAL MEDIA CHANNELS

Case: Solinternships S.L

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Abstract <p>The object for this research was to determine which digital media channels will attract new customers most effectively and how should these channels be utilized by the case company Solinternships S.L.</p> <p>The research strategy is a case study and the choice of the research method used is qualitative. The theoretical part of the research focuses on theories about digital marketing and digital media channels. The main focus of the theory is towards digital media channels such as search engine marketing, social media marketing and e-mail marketing. The empirical data was collected through unstructured questionnaire which was sent to three preselected participants. The main purpose of the survey was to gather information about the participant's general knowledge of digital marketing and about how have they utilized digital media channels.</p> <p>The results pointed out that participants considered digital marketing as an important factor both today and in the future. The implementation of digital media channels depends on the business sector one is operating. Search engine marketing was considered the most important media channel where social media and e-mail marketing divided opinions. Survey suggested that there is a huge positive potential for companies in digital marketing but also potential to fail.</p> <p>The main conclusion was that the companies need to consider digital marketing as a part of their marketing activities in order to be successful. Having an attractive website and by appearing on top of the search results in Google are key factors to success.</p>		
Keywords Digital marketing, digital media channels, search engine, social media.		
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Tiivistelmä <p>Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoitus oli määrittellä ne digitaalisen markkinointiviestinnän kanavat jotka tavoittavat kohdeyleisön tehoikkaimmin ja kuinka näitä kanavia tulisi hyödyntää Solinternships OY:n toimesta.</p> <p>Tutkimusmenetelmä on tapaustutkimus ja tutkimusote on kvalitatiivinen. Teoriaosuus keskittyy digitaaliseen markkinointiin ja digitaalisen markkinointiviestinnän kanaviin. Pääteemana toimii keskeisimmät digitaalisen markkinointiviestinnän kanavat kuten hakukonemarkkinointi, markkinointi sosiaalisessa mediassa sekä sähköpostimarkkinointi. Empiirinen aineisto kerättiin kyselytutkimuksella joka lähetettiin kolmelle ennalta määritetylle vastaajalle. Tutkimuksen päätavoitteena oli selvittää vastaajien yleinen tietämys digitaaliseen markkinointiin liittyen, sekä selvittää kuinka heidän yrityksensä ovat hyödyntäneet digitaalisen markkinointiviestinnän kanavia.</p> <p>Tutkimus osoitti vastaajien pitävän digitaalista markkinointia tärkeänä niin nykypäivänä kuin tulevaisuudessakin. Digitaalisen markkinointiviestinnän kanavien hyödyntäminen riippuu yrityksen päätoimialasta mutta kaikki vastaajat totesivat hakukonemarkkinoinnin olevan tärkein kanava toimialasta riippumatta. Markkinointi sosiaalisessa mediassa sekä sähköpostimarkkinointi jakoivat mielipiteitä tärkeydellään. Tutkimus osoitti digitaalisen markkinoinnin tarjoavan positiivisia mahdollisuuksia yrityksille mutta myös mahdollisuuden epäonnistua ja saavuttaa huonoa mainetta.</p> <p>Johtopäätöksenä voimme todeta, että yritysten on ajateltava digitaalista markkinointia osana markkinointitoimenpiteitään. Houkuttelevat kotisivut sekä mahdollisimman suuri näkyvyys Googlen hakutuloksissa olivat vastaajien mukaan tärkeimmät menestykseen johtavat tekijät.</p>		
Avainsanat (asiasanat) Digitaalinen markkinointi, markkinointiviestinnän kanavat, hakukonemarkkinointi, sosiaalinen media		
Muut tiedot		

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

The world of technology is developing fast, and we need to find new ways and solutions to keep up with this evolving world. People are spending more and more time on the Internet to search for information, entertainment and to stay connected with other people. Furthermore, the increasingly important digital world affects marketing. The traditional media such as radio, TV and print do have alternative options to the Internet. The hundred year old way of mass marketing is not anymore the only way to reach potential customers thus, old marketing tools such as the yellow pages are losing their relevance as a combiner of sellers and buyers. In the Internet the rules of marketing are different than in the physical world. One of the significant new rules is that the companies can interact straight with the customer. The Internet is a free media where being visible is not regulated by anyone. All sizes of businesses can discover the potential of the Internet as a marketing tool however doing the correct things. Finding and choosing the correct customer segments and learning the correct ways to exploit the marketing tools provided are the ways to success. (Juslén 2011, 3.)

Marketers are expecting a change in financial spending from traditional marketing towards digital marketing. Figure 1 below demonstrates the average budget reserved as part of digital marketing from the total marketing budgeted in Finnish companies. The figure shows that the average digital marketing budget spending has increased on average despite the reduction in 2012. The future trend in the digital world is that companies focus on and invest more on digital marketing along with traditional marketing.

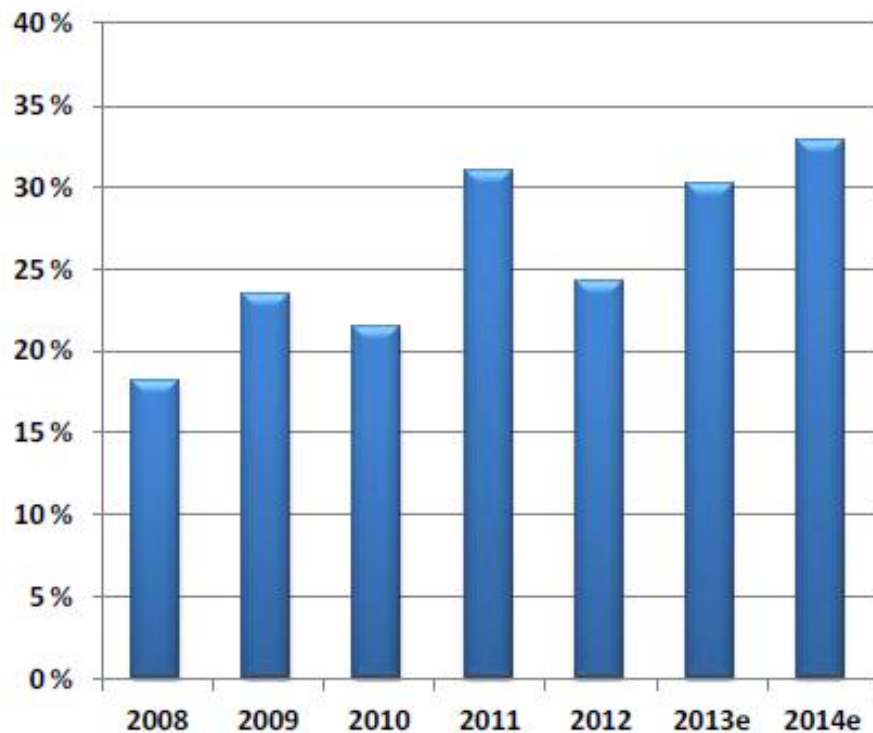


Figure 1. Finnish companies average digital marketing budgeted (% of total budget). Source: [www.divia.fi](http://www.divia.fi)

Before companies might have needed significant financial assets for marketing campaigns whereas today it can be purchased for “free.” Instead of buying advertisement space from the local newspaper or promoting their sales on TV, it is now possible for companies to create their marketing campaign on the Internet. If the message is interesting enough, the distribution happens via the internet users. (Salmenkivi & Nyman 2007, 65.)

In the last decade, the Internet and other digital media have become available to a lot of people, not just for the rich or for the big companies and thus expanded the markets of goods and services. People can now choose between different products and services or compare prices from using laptops or smartphones from a much wider perspective. In addition this creates a huge opportunities for companies and organizations to expand into new markets and offer new products and services worldwide. The main goal of marketing is to attract new customers by promising superior value but also to keep current customers by providing satisfaction. (Chaffey, Ellis-Chadwick 2012, xiii; Kotler, Wong, Saunders & Armstrong. 2005, 5.)

Figure 2 below demonstrates the daily media consumption by hours in America in 2013 vs. 2012. We can see that the hourly difference between these two years has not changed more than by 0,1hours except the consumption of going online with a mobile phone and reading the news online that has increased by 0,2hours per day meaning that people are changing from traditional newspapers on to digital news or newspapers. Since mobile phones are developing fast, and people tend to carry them everywhere, it is possible to surf the Internet where ever you are. This explains the increase of using an application or going online with a mobile phone.

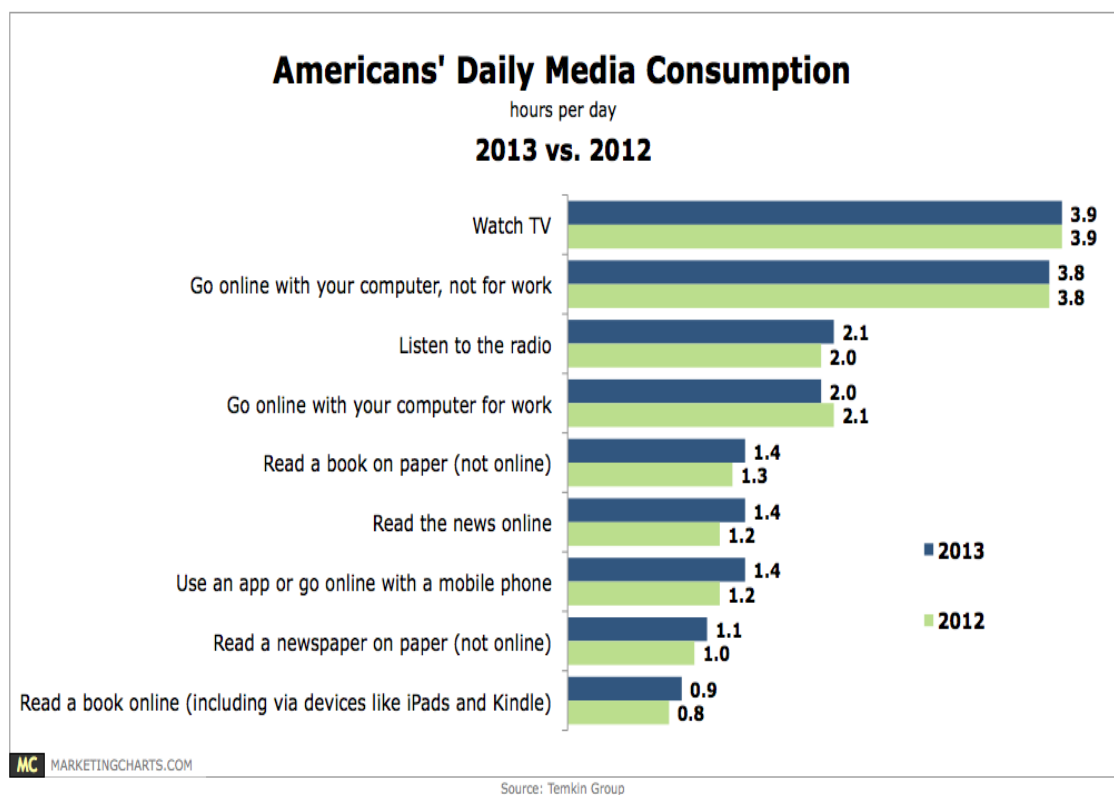


Figure 2. Daily media consumption in U.S (Hours per day) Source: [www.marketingcharts.com](http://www.marketingcharts.com)

The thesis is divided in to three main parts. First a theoretical framework is provided to give background information about the area of digital marketing and, more significantly, about three digital media channels. The second part of the thesis deals with the research method and the third part focuses on analyzing the obtained results and constructing suggestions for the company based on these results.

## 1.2 Introducing Solinternships S.L

This thesis was assigned by a newly established company “Solinternships S.L” located in Seville, Spain and operating in the field of digital marketing. There are students and recently graduated people without work experience all over the world, which is why there is a need for internships for these people. The company acts as an intermediary between the students and companies helping them to find each other. The company offers supporting functions in addition to internship placements such as accommodation, language courses, trips and tours and general support for those living in Spain.



Figure 3. Logo of Solinternships S.L

“Solinternships offers internships in Spain for international students and graduates. The programs provide first-hand work experience in multicultural environment. It is a great opportunity to learn valuable business skills and, most importantly, a new language.” (Website of Solinternships 2013.)

Internship placements are provided in various different business fields such as IT, engineering, marketing etc. and are displayed on the company’s website. Every position available has a short description containing information about the job itself, the company, location, duration and whether the trainee will be paid or not.

Accommodation is arranged in cooperation with Spanish estate agents. People seeking internship placements may want to add accommodation to their package to

help them to prepare properly for living abroad and to avoid any housing issues on the spot. Language courses are offered in the local schools and organizations, which are important partners because we can promote their services on our website as they can promote ours. The founder of Solinternships has years of experience of running a travel agency. Hence, arranging trips and tours are a nice, affordable bonus for the clients.

Solinternships has already established a website which is updated on a regular basis. The first version was made in English but will have to be translated into different languages including Spanish, Russian and French. Solinternships also has existing accounts on Twitter and Facebook even though the full potential has not yet been discovered. The current situation is that the company needs to find ways to enlarge its customer base and create more revenues. Since the company is operating in the internet, utilizing it as a marketing tool is the most efficient way to attract new customers.

## **2 RESEARCH STRATEGY**

### **2.1 Research problem**

When the marketing research problem has been clearly identified it is possible to design and conduct the research properly. If the problem is misunderstood or ill defined it will be waste of time, money and resources and will not provide understanding of the problem nor specific components needed to carry out the research. Mistakes can be made when gathering and analyzing irrelevant information but also when asking the wrong questions. Communication and involvement in problem definition will radically improve the usefulness of research. (Malhotra 2010, 68 – 69.)

The thesis is a part of my Bachelor's degree and it seeks to discover a better understanding on different functions of today's growing world of digital marketing. Target for the thesis was to find out whether it is an opportunity or not for the case company to utilize the potential of digital marketing and which digital media channels should it exploit. More specifically, the research had to address more precisely the potential implementation of existing digital media channels that will be cost effective, easy to use, and that will attract big audiences for the case company. Knowledge of the existing digital media channels, in addition to screening out the most suitable channels for the case company is needed by gathering information from literature, books and magazines and by gathering data from carefully selected people who have experience on digital marketing. Research questions based on the objectives are:

- Which digital media channels will reach the potential new customers most effectively?
- How should these channels be utilized in the case company?

The thesis aims to find answers to these questions and to provide a development proposal for the case company to help them to plan marketing activities more effectively.

## **2.2 Research approach**

Choosing an appropriate approach for a research enables one to choose proper data collection methods, provides understanding about where to gather data from and how to analyze it. It helps to determine which research strategies will work for a certain case and which will not. In addition, knowledge from different types of research approaches gives better understanding on determining which approach is the most suitable for a certain case. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 126.)

When one desires to get insight into several groups of people, their visions, to the way they handle problems and find solutions, a selection of a case study is adapted. In addition, it enables one to observe the changes by continuous monitoring and by repeating the measurements. A case study research is seen as a strategy that explores a certain phenomenon in its real life context by using multiple sources of data. Triangulation refers to the data collection methods where data is collected to one study from different sources for ensuring the validity. (Swanborn 2010, 26; Saunders, etc. 2009, 146.)

A case study was chosen for the thesis since it enables the author to find the best possible outcome for the research. Along with the case study, an unstructured questionnaire was conducted to gain more in debt information on how other companies perceive digital marketing and utilize digital media channels. The author himself has experience on working in the case company, which gave an opportunity to observe the organization from inside perspective. In addition, it gave an insight look on what is needed in the field of marketing.

### 3 DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS CULTURE

The author want's to highlight that the concept of digital marketing is relatively new along with the definitions. Before, people were speaking about Internet marketing, E-marketing or web marketing, however the thesis refers to digital marketing since it covers more aspects of today's digital world. In the following part we examine closer these terms and definitions. Table 1 below provides an overlook to the terminology, which will be discussed in more detail later in the thesis.

Concept	Brief definition
<b>Digital marketing</b>	Applying digital technologies to achieve marketing objectives
<b>Web 2.0</b>	Social Internet that facilitates interaction of

	web users
<b>Digital media</b>	Interactive services and communications delivered by different digital technology platforms
<b>Digital media channels</b>	Online communications techniques

Table 1. Terminology and brief definitions.

In the beginning the concept of digital marketing is introduced. This gives the reader an overall picture of the developing world of digital technology platforms, combined with traditional media, in order to reach marketing objectives. (Chaffey, Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 48).

### 3.1 Digital Marketing

Digital media among the Internet has transformed and developed marketing since the launch of the first website in 1991. There are more than one billion regular daily users of the Internet where they search products, services and people. Consumer behavior and the way the companies market their products and services to businesses and to people have changed dramatically. To be successful in the future the companies need experts, marketers and strategists with fresh knowledge of how to apply digital media such as the Internet, email, social media and mobile. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 6.)

The era of so called traditional media has been expected to change due to the new digital media's that have become important factors on today's marketing communications. The biggest advantage of digital media compared to traditional media is the excellent directionality and interactivity. The communication is not anymore just traditional sender-receiver communication but receivers can now respond and talk to the sender more efficiently. The Internet and mobile have changed this interactivity most radically. (Karjaluoto 2012, 127.)

According to Karjaluoto (2010, 13 – 14), it is impossible to find one correct answer to how to define digital marketing communication. The typical books of marketing communications do not use the concept of digital marketing communications even though they deal with the most common forms of it. In other words, marketing communication books refer to Internet marketing, email marketing and digital technology all of which mean electronic media. These concepts do not tell the whole truth about the functions of today's world of digital marketing, media or interaction. In this sense, the best term to describe this phenomenon, is digital marketing communications, or DMC. This abbreviation refers to all types of media and communication which can be implemented on a digital format. In addition, it is important to distinguish the difference between DMC and Internet marketing. DMC, including the Internet, covers more channels. Those who have never used the Internet can receive digital marketing communication to their mobile phones in the form of a text message. Digital marketing communications are a new form of communication where the focus is to attract a certain focus group more effectively but also more cost-effectively.

The Internet is becoming the most important marketing media to where people are directed from other media's. It is essential to understand what makes the future digital channels, -services and the community of users so important, who controls them and how to approach them. (Salmenkivi & Nyman 2007, 60.)

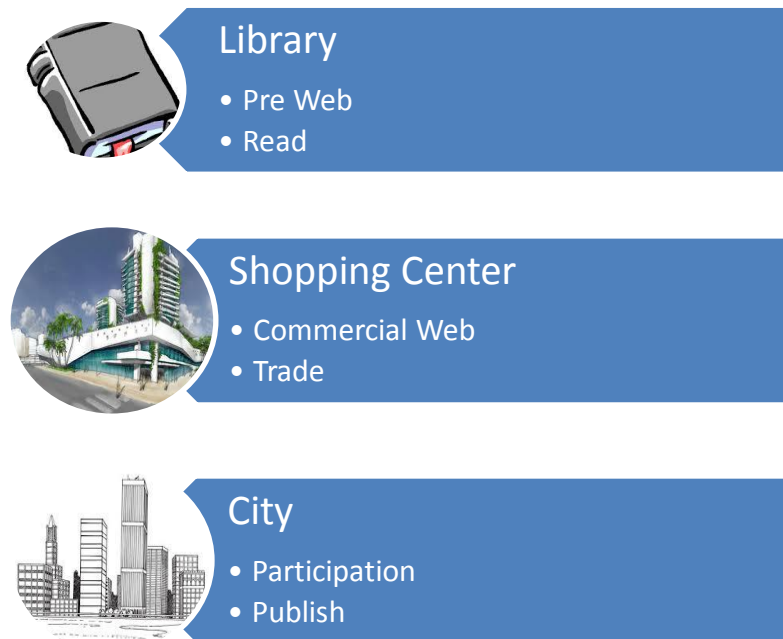


Figure 4. Participation Web. (Salmenkivi & Nyman 2007, 30.)

The Internet has evolved from being a technical tool for gathering information on to a media where people now spend time, make purchases, meet friends and have a good time. Metaphorically the Internet has advanced from a library to a shopping center and all the way on to a city. Figure 4 demonstrates this development of the Internet.

In the first phase when the first Internet- and web-browsers were developed it allowed the linking of information by using hyperlinks. In other words, this could be imagined as a digital library. Second phase demonstrates the shift towards commercial usage of the Internet when first online shops were created. In this phase it was noticed that the Internet, in addition to library, works as a huge shopping center. The communication between customers inside the shopping center is minimal however the “shopkeepers” were able to monitor the behavior of the customers. In the third phase the people have become more active and found out that there is life also outside the shopping center. It is possible for them to create content and participate in to the Internet. It has been developed onto a big city where friends, family and co-workers can now talk and share information. In the

future the usage of Internet will spread to other digital hardware platforms such as mobile phones. (Salmenkivi & Nyman 2007, 29 – 32.)

### **3.2 Web 2.0**

Web 2.0 is a concept referring to the change towards more social and interactive Internet. This change is related to the phenomena where the administrators of the web pages along with the users have developed Internet and its content towards more participatory, social and more interactive direction. Media becoming more social emphasizes the importance of the receivers of the messages who can now participate to the production of the message, comment on it and share it. Since producing and sharing information has become easier, the digital communications between customers has increased. (Karjaluoto 2012, 203 – 204.)

The term “Web 2.0” was first introduced by Tim O’Reilly in 2004. He’s vision did not involve changing the Internet to a new level, nor its technological development. Instead, it was about the new ways of thinking, acting and producing information by active users. The communal and participatory Internet is a complex combination when technology is developing and creating new opportunities among with the changing attitudes of its users. Discussions between customers are a matter that marketers need to take into consideration. (Salmenkivi & Nyman 2007. 36 – 39.)

### **3.3 Digital media**

Hundreds of years ago, communication between people took place face to face or by writing letters. Today, people have various ways to connect and mingle with friends and family but also with companies and organizations. Digital media platforms such as the Internet, mobile phones, interactive TV’s and tablets make it easier and faster for people to communicate and interact. Today companies and marketers, in order

to understand the complex and competitive market, are focusing on creating a digital strategy to increase their brand awareness and sales.

Figure 5 below demonstrates the three main types of media channels that are considered by marketers today. **Paid media** refers to bought media. Companies are investing in visitors, display ads, search engine marketing along with traditional media such as radio, TV and direct mail which create the majority of spending on paid media. **Earned media** refers to publicity generated through activities that have been increasing the awareness of a brand. **Owned media** is owned by a certain brand. Online means a company's website, email list's, blogs, mobile applications and social networks like a presence on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. Offline owned media includes retail stores, flyers and brochures. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 11.)

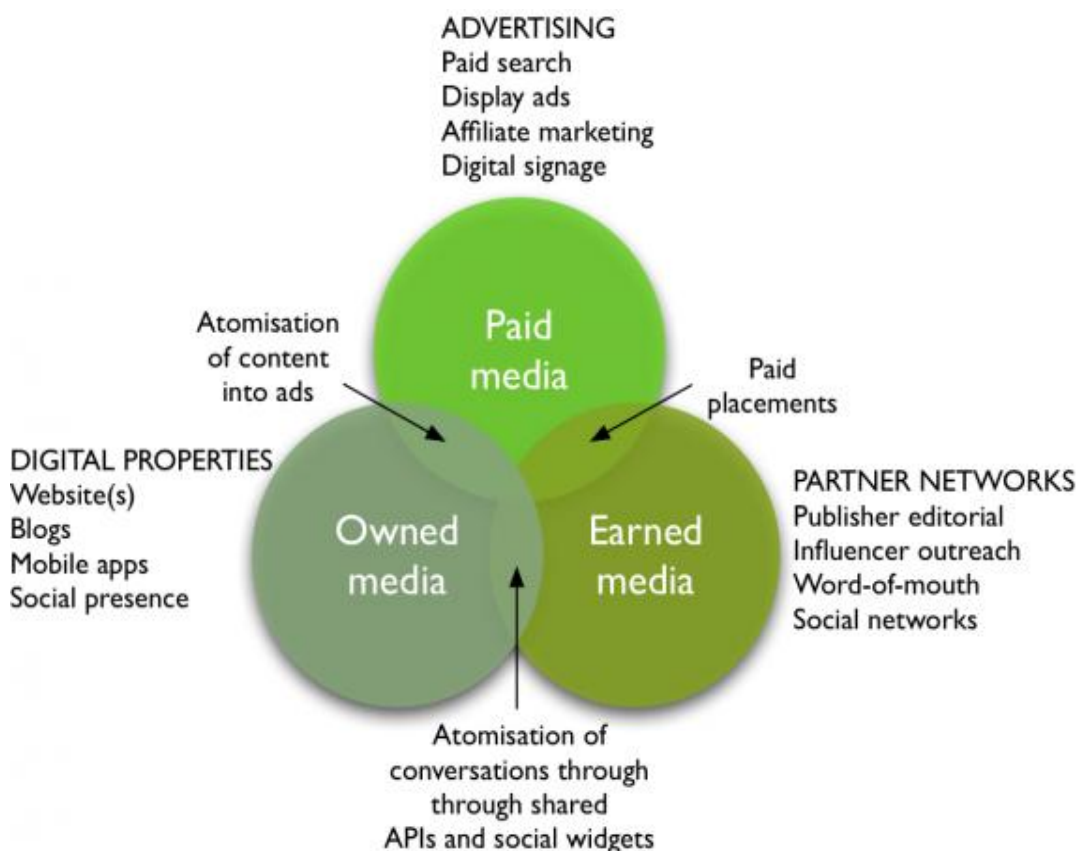


Figure 5. The intersection of the three key online media types 2013. Source: [www.smartinsights.com](http://www.smartinsights.com)

## 4 CHOOSING DIGITAL MEDIA CHANNELS

Companies and marketing managers use different digital media channels, such as search engine marketing, affiliate marketing, e-mail and social media marketing to attract new potential customers to their websites. Traditional communications such as PR, advertising and direct mail are important when companies encourage people to visit their online presence. Both for online businesses and multichannel businesses, choosing the correct and most cost effective digital communication technique is a major marketing activity and a way to attract new customers. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 484.)

The thesis focuses on three digital marketing channels which were screened out by having conversations with the founder of Solinternships S.L and by looking at Dave Chaffey's and Fiona Ellis-Chadwick's book; Digital Marketing: Strategy, Implementation and Practice. These channels include:

- Search engine marketing
- Social media marketing
- Email marketing

### 4.1 Three common digital media channels

Choosing the correct media channels should be started with a research where the company clarifies to which media channels others invest their money in. Traditional media (TV, radio, newspaper etc.) is losing funding while the advertisers are increasing the focus on the Internet and mobile marketing. Assuming the economic situation has gone for the worse, companies are forced to find more financially effective ways to reach their target audiences. Benefits of Internet marketing is that it is relatively cheap and its interactivity, versatility and measurability. Many of the companies agree that they should be in the Internet and moreover, they should advertise there. (Karjaluo 2010, 103 – 104, 128.)

## 4.2 Search Engine Marketing

It is vital for the companies to cultivate search engine marketing to generate quality visitors to their websites. People now turn to search engines when they seek information about products, services or entertainment. There are few key players in this field including Google, Yahoo!, Bing and Google-owned YouTube which actually is the second largest search engine after Google when talking about the volume. (Chaffey & Elis-Chadwick 2012, 490.)

According to Karjaluoto (2010, 133), there are several reasons on why it is important to appear in the search engine listings, such as the visibility at the right moment which generates quality visitors and potential customers. Since search engines utilize pull-strategy where the users seek information they do not think about the advertisements displayed in a negative style. Websites that do rank the highest on the search engine listings do get the most of the visitors. If the website does not appear in the first page of the listings it will dramatically lose visitors. In order to reach the full potential of the Internet as a marketing channel, it is vital to be on top of the search engine listing.

Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick (2012, 490 - 491) suggest that search engine marketing can be divided into two different types:

- Search engine optimization (SEO)
- Paid search (pay – per – click) marketing (PPC)

The difference is seen when companies practice SEO, they try to increase the position in search engines natural or organic result listings by themselves whereas in PPC a predetermined fee is charged whenever a person searching information clicks the “sponsored” link.

Next section of the thesis we examine these two search engine marketing types more precisely. As mentioned before, there are several search engines available and

the way they work varies. Solinternships S.L have decided to use Google and its tools when implementing SEO and PPC since it is one of the most well recognized and used by the public.

### **Search engine optimization (SEO)**

The results given by search engines are not always pleasant for the marketers. These results are tried to be improved by SEO which allow the websites to be modified in order to be found better by the search robots that gather information to a search engines databases. (Salmenkivi & Nyman 2007, 284.)

There are two types of search engines that gather their listings in various different ways; Crawler-based search engines and human-powered directories. (Michael, A. & Salter, B. 2008. 11 – 12.)

- Crawler-based search engines:  
They create the listings automatically or “by themselves.” They crawl their way through websites and gather information from the sites. From these pieces of information they create an index from where people make the actual searches. Whenever changes are made to the website, crawler-based search engines eventually will crawl back to these pages and automatically update the index. The most recognizable crawler-based search engine is Google.
- Human powered directories:  
As the name suggests, these search engines such as Yahoo! relies on humans who make the listings. Workers go through websites and they create a personalized description for every website. When a person is making a research, the results are gathered only from these descriptions.

We can divide the crawler based search engine operations in to three main categories. First category is the “crawler” or the “spider” which crawls through websites gathering information and then follows various links to other pages on the

site and repeats the process until moving to the next website. All the information gathered by the crawler is gathered into an “index,” which is the second category. The index is a library where all the information gathered from the websites exists. This library is updated when the websites are updated. The amount of visits that the crawler makes to same webpages varies from weeks to months however it takes a while for the crawler to update this new information to the index. This creates a situation where people say that the website is examined or crawled however not indexed. When the search engine has not indexed the website at all or has not indexed the updates, it do not affect in the listing. Last category is the search engine software itself. This program travels through millions of webpages and searches the most relevant ones that match the search. (Michael & Salter 2008, xii.)

There are many important aspects when improving the ranking of the website and how it is done however we can distinguish couple of important factors; Keywords, location, links and frequency. Keywords or key phrases are the words and phrases that people type to the search box when searching information from the Internet. It is vital for the companies to know which key phrases are the most relevant for them. Sources on identifying these phrases are knowledge of your market, knowledge of your competitor’s websites and keywords from the people who have visited your site. Google provides several tools (Google analytics, Google keyword planner etc.) in order for the companies to find the correct key phrases. Location refers literally to the location on the website where these key phrases are used. When key words are appearing in the HTML title tag they are seen to be the most relevant for the searched topic. Key phrases that appear near the top of the webpage such as headlines and titles or the first paragraphs are also seen to be relevant. Combining frequency and keywords and phrases creates an important aspect for the search engines on how they determine relevancy. The more frequently the keywords are used, the better the result in general. However some web designers are repeating these key phrases hundreds of times on a single web page, trying to boost the page ranking. Most search engines nowadays recognize this “keyword spamming” and ignore it. Worst case scenario is that the website will not be listed at all and thus lose all of its visibility. (Ledford 2009, 14 – 15; Salter & Michael 2008, xiii.)

One of the most important factors determining a good ranking is the amount of links a website has. A company can ask its partners or subcontractors etc. to link their websites together in order to create so called “link network.” Blogs that are well networked are ranked high since there are several links on the page. (Nyman & Salmenkivi 2007, 285.)

According to Karjaluoto (2010, 134), search engine optimization is a long term process which is constantly running. However, the benefits are great. Being visible in the search engine listings is free. Internet users tend to trust more on search engines natural or organic result listings than to the sponsored links. The algorithms of search engines are mostly similar thus optimizing the webpage helps to increase visibility in all of the search engines and most importantly, when SEO has been implemented, the visibility usually always increases.

### **Paid search (pay – per – click) marketing (PPC)**

Paid search marketing (PPC) refers to conventional advertising where a text advertisement with a link to the company’s website is displayed when the user types in a certain word or phrase to the search engine. On top of the page or on the right side of the page are “sponsored links.” These links on top of the page are usually seen with a different background color in order to separate them from the natural listings. Despite the fact that many users prefer to click on the natural listing, one third of people still clicks the “sponsored link” which is enough to generate profits to the companies. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 491.)

Advertisers are basically buying words that are mentioned when users conduct searches. Furthermore, they are competing against each other on who pays the most for a certain word or phrase and thus receives the highest position in sponsored link listing. Advertisers pay to the service provider such as Google only if the user actually clicks the company’s link. When designing paid search marketing it is important to think with which words people are searching information with. If it is red wine that

marketers are advertising, it is important to think words describing the brand and product information. However, using different approaches can be lucrative such as “cheese and wine” or “game food.” (Salmenkivi & Nyman 2007, 282.)

According to Ledford (2009, 101 – 102), there are numerous advantages for pay – per – click programs over search engine optimization. There is no need to make any changes or add anything to a current website. Main thing to do is to pay for the key words that you want to target. PPC is fast and easy and after starting a PPC campaign it only takes minutes to create traffic to your website where in SEO campaign it may take months before you start creating traffic. PPC campaign does not need any specialized knowledge, however if you do understand keywords and how they work your PPC campaign will be targeted much better.

### **4.3 Social Media Marketing**

A lot of people know the word social media and are familiar with Facebook and Twitter among other sites. However, social media includes so much more than just the networks mentioned before. A definition of social media is required in order to get a better perspective on the subject.

It is difficult to create an unambiguous definition of social media. One way is to regard social media as an environment implemented through the newest Internet technologies where people can publish, modify, classify and share different contents. In addition, social media offers people places to join together and to manage relations. In practice, social media consists of various sites and services each of which serve a certain purpose. (Juslén 2011, 197.)

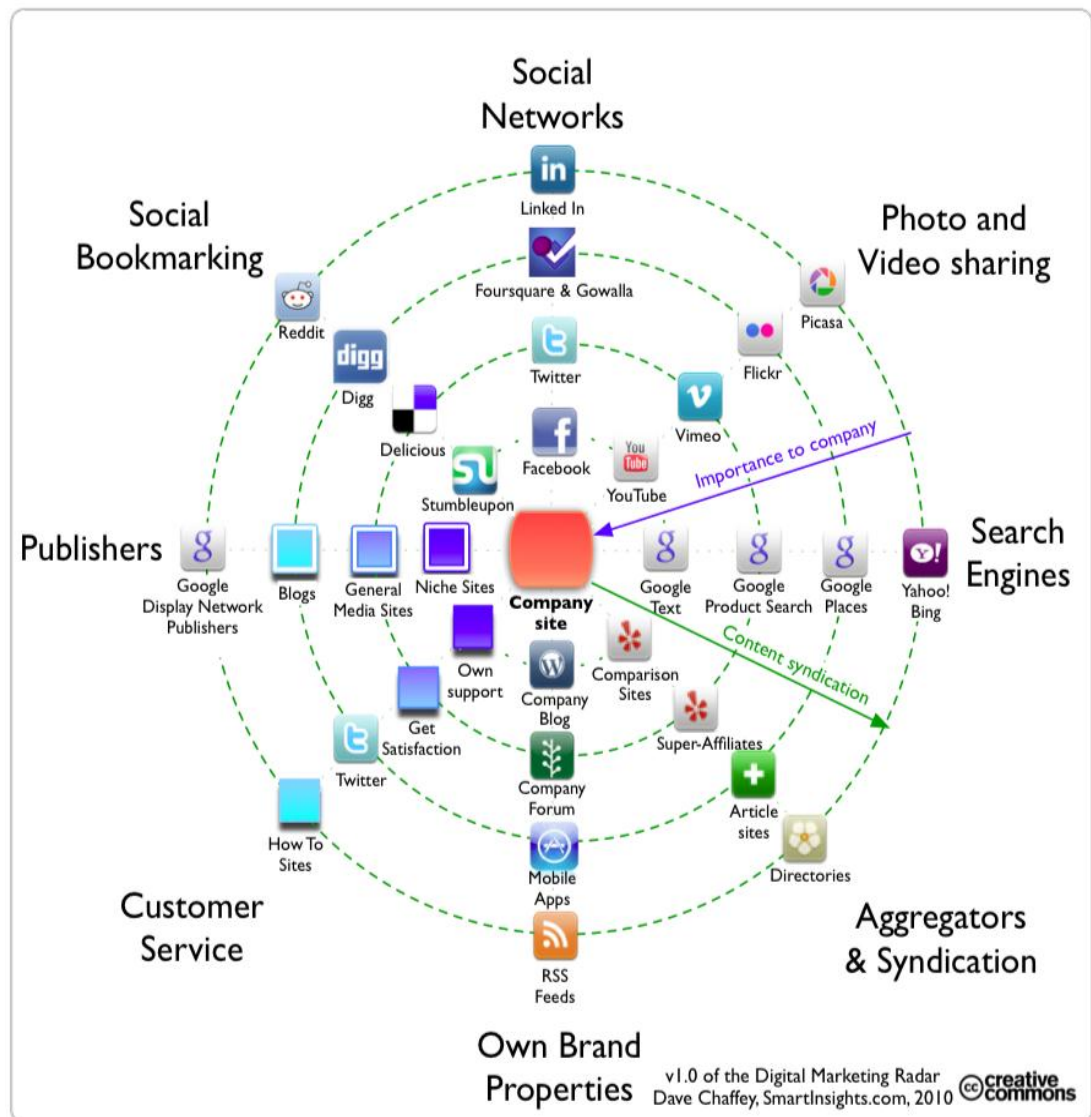


Figure 6. Social media marketing radar 2010. Source: [www.smartinsights.com](http://www.smartinsights.com)

Figure 6 demonstrates the main forms of social media where companies should consider being present. This radar can be used to discuss which sites the company should pay more attention to and which ones are considered less important. Social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter are just a fraction of the whole concept. Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012, 32 – 33) define eight categories of social media:

Category	Description
1. Social networks	Social platforms; Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn for consumer and business

	audiences
<b>2. Social streaming</b>	Photos, videos and podcasts
<b>3. Social search</b>	Search engines provide opportunities to tag, rate and comment on results thus becoming more social
<b>4. Social knowledge</b>	Businesses can solve problems of the audience and show the benefits of their products
<b>5. Social blogging</b>	Company or a person can create a blog where they share information and in addition look to other blogs to gain information
<b>6. Social customer service</b>	Company's own customer support forum where they can share information and deal with customer complaints
<b>7. Social publishing</b>	Newspapers and magazines which have an online presence
<b>8. Social bookmarking</b>	Enables users to add, edit and share bookmarks of web documents

Table 2. Social media categories.

According to Juslén (2011, 199), social media can be divided into three forms: Content publishing services, networking services and to data classification and sharing services. Content publishing services give an opportunity for anyone to publish content in the Internet, including WordPress (blogs), YouTube (videos), Flickr (photos) or Wikipedia (encyclopedia). Networking services enable users to create and maintain virtual networks and relations. These include MySpace, LinkedIn and Facebook. Data classification and sharing services make it possible for the users to classify and share information found on the internet. These include Delicious, StumbleUpon and Digg.

Everybody can publish content on social media such as video, audio, photos and games. Today it is possible to combine two applications from different categories. A blog can contain a video. An email can include an audio clip. Wiki can have video, audio clips and pictures even though the most important factor on social media is content. With proper content, companies can attract new customers whose interests, activities and needs can be monitored and turned in to profits. (Safko & Brake 2009, 69.)

The word “market” originally meant a public place swarming with people where sellers and buyers faced each other to discuss about a certain product or service. Thousands of other conversations between buyers were active at the same time. The power of information and knowledge was with the sellers. Today social media connects people (buyers) and their information together giving them the power of information thus leaving little room for the sellers to have an impact on the final purchase decision. Social media is about communities and conversations happening in them. Creating and exploiting virtual relations effectively gives the companies a basis to which build a marketing plan. (Juslén 2011, 207 – 209.)

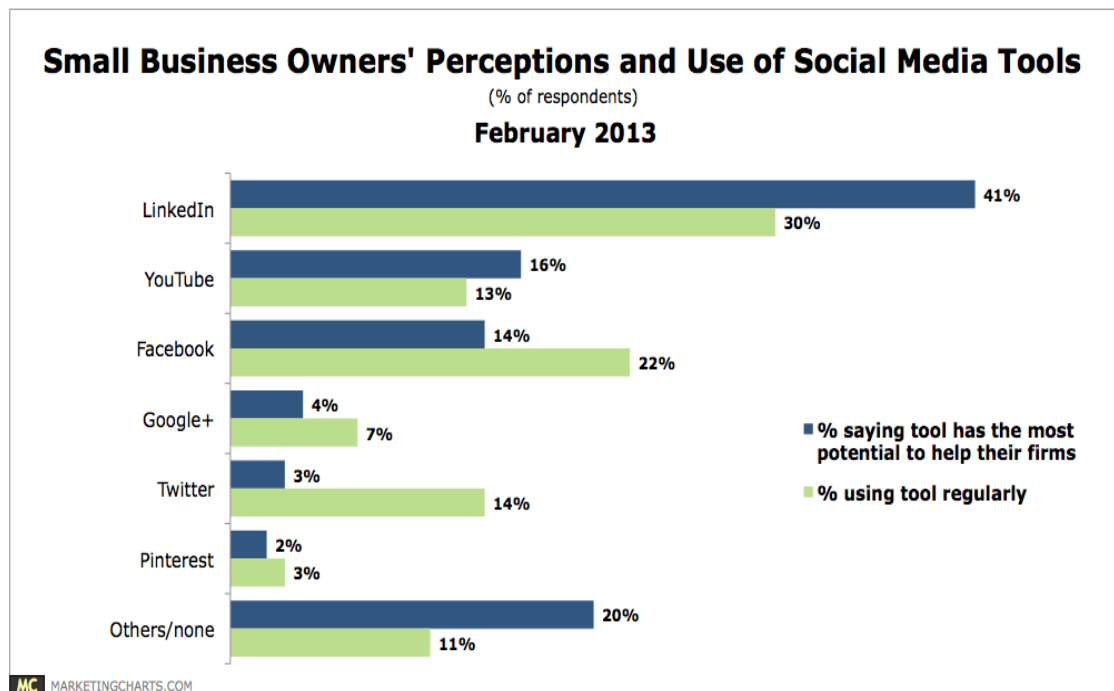


Figure 7. Small business owner’s perceptions and use of social media tools (% of respondents) February 2013. Source: [www.marketingcharts.com](http://www.marketingcharts.com)

Figure 7 demonstrates small business owners' perceptions of social media tools in 2013. LinkedIn, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter are the tools most commonly used for these companies. The figure shows that LinkedIn has the greatest potential to help firms. Facebook is behind YouTube in terms of usefulness, 22% of the respondents said that they regularly use Facebook, compared to the 13% regularly using YouTube. Just 3% said that Twitter had the most potential to help them even though it ranked as the 3<sup>rd</sup> most regularly used site (14%) behind Facebook (22%) and LinkedIn (30%).

#### **4.4 Email Marketing**

In the world there are 2.9 billion email accounts and people send 56 million non-spam email messages every day. Email is still the most important tool for creating customer relationships despite the growing popularity of RSS feeds, blogs and social networks. Instead, marketers are now blending email messages with social media, such as twitter and Facebook. Companies for example have a new email campaign and a strong following in Twitter hence they integrate the email link to a tweet, inviting followers to read the whole text behind the link. Email is still a way to create buzz and the main way for companies to send promotional offers or announcements to customers. (Waldow & Falls 2012, 5, 35; Strauss & Frost 2012, 310 – 311.)

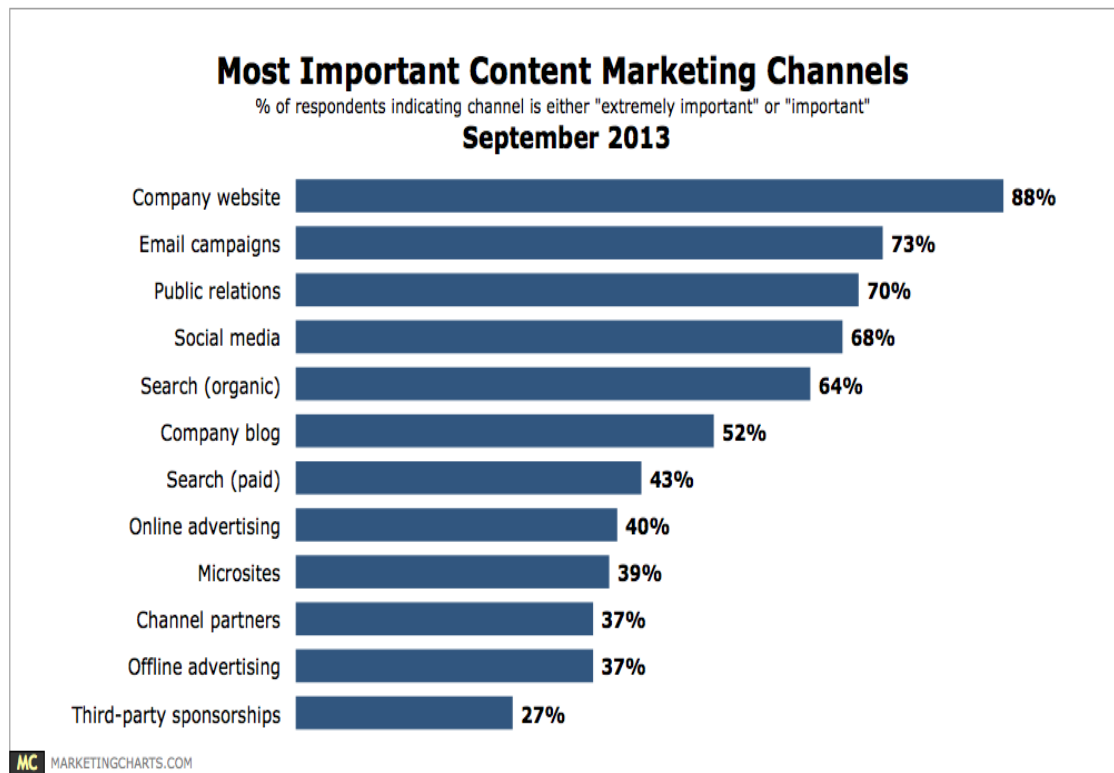


Figure 8. Most important content marketing channels (% of respondents indicating channels are either "extremely important" or "important") September 2013. Source: [www.marketingcharts.com](http://www.marketingcharts.com)

Figure 8 demonstrates the importance of content marketing channels in September 2013. Company's own website is the most important channel and email comes as the second most important channel despite the fact that often phrase "email is dead" is heard (Waldow & Falls 2012, 1). Social media is becoming more and more popular channel for marketers with only 5% difference to email and 2% difference to public relations making it the fourth most important marketing channel.

There is a difference between email and email marketing. The author is focusing on the marketing aspect, it is important to distinguish the difference. Email is a message between families, friends, co-workers and colleagues. Usually it is sent to one person or to a smaller group of people in order to communicate and share ideas, ask questions, receive and give information, and so on. When we add the word marketing to email, it creates marketing channel which allows companies and individuals to communicate with their subscribers, fans and customers. Email marketing for many companies and organizations is a way to inform their clients and

partners about new products and services, upcoming events and new business ideas. It is powerful tool for business-to-business and a key driver of sales in business-to-consumer perspective. (Waldow & Falls 2012, 7.)

According to Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick (2012, 530 – 531), there are several advantages of email marketing. It has a low cost since it is more efficient than direct mail. Direct response encourages to action since receiving an email encourages the receiver to click through to a website where the email came from thus increasing the chances of an immediate response. Lifecycle of an email campaign tends to be shorter than in traditional media and it is relatively cheap and easy to personalize the email messages. In addition, the content is highly tailored and it gives an opportunity to test. Testing whether the email campaign is good or bad or profitable is relatively easy and cheap. Combining email marketing with other media increases the campaign response.

Email does not come with advantages only. It too has its weaknesses such as spam. 81 to 95 percent of the emails sent in the world is spam which is why most of the email software's use spam filters. It might be hard for legitimate email to go through these spam filters and thus do not reach the audience. Consumers might not even open anything which resembles spam. Another disadvantage includes the fact that an email needs to be delivered, opened and also acted to before it works. (Strauss & Frost 2012, 311.)

Waldow and Falls (2012, 250 – 251), suggest four main steps for creating success in email marketing:

1. *Grow your list.* Have a list of potential customers to whom the company promotes their products and services. The list contains email addresses to which the message will be send to.
2. *Plan your content.* What is it that you want to include to your email campaign? Why would people want to read your email over and over again?

3. *Determine success metrics.* What is the main reason behind email marketing? Clear understanding about the goals is needed in order to reach them. It might be that through email marketing a company want's people to open its emails and obtain information or just to see the company name. If they want people to take action on the email, ensuring that the call to action is obvious and clear and makes it easier.
4. *Send, test, analyze, adjust and repeat.* One must test what works the best to for the audience. After adjusting the email to reach its full potential, one must send it again and repeat.

## 5 RESEARCH METHOD

### 5.1 Data collection

There are two main data collection methods to differentiate the data collection techniques and the procedures on how the data is analyzed. We can distinguish these two data collection methods by focusing on numeric or non-numeric data. *Quantitative* research is commonly seen as a manner to collect numerical data such as statistics and graphs. *Qualitative* research instead, focuses on gathering non-numerical data and refers to oral data, but also to pictures and video clips. These two research techniques do not exist in isolation. Therefore, one can combine data collection techniques and analysis procedures by creating *mixed methods approach* where both techniques are used together. Analyzing data consists of two approaches: In *Deductive* approach, one begins the research by using existing theory which will shape the form of the research questions and objectives. In *inductive* research, one will begin by defining theory based on the data and then move on to exploring the noteworthy of the emerged issues and themes. (Saunders, etc. 2009, 151 – 152, 489 – 490.)

The author seeks to obtain a better understanding on how companies perceive and utilize digital marketing today and what are their perceptions and motives towards marketing in different digital media channels. Qualitative data can be collected from short open-ended questionnaires, in-depth interviews or from entire policy documents (Saunders, etc. 2009, 480). Since there were themes emerging from the data during the process, and the author was seeking to obtain information from issues mentioned above, a qualitative research method from inductive perspective was chosen.

## **5.2 Data analyses**

For the data to be useful, it needs to be analyzed during and after the collection, especially when following inductive approach, in order to recognize patterns, themes and relationships based on which to develop a theory. Some approaches for analyzing qualitative data can be highly structured, whereas other approaches follow much lower level of structure. In addition, some approaches are highly formalized when other approaches are more narrative, relying heavily on the researcher's interpretation. The diverse nature of qualitative data suggests that there is no standardized method for analyzing this data. However, one can distinguish three main types of data analysis processes: summarizing, categorizing and structuring of the meanings. (Saunders, etc. 2009, 480, 488, 491.)

There are two types of data that the researcher can gather; primary and secondary data. The main differences of these two types of data is that primary data is acquired by the researcher to address the research problem, whereas secondary data is acquired for something else than the research problem itself. Primary data might be highly expensive and time consuming to gather whereas secondary data can be collected with a much lower cost, quickly and easily. (Malhotra 2010, 132.) There should be theories in secondary data that supports the primary data and these should be compared when analyzing the data as a whole. In the research, there was a clear correlation between secondary data and primary data collected through an unstructured questionnaire.

Analyzing the data usually begins by creating fieldnotes, documents and interview transcripts. After a few weeks of data collection, or when all of the data is gathered, one creates categories and coding schemes in order to categorize the similar concepts, themes and constructs emerged from the data. (Lindlof & Taylor 2011, 244, 246.) Forming a trust relationship with the questionnaire participants is important for the primary data collection and analysis in order to bring together relevant and trustworthy information. The questionnaire was conducted by sending it to entrepreneurs, which the author personally knows, with the intention of having mutual feeling of trust. This would have been difficult by collecting data from unfamiliar respondents since there might be no trust and it is possible for them to answer imprecisely and provide incompetent information. People might be unwilling to answer questions that will invade their privacy, embarrass them, or affect their status or ego negatively (Malhotra 2010, 172).

### **5.3 Planning the structure of the data collection**

First attempts to gather information and statistics were based on surveys and interviews in 1920's. This way of collecting data has been important for both quantitative and qualitative marketing researches. In the inter-war years, the government of the United Kingdom was conducting quantitative surveys until it was discovered that this research method was providing superficial data since the responses were close related to social pressures and did only tell little about the true feelings of the public. These problems made qualitative researches more popular since it overcomes these limitations. The model of qualitative research was created in order to gain better understanding of motivations, feelings and attitudes, but today it has evolved to become a tool with a wider range of issues. Researchers have created new and alternative methods to address these issues and to answer the new questions. (Desai 2002, 1 -2, 10.)

The most frequently used research method for gathering information to a case study research is to send a mail survey. Questions are mostly open-ended covering 10 – 20

research constructs. Questionnaire should be completed by one person from the company instead of having multiple respondents. Logic assumes that the person answers from he's own perspective and is willing to report the thinking process of also others who are involved to the research process. (Woodside 2010, 2.)

A pilot unstructured questionnaire was conducted for the thesis and based on those results, the author decided to carry on with the exact same questionnaire. The participants were selected from three different companies who utilize digital marketing as a part of their marketing strategy. One company utilizes digital marketing substantially where other two to some extent. Two companies are located in Finland and one is located in Spain. This arrangement provides a wider understanding on how people in different countries and cultures exploit digital marketing and moreover, can we distinguish significant differences or similarities between them. The questionnaire combined open-ended questions as well as multiple choice questions that were the same for everyone so that the results could be compared. Open-ended questions were formulated to encourage participants to express their personal understanding about the topic, rather than guiding them towards predetermined answers. The questionnaire was sent to participants through *surveymonkey* ([www.surveymonkey.fi](http://www.surveymonkey.fi)), a web survey company which also provided a template for the questionnaire.

#### 5.4 Data description

Data was collected from three different companies. *Company A*, *Company B* and *Company C*. Table 2 below demonstrates the basic information from the companies.

	<b>Company A</b>	<b>Company B</b>	<b>Company C</b>
<b>Industry sector</b>	Facility cleaning	HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, Air-Conditioning)	Tourism and travel

<b>Turnover</b>	4 M€	4,3 M€	0,9 M€
<b>Number of fixed employees</b>	110	30	6
<b>Age of the company</b>	24	42	15
<b>Position in the company</b>	Chief Executive Officer	Owner/Entrepreneur	Owner/Entrepreneur

Table 3. Company information.

## 6 RESULTS

### 6.1 Background information

More and more consumers use, act and produce information in the Internet. Therefore, consumers and organizations work together. Marketing has changed and will change its form, which makes choosing new media channels important for companies. (Kananen & Pyykkönen 2012, 7 – 9.)

In the thesis, primary data was collected from three participants working in different companies and from the author himself observing the case company as one of the employees. The companies operate in different industry sectors but their perspectives towards digital marketing were more or less similar. Previous discussions between the author and the founder of the case company suggested that there are four key elements to consider when creating visibility for the company. These elements included the company's website and marketing through three different digital media channels. The purpose for the data collection was to gather supporting information to this matter from companies who already exploit the possibilities of digital marketing. The research also tends to seek information on how

do these companies perceive digital marketing in general, do they utilize it and will it change in the future if not. In addition, the author wanted to know which digital media channels these companies utilize, why and how much. These questions were to seek confirmation to the theory, as well as finding answers to the research questions. Answers to these questions were gathered through an unstructured questionnaire, but also by having face to face discussions with the participants.

## **6.2 General knowledge of digital marketing**

All three participants were familiar with the term “digital marketing” and were able to give a description to the topic. Since the terms used with digital marketing are relatively new, there were detectable differences on how participants were using these terms. Some were referring digital marketing to be mostly Internet marketing where others were referring to digital platforms. We can’t say whether one is correct or not since the term “digital marketing” includes all of terms mentioned above. We could say that all the participants gave similar classification to digital marketing since they left out TV, radio and newspaper for not being part of digital marketing.

Participants were asked whether they practice digital marketing by their own, or have they outsourced that service. Company A is buying everything related to digital marketing from a specialized marketing agency where company’s B and C have outsourced most of it but not all. From the data we can learn that companies are focusing more on paid advertisement rather than optimizing the search engines themselves. Participant from company A addressed the subject as:

“I think most of the SME companies have outsourced their operations regarding search engine marketing to marketing and advertising agencies. The companies are not big enough to hire a person just for digital marketing but they are big enough to realize the importance of it and thus willing to pay someone else to take care of it.”

The questionnaire wanted to discover the participant's expectations towards digital marketing in the future between companies and customers. Company A expressed the topic as:

“Digital marketing has eliminated the gap between the customer and the company. It is easy for the customer to give feedback to the company through different channels, also making it possible to share the feedback through Facebook, Twitter or blogs.”

Company B was in line with company A where digital marketing has made it possible for the customers and companies to meet through different service providers.

Company C doubted that in the future, one might have to pay higher commissions for the visibility in the internet since it is becoming vital for the companies and thus, the rivalry for keywords and good positions have increased.

### **6.3 Exploiting digital media channels**

The research aimed to clarify whether the companies are part of some digital media channels or not. In addition, do they benefit or not from them. What the author learned from face to face conversations before the questionnaire was conducted, was that these companies rely much on traditional marketing but when speaking about digital marketing, there were three aspects that were emerged; search engine marketing, social media marketing and e-mail marketing. However, certain channels are more important for some than to others. The author's previous observations when working in the case company suggested that this new company should exploit exactly these same channels in order to increase their customer base. These three channels are lucrative for the companies when attracting new customers and thus generating revenues. In addition, it provides an answer to the first research question

“which digital media channels will reach the potential new customers most effectively?”

The respondents agreed on the matter that it's important for the company to utilize digital media channels in their marketing activities. Potential customers today search more information from the internet and the visibility there is important factor. All three participants agreed that search engine marketing, along with an up to date website, are the most important channels for them. An interesting aspect concerning search engine marketing that emerged from the conversations with company B, was the way they sell their products and services. The respondent expressed this as follows:

“Instead of hiring a person just to sell our products, we should consider investing more money on the visibility in Google since people with the need of our products will search information from there first.”

Hiring a salesman does not guarantee any sales. People today tend to pay little attention to advertisements pushed at them, such as telemarketing does or a person behind your door selling coffee. There rarely is a need for the product or service their offering at the moment. Instead of paying high salary to a single salesman who tries to push the products to consumers, company B decided to invest this money on increasing the visibility in Google. This comment is clearly in line with the theory suggesting the importance of paid search marketing. Company B has increased their turnover by almost 50% since they started the first search engine marketing campaign few years ago.

The strengths of all three companies in search engine marketing were that they have focused on finding the right key words in order to gain better listings in Google. They also mentioned the importance of updating the web pages. Interesting matter that the author found out was that all three companies are involved specifically with Google and the tools they provide. Whether the company is located in Finland like

company's A and B, or in Spain like company C, they all rely on Google. This enforces the assumptions that the case company should implement the tools provided by Google when practicing search engine marketing.

Participants were asked about their opinions on social media and social media marketing. First the author wanted to discover the general thoughts about social media. What it means and is it possible for the companies to utilize it somehow. All three participants mentioned Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube being the most recognized social media platforms but had different views on the actual implementation of social media. Companies A and B, when asked about how well does their companies exploit social media in general, answered "poorly." Company B stated that it is not useful in their business sector, where company A gave one example on how it has helped them:

"Facebook worked brilliantly in spring 2012 when recruiting summer workers. We received more than 200 applications and more than 120 people came to the interview which was arranged in one specific day."

Company C was not using social media as much as they wanted to and said that they kind of forgot it for a while, but today are paying a lot more attention towards it. They are part of Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, Google+ etc. and have moved one employee to work full time with online marketing.

There was one negative issue emerged addressing social media marketing. Social media is an opportunity for companies, but also a threat if used incorrectly. One participant expressed this as follows:

"Customers are becoming an important channel of marketing for companies. Companies are forced to get customers to market themselves, which is already happening through social media, especially when companies fail in

their operations. Companies will get caught more quickly if they fail in their promises. ”

All three participants answered neutral when asked about e-mail marketing. They do exploit the tool but the views are different. Company A has introduced a newsletter to its customers. Newsletter is sent through e-mail and will provide up to date information to customers but also to the staff. Company B is not using an actual newsletter, but they are sending information to selected people and clients through e-mail. Company C is relying heavily on newsletters and they have established quite substantial e-mail data base from clients and from other companies working in the same business field. Periodically, they do benefit from sending information and product offers. To increase the size of the data base, they have added an email catcher to their website.

Based on the results gathered from the data, it is possible to answer the second research question; “How should these channels be utilized in the case company?” The author has learned that search engine optimization can be exploited by the case company itself. By defining keywords, having attractive website with relevant information, and by updating the website regularly, will improve the listings in Google. If the case company wants, it is possible to exploit paid search marketing since the results are visible faster and the costs can be kept in budget. Since Google is the most well-known search engine, the best option for the case company is to utilize the services provided by Google. In addition, gathering e-mails and by sending newsletters, are a good way to attract new customers as part of the marketing plan. Taking advantage of social media will attract new customer when done correctly. It is easy to fail and receive negative attention, so it is important for the case company to develop campaigns that do not jeopardize their reputation.

## 6.4 Measurability and objectives

Participants were asked to what extent their companies exploit web analytics and the answers were more or less similar. Company A is regularly following the amount of visits in their website. Company B reported using analytics relatively little. This is explained by the fact that all these types of services are outsourced, and the company itself, do not need to pay that much focus on analytics. The company their paying for is providing them with all the information concerned about analytics. Company C is also following the amount of visitors in their website and now it is more important than before since they changed the entire layout of the website recently.

When exploiting digital marketing, it is important to define targets that are pursued. Figure 3 below demonstrates these targets and explains how important those targets are for companies A, B and C.

The question for participants was; “How important do you consider the following objectives in digital marketing?” Answering options given to participants were; *Not important, somewhat important, can’t say, Important and Very important.*

Target	Company A	Company B	Company C
<b>Increase of sales</b>	Very important	Very important	Very important
<b>Increasing the awareness of the company</b>	Very important	Can’t say	Important
<b>Brand/Image improvement</b>	Very important	Important	Important
<b>Improving customer service</b>	Very important	Can’t say	Can’t say
<b>Improving customer satisfaction</b>	Can’t say	Can’t say	Important

<b>Reduction of costs</b>	Very important	Can't say	Can't say
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Table 4. The importance of different objectives in digital marketing.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the data gathered it is possible to conclude the importance of digital marketing both today and in the future. Based on the participant's statements, they all agree that digital marketing is useful and an important factor in their marketing strategy. There, of course, are differences on how companies see the importance of different media channels. However, all the participants agreed on the fact that having an attractive webpage and appearing on top of the listings in search engines are the most important matters when speaking about digital marketing.

Based on the data collected we can say that companies and organizations need to exercise relationship marketing where the focus is more towards the customer. The customers today can interact straight with the companies and will find information in large quantities and fast. Based on the barometers provided by Divia and MarketingCharts, we can learn that digital marketing is becoming increasingly popular year after year as is the financial expenditure towards it. The development of digital technology has created new ways for the companies to market themselves and it's a great opportunity to follow the evolution.

The collected data suggested cost-effective ways of digital marketing and how can the results be measured. All three companies who answered the questionnaire have outsourced these operations. However, they are determining how much they will invest on it. Search engine optimization can be done fairly easily with no additional costs but the results are not achieved immediately. Faster results are achieved

through paid search marketing where cost-effectiveness is based on focused advertising and the client is able to determine the amount of money their investing in the campaign. Companies can easily form reports and statistics from different variables and thus, the measurability is fairly simple.

Choosing the correct digital media channels is important. Most of all the company needs to consider their clients and customers and determine their wants, needs and interests. According to this, choosing the most valuable digital media channels are based to the knowledge of their customers. Based on the data collected we learned that certain channels are important to others where the same channels do not offer any relevant meaning to others. If the company does not possess the resources to focus on for example to a Facebook page, it is not worth joining that service.

Many companies have begun to use social media channels in addition to traditional channels. Like the theory suggests, it is important to be in the same place where the customers are; In the Internet. Social networks are still mainly used by young people and young adults however, recently the popularity has increased among older people. Customer segment for the case company are students and recently graduated suggesting that having an account on social networks is an excellent way to advertise the company and its services.

Discussions with the questionnaire participants suggested that having a website among search engine marketing are the two most important factors for the company. Even though some companies take websites as granted, it is important to make sure they are updated regularly and contain relevant information that is easy to find. One participant noticed that their website needed a facelift so they launched a new, improved website recently.

According to the questionnaire and discussions with the participants, traditional ways of communication such as meetings and personal visits are highly appreciated. However, there are trends towards new ways of communication. All of the

companies where the participants were from had webpages and e-mail addresses but they also had smartphones and tablets suggesting that they are willing to take advantage of new technology in their daily activities.

The research provided answers to the research questions about which digital media channels will reach the potential new customers most cost effectively and how should the case company take advantage of them. Traditional media remains as an important channel for companies however, being visible in the Internet is vital in today's digital world. Everything starts from the website being up to date. Search engine marketing in most cases will increase the visibility radically but the costs vary. Search engine optimization can be done fairly easy and with a low cost where paid search marketing provides results faster but requires more financial investment. Social media serves the purpose for the case company since it reaches the potential customers effectively. From social networks Facebook, Twitter and YouTube should be taken into active use and direct them to provide information to the customers. Combining social networks with e-mail marketing will create entirety where the customers will receive updated information more focused. The theory suggests that inserting a link of a newsletter into a tweet, enables the person to read the actual newsletter more likely. Based on the questionnaire, when a company creates successful digital marketing campaign, they will increase the overall awareness of their company, improve their brand image and create more sales. Hopefully the case company will find this thesis helpful when planning their marketing activities.

## **7.1 Suggestions for development**

Since the case company has just been established, it is difficult to give specific suggestions on how they should develop their operations. Instead, it is more beneficial to follow the examples of other successful companies and understand how they follow their marketing strategy. This way it is possible for the case company to avoid the common mistakes and focus on the relevant issues.

We are living in a fast developing and demanding economy where smaller businesses need to learn from successful ones how to survive. In addition, they need to find ways to market and advertise their products and services to ensure their cash flow. Marketing budgets along with staff and others are cut down and creating a situation that reflects to sales negatively. In Europe there are countries that are not doing well economically, including Spain where the case company is located. This being one of the reasons why all the operations need to be as cost-effective as possible.

The case company has already established webpages that are updated regularly. The website was constructed by following a clear pattern focusing on providing relevant information about the internship placements. The website is visually beautiful with bright colors and text that is easy to read. Since the website has not yet been finished, suggestions for development are to increase the amount of pictures and videos since they make the page more visual. In addition, more information about the application process is needed for increasing the professional look of the company.

Theory and results verify the importance of search engine marketing. Website of the case company has not been optimized yet, since it is under construction. Theory suggests that when implementing search engine optimization, getting visible results may take a long period of time, which is why it is important to start optimizing the site even though it's not finished yet. After the website is finished, the case company could test a small paid search marketing campaign. Analyzing the results will provide guidance towards the necessity of this type of campaigns.

User accounts in Facebook and Twitter has been set up by the case company but the exploitation is minimal. After establishing a working website, it is important to start utilizing these social networks. The idea behind Facebook, Twitter and other social networks is to create discussions between users. A person responsible for writing updates to these networks has to know how to produce dialogues with rich content. Wrong types of updates can create negative visibility and might jeopardize the company's reputation. Updates with rich content will create positive visibility and feedback so it is important to carefully design the profile.

Since the case company can attract new customers from all over the world, getting familiar with organizations such as schools and universities in Seville and in other cities or even countries, is necessary. The author himself at the moment is a student from another country where it is possible for the case company to attract customers from. Creating an e-mail campaign to be sent to different schools and universities is a great way to increase the awareness of the company. With the right actions, Solinternships will create a strong position in the market.

## **7.2 Reliability and validity**

I believe that the results gained from the research are reliable and that the data collected from the questionnaire were similar, suggesting the repeatability of the research. The theory based on literature, books and magazines as well as news and articles of today's digital world suggests that this research is reliable and valid. All the sources indicate that companies benefit from digital marketing both today and in the future. Technology and tools for digital marketing are evolving and companies need to consider the fact that customers are the ones determining when they want to make purchasing decisions and when they can be reached.

For the questionnaire to be valid, the author conducted a pilot questionnaire that was sent to one participant. Testing the questionnaire enabled the author to validate the questions by learning that the participant possessed appropriate amount of knowledge about digital marketing before the actual questionnaire. A pilot questionnaire also enabled the author to make necessary changes to the questionnaire if needed before sending it to other participants. An aspect supporting the reliability of the research is that the results gathered from the questionnaire suggest that exploiting the existing digital media channels will increase the visibility of businesses and, accordingly, revenues.

Results from the questionnaire correlate with the theory about digital marketing and digital media channels suggesting that the research is reliable. Solinternships is on a start-up stage which creates issues to consider when analyzing the results. One

problem that the author noticed was that the culture affects to the behavior of people. The environment for the case company has not yet been established and the progress is seen by different ways. However, even though persons involved with the case company have different visions on the stages along the process, they still share the same ideas towards digital marketing. They all agree about the importance of search engine marketing, social media marketing and e-mail marketing as being important factors. This progress is similar to the theory which increases the author's confidence towards understanding digital marketing and how will it be implemented in practice.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendice1. Questionnaire of the general knowledge and implementation of digital marketing

General information of the company:

- Main line of business?
- Turnover?
- Number of fixed employees?
- Year of establishment?
- Your position in the company?

1. How well do you know:

Search engine marketing?

Social media marketing?

E-mail marketing?

2. How well does your company exploit:

Search engine marketing?

Social media marketing?

E-mail marketing?

3. What are the strengths of your company related to:

Search engine marketing?

Social media marketing?

E-mail marketing?

4. How actively does your company take advantage of digital marketing or do you use external service provider?

5. How actively does your company use:

Search engine advertising? (Paid position in Google)

Search engine optimization? (Improving the visibility in natural listings of Google)

Social media marketing?

E-mail marketing?

6. If your company exploits digital marketing, what kind of results have you received?

Positive / negative etc.

7. How do you see digital marketing in the future between company's and customers? B

to B / B to C etc.

8. How important are these digital applications in you marketing plan? From scale 1 to 5

(1= not important / 5= very important)

Facebook?

Twitter?

YouTube?

LinkedIn?

Blogs?

Closed discussion forums (Extranet)?

Other, which?

9. Does your company exploit web-analytics? If yes, how much and how?

10. How important do you consider the following objectives in digital marketing: (From

scale 1 to 5 (1= not important / 5= very important)

Increasing sales?

Raising the awareness of the company?

Improving the company image / the brand?

Improving customer service?

Reduction of costs?

Other, what?

**Thank you for your answers**