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Developing Social Media Marketing for Hospitz Oy



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Abstract

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The purpose of this thesis was to create social media marketing recommendations for Hospitz Oy. The company is a small firm providing accommodation services in southern Finland. The aim of the recommendations was to increase sales, attract potential customers, retain existing customers, and increase brand awareness.

The theoretical framework was based on relevant marketing theories and concepts related to developing social media marketing recommendations. The information obtained in the theoretical part was used to justify the proposals presented. The company owner was interviewed to analyze the company's current situation. A semi-structured interview method was utilized to gather in-depth insights. During the interview, the company's main marketing channels and strategies were discussed. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the collected data. The primary outcome was to improve the current situation in social media marketing.

The final product is a set of recommendations to improve social media marketing and to choose suitable marketing channels and technologies to keep marketing costs as low as the company wants them to be. As a result, the company has a strategic action plan to make the company operations more efficient and successful.

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1 Introduction

Today's business landscape is dynamic and competitive, and effective social media marketing is seen as essential for enterprises of all sizes, including small enterprises. This thesis explores the creation of a comprehensive and practical recommendation for utilizing social media marketing for a company commissioner. The strategy developed is designed to increase brand awareness, stimulate sales, and attract potential customers, including developing existing customer relationships.

The author of this thesis has experience in digital marketing and social media marketing from studying at Kajaani University of Applied Sciences and has practical experience in applying these strategies as a marketing specialist for a tech company. This experience has been essential in developing a social media marketing recommendation for the company. This thesis thoroughly analyzes marketing concepts and theories related to the market requirements where the company for which the recommendation is developed is represented. This thesis aims to develop recommendations for improving social media marketing and identify marketing channels and techniques. To achieve this, three main research questions will be used to capture the purposes of this thesis. The research questions are: What type of digital marketing is currently used by the company? How can digital marketing in the company be more effective?

There were limitations, especially in data collection. The author of this thesis must explore different data collection methods before settling for interviews and documents.

The theoretical part includes: introduction, which gives background information about the company, the aims of the thesis. The theoretical background chapter consists of the definition of social media, social media as a marketing tool, and a review of social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. It also includes a content-creating strategy that involves content marketing, company-created content, and user-generated content. Search engine optimization and email marketing were also considered at the end.

The research methodology describes the various research methods utilized in the thesis and the procedure for conducting research. It also explains the authors' choice to use a qualitative

research approach. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured approach to gather primary data. Thematic analysis is a method used in data analysis.

Furthermore, the focus is on implementing the research. The researcher answers the research question by developing a social media marketing plan for the hotel.

As a result, the thesis provides an overview of the essential research findings and examines and analyses the outcomes. Utilizing the finished product developed as part of the thesis allows the company to change the business path and lead to sustainable growth. The possibilities of social media marketing allow companies to interact more effectively with their target audience and build brand loyalty. This thesis is done for a company based on the fact that this can be used in the future as practical instruction on what steps to take and in what area with the ever-changing digital business landscape.

2 Social media marketing

Marketing, along with human resources, financial management, and production, used to be considered a critical functional component of a company. However, the modern concept that marketing is customer-centric plays an essential role at the strategic level, driving business decisions and solutions. (Bergström & Leppänen 2018, p. 17).

Today's companies must recognize that marketing is integral to every function beyond the marketing department. The critical factor of competitiveness is the organization's image; due to this, organizations create a basis for establishing long-term relationships with customers. Marketing thinking is based on the needs and wants of current and potential customers. As a result of marketing thinking, new products and services are generated. (Bergström & Leppänen 2018, p. 17) According to Bergström and Leppänen, there is a single correlation between customer satisfaction and the continuation of the relationship with them. This means that the more satisfied the customer is, the more likely the relationship will last, and the longer the relationship with the customer, the higher its success rate. (Bergström & Leppänen 2018, p. 17).

Customer outreach is an essential task conducted by the company using websites, search engines, social media channels, and emails. However, traditional marketing methods cannot compete with digital marketing because most consumers spend an unprecedented amount of time online. Traditional marketing methods do not allow companies to build relationships with customers in the way that digital marketing offers by allowing them to promote their products and services by interacting with consumers. (Pascalau & Urziceanu, 2021, p.3).

The most important of the digital marketing tools is Search Engine Optimization (SEO), as this tool helps improve both the website's visibility and convey the advertising message to the target audience in the most effective way, i.e., ensuring the relevance of the company's online activities. By providing targeted, personalized offers to potential customers, i.e., the target audience is called for the use of mailing by e-mail, i.e., marketing by E-mail. This tool allows for building a trusting, long-term relationship with the client. (Vikarchuk & Yushkevych, 2021, p.5).

In the current digital environment, mobile marketing should be given significant attention as an expanding and influential area of digital marketing. Since the mobile phone (smartphone or other

similar device) has become an integral part of life and the primary device for obtaining information, mobile marketing has become an essential tool for communication with the customer in the digital environment. Mobile marketing enables targeting the influence on the user, as well as using information from the user to segment and target the audience they keep online. (Tong et al., 2019, p.64).

In digital marketing, there are three types of media: paid, owned, and earned. The first category is paid media, meaning that the company is willing to invest financially in display advertising, affiliate marketing, or search engines to increase conversions, drive website traffic, and expand audience reach. Occasionally, companies invest in media channels, such as print and television advertising, the first media types. Owned media is defined by the fact that the company controls it directly. It can be physical assets such as brochures and retail stores or digital assets that include social media channels, apps, websites, and email marketing. The last type of media is earned media, which implies that there are different methods of communication between clients and customers online and offline. Communication can be seen as word-of-mouth, implying that discussion can occur because of social media marketing or conversations in various social media channels. Digital marketing means that while earned media used to be advertising created through public relations, now it is content sharing through influential bloggers and partners. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2019, p. 10).

It is essential to highlight that marketing is a process that satisfies customers' needs. This process implies that companies, through marketing, provide corporate value to customers to build strong relationships with them, receiving value from customers in return. (Kotler et al. 2016, p. 5.).

2.1 Definition of social media

One of the social media researchers, Joseph Thornley, published the following definition: “social media are online communications in which individuals shift fluidly and flexibly between the role of audience and author. To do this, they use social software that enables anyone without knowledge of coding, to post, comment on, share or mash up content and to form communities around shared interests.” (Thornley, 2008).

Social media, also known as Web 2.0, is an increasingly evolving ecosystem of online interactions. The concept of “social media” includes various platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram. Through these platforms, people can communicate, share information, and build connections. (Obar & Wildman, 2015, 4) Unlike other technologies, social media is designed to foster social connections. They are centers of attraction for communication and interaction in various formats, from sharing news to making new friends. (Obar & Wildman, 2015, p. 7).

One of the critical features of social media is that interactions are transparent. This is demonstrated by social media providing an opportunity to utilize communication between users. In contrast to traditional media, the average user can post their impressions and express opinions that other users will see. This can be in a chat room or a forum for communication. The existence of transparency of interaction allows the creation of an institution of reputation in social media, where users can share feedback about products or services they have used. In the future, users can pay attention to this and decide whether they need such a service.

Businesses are heavily involved in using social media, which is primarily used for marketing, advertising, branding, and other processes. (Jeswani, 2023, p.2) Companies use social media monitoring tools to track user feedback, which helps in marketing and sales. The tools range from free basic applications to subscription-based tools. Social networks provide information on trends in the industry in which the business is involved. Businesses using social media strive to be more customer-centric and increase consumer-to-consumer interactions. (Chaffey & Smith, 2017, p. 232).

2.2 Social media as a marketing tool

Social media development has revolutionized how people keep in touch with society. (Clow & Baack, 2015, p. 274). Many factors validate social media as a marketing tool, proving it effective and valuable. The main advantage of social media is that it allows for real-time customer contact and feedback compared to traditional marketing methods. It requires no additional financial investment on the company's part and allows it to reach more people. (Coles 2014, p. 5).

According to Kenneth E. Clow and Donald Baack, even though marketers can connect with customers through social media, a brand's image can be falsely defamed and spread quickly. With

the revolution of new marketing techniques, social media has become an extremely effective and helpful resource for spreading company and brand awareness. (Clow & Baack, 2015, p. 274).

Social media platforms are designed to attract a broad audience. However, mainstream platforms focus on creating interactions between users, while some companies prefer to build their platforms based on the requirements of specific groups of people or interests. Dating sites represent an obvious example of a company that has developed a platform that meets the definition of social media but targets a specific group of people. (Clow & Baack, 2015, p. 274).

Social media marketing plays a crucial role in increasing brand awareness and strengthening brand image. Companies can, among other things, measure how satisfied customers are with their product or service in real-time. Because people pay much attention to social media, companies can use viral marketing to increase their brand awareness effectively. (Clow & Baack, 2015, p. 274).

Recent studies show that companies are increasingly investing in social media, mainly social media marketing activities. (Trachuk et al. 2021, p.179). The main factors that have the most significant impact include the decrease in response rates due to traditional digital marketing tools, particularly banners and email marketing, which have become less attractive due to the large amount of unnecessary information. The rapid expansion of the online audience has also led to a growing interest in social networks, where many users accumulate, and the social network becomes an ideal platform for advertising impact. Most Internet users are young people who no longer perceive the impact of traditional marketing on the digital environment. The decrease in the cost of the Internet everywhere also plays a vital role in the influence of social networks and the influence of reference groups in social networks on the purchase decision, i.e., the user's social networking circle has a significant influence on him, which create the preconditions for highly effective viral campaigns on social networks. Marketing on social media also effectively harmonizes with the social media communication style, which is friendly and unobtrusive, which promotes the product on social media. When using social media as a marketing channel, one should consider the motives guiding social media users' use - information seeking and communication. Consequently, the user should receive comprehensive information in the communication format specific to social networks. (Trachuk et al. 2021, p.179).

In the first stages of marketing development in social networks, the impact was realized through

entertainment videos, a popular genre in this communication channel, integrating the company's message. Then, companies' cooperation with users came to the forefront; in this way, user marketing was realized. This helped to form a brand value closest to the consumer due to their direct participation in the formation of value. (Merz et al., 2017, p. 6-7).

In addition, while increasing the company's visibility, using social networks allows for competitive intelligence on competitors' marketing activity in the social network and analyzes the degree of their success. (Vuori et al., 2009, p. 2). The company increases its relevance to the consumer by providing users with relevant and expert information on social networks. It also seems closer, which creates a background for building a long-term relationship with the customer and increasing customer loyalty. The feedback also provides an opportunity to retain the user because the company is always on the phone and can quickly provide the information the customer needs. (Vuori et al., 2009, p.7). At the same time, the company sees the trends prevalent in social networks and can use the current trends to attract attention to itself and its product. (Vuori et al., 2009, p. 6).

2.3 Social media platforms

Some social media platforms engage the audience with the brand and company. One such platform is Facebook and Instagram. Facebook is one of the most consistent social media channels used in marketing. This is partly because Facebook's audience is over a billion people worldwide and represents completely different segments of society. (Appel et al., 2020, p.79). The platform's convenience is that it offers all the necessary features to interact with customers and promote your brand through paid advertising, or by creating a business page where companies post information about their organization. Facebook is the most successful in terms of social media marketing, a source of customer engagement. This is explained by the fact that Facebook has an audience of more than a billion people worldwide and represents completely different segments. This platform is user-friendly in providing all the necessary features to interact with customers and promote a brand through paid advertising or creating a business page where companies post information about their organization.

Instagram, according to Kenneth E. Clow and Donald Baack (2015, p. 277) has more than 200

million users, 60 percent of whom are active users who log into the social network regularly. The peculiarity of the social media platform is that users, unlike Facebook, can be involved in raising awareness of a particular brand by posting images or videos of the company's product or service. This is a client-to-customer approach to marketing. It has a positive impact on the brand image, because this approach generates a lot of trust in another customer. (Clow & Baack, 2015, p. 278). Instagram's unique feature is that users, in contrast to Facebook, can more easily and quickly familiarize themselves with the brand, as the concept of Instagram involves the presentation of mainly visual content, also the customer shares impressions about a particular brand by posting images or videos about the company's product or service. These marketing approach is called customer-to-customer or word of mouth. This has a positive impact on the brand image as this approach generates trust from other customers. (Park & Namkung, 2022, p.10).

2.3.1 Facebook

The world's most popular social network is Facebook, founded in 2004 with an audience of over 600 million people in over 70 countries. The main idea behind the platform is to allow users to create profiles and explore the profiles of others, gaining insights into their interests and values. However, the platform is also a social networking portal where organizations and businesses create and share information about services or products. Thus, with the emergence of commercial enterprises on the platform, the focus is slowly shifting from user relationships to attracting customers. (Ramsaran-Fowdar & Fowdar, 2013, p.73).

From the perspective of a digital marketer, the communities within Facebook are the most useful for introducing research regarding what the users' preferences and consumer likes and dislikes are. This helps and simultaneously the main core to create market segmentation and targeting and positioning strategies. Because Facebook is a public and open platform, marketers can collect personal information from users' walls and pages. In addition to analyzing this, information can be processed for direct marketing purposes. (Ramsaran-Fowdar & Fowdar, 2013, p.75).

While the original purpose of the platform was to build connections between users, Facebook offers tools to achieve marketing goals. These include advertisements and polls. The advantage of advertisements is that the end customer can strictly segment users based on personal criteria,

such as age, gender, and location. The polls allow us to get up-to-date information from customers. Facebook messages enable organizing a conversation between users and the company, as well as answering questions about the product or service. Business/Interest Club: The organization has a unique opportunity to provide information about upcoming events, promotions, and other information in real time. (Ramsaran-Fowdar & Fowdar, 2013, p.75).

The benefits of using Facebook marketing. (Ramsaran-Fowdar & Fowdar, 2013, p.76). Social media's first and foremost benefit is the reduction of marketing costs in terms of money and personnel. When companies go through economic crises or recessions, they search for ways to cut costs; in such cases, they resort to social media, cutting costs and promoting the business in this direction. Other methods, unlike social media, have not previously allowed companies to reduce communication costs and create a quick and consistent connection with millions of individual customers around the world. (Ramsaran-Fowdar & Fowdar, 2013, p.76).

Facebook is considered one of the areas of the marketing revolution that has contributed to the creation of personalized advertising. Therefore, the popularity of Facebook advertising has grown. According to experts, two factors allowed this phenomenon to succeed. The first factor is creating accurate targeting based on demographic or other criteria. The second factor is the tightening of requirements and the quality of ads. By combining these two factors, the company has successfully designed Facebook to attract traffic and promote businesses ranging from small to large corporations. In turn, the massive active audience and high user engagement make the platform - attractive for potential interaction from commercial companies. The economic advantage of advertising agreements is that Facebook offers a flexible and competitive payment system for different budgets. (Ramsaran-Fowdar & Fowdar, 2013, p.76).

In the days when social media did not exist, customer access to information about brands was limited to traditional media. Companies use their marketing strategies to develop a perception of what a brand looks like in the eyes of the consumer. However, at the time of the emergence of social media, this situation has changed. The consumer now determines the brand positioning, not the company. In turn, the consumer acts as an active creator of information about the product through their review or opinion. Marketers and corporations view this from two perspectives, one is that the user can leave a positive one, which is an advantage. However, there is also the possibility that the user may be disappointed with the product, thus lowering the credibility of the product or service. Modern research confirms companies' fears of creating reviews and

opinions from users on social networks, which strongly impact attracting new customers. Traditional marketing tools are playing a losing battle with word-of-mouth, which becomes a critical factor in expanding the customer base and has a long-term effect. (Ramsaran-Fowdar & Fowdar, 2013, p.76-77).

As with other social media platforms, there are interaction guidelines for Facebook to make a positive impact on an organization. (Ramsaran-Fowdar & Fowdar, 2013, p.79). One of these areas is to create a community with people who share the interests and values of the organization. Involve users through available tools within the social network, such as a blog. Utilize what customers like to create an effective narrative about the product or service. Build a product that gets users to converse with each other and the organization. (Ramsaran-Fowdar & Fowdar, 2013, p.79).

2.3.2 Instagram

In 2021, Instagram became the fourth most popular social network worldwide. Thus, according to statistics, Instagram (1.368 billion) follows Facebook (2.853), YouTube (2.291), and WhatsApp (2.0), respectively. The engagement rate exceeds that of Facebook by 1.78% (2.2% and 0.22%, respectively). (Statista, 2022).

Every year, business accounts on Instagram are becoming increasingly popular; for example, 90% of social network users subscribe to at least one business account. 40% of Instagram users prefer this platform to buy goods or services. Furthermore, over 50% of users who saw a product on Instagram purchased the seller's website. All this indicates the inevitable influence of the social network Instagram on increasing sales due to its competent use for marketing purposes. (Bologova, 2021, p.23).

Instagram is a marketing platform since humans quickly pick up visual pictures. This benefits any business because people quickly remember what they like and want to buy. Typical Instagram features include posting posts and stories, commenting, and communicating with other users directly. However, over time, as it became apparent that Instagram is an important marketing tool, features such as specifying the sponsor of a post and a personalized feed that is permanently

compiled based on a user's actions, which are determined by the interests of the latter, was added.

Considering a modern Instagram marketing plan, it should include: a team of specialists, including an SMM manager, designer and copywriter. Business account, with a description of the company and the main ideas, contact details, and a link to the company's website. Customized content for the target audience and the purpose of the company's marketing strategy. All other important information can be fixed in highlights (e.g., prices of goods/services). (Bologova, 2021, p.24).

Depending on the marketing goals, there are six different types of business accounts: a store (which represents a showcase page), a public account (an online magazine format that builds brand awareness), a personal brand account, an informational blog (which specializes in textual information and communication with users), a brand account (the purpose of which is to keep the audience loyal to the brand and increase its awareness), a mini-landing page that allows achieving a quick conversion with minimal costs. Instagram allows you to collect statistics on content, such as the number of views, engagement, likes, post saves, reposts, reactions, comments, etc.

There are several Instagram advertising options, such as buying advertising from influencers. Advantage: to appeal to the target audience in a personalized way. Risk: the possibility of refusing advertising. Mass-liking and mass-following. Advantage: to attract an audience for free. Risk: It is time-consuming and does not guarantee arrival. Holding contests. Advantage: to quickly attract an audience. Risk: mass-leaving after the end of the competition. Targeted advertising. Advantage: to achieve comprehensive coverage of the target audience. Risk: high costs. (Bologova, 2021, p.25).

It is also worth mentioning that due to the large number of Instagram accounts, the content becomes homogeneous; because of this, it is quite difficult to keep customers' constant attention. Despite this fact, Instagram allows you to effectively promote various companies and their products or services using competent marketing strategies and personalized content. (Bologova, 2021, p.25).

2.4 Content creating strategy

The Content Creation Strategy is a detailed plan to achieve online promotion goals. These goals may include attracting traffic and subscribers and increasing sales. The development and implementation of a content strategy includes the following stages: setting strategy goals, determining the types of content to be published, determining the tools that will be used to promote the content, and analyzing the results of the strategy implementation.

2.4.1 Content marketing

There are three components that content includes, these are words, information, and knowledge. The definition of valuable content can be characterized as useful information created for a specific audience. This content is generated to help, educate, and share information with customers. (Jefferson & Tanton 2015, p. 25). According to one of Kingsnorth's statements, then various forms of content such as blogs, videos, podcasts, and infographics can effectively attract consumers to companies' products and services. (Kingsnorth, 2019, p. 225). Content marketing is a strategic approach that consists of creating and distributing useful and relevant content focused on the target audience. The goal of the strategic approach is to gain trust and build audience loyalty. One possible outcome of the approach is increased sales and profits. (Du Plessis, 2022, p.1).

Success in digital marketing communications is defined by putting the content created at the center of all marketing efforts. This drives the channels that are used to engage with audiences and communicate. Content is an important component when building a marketing strategy, which includes email marketing and social media outreach. The result of creating content as part of executing a marketing strategy, is to create demand and engagement with the audience. As part of content creation, the company must consider that the content created must be beneficial to the target consumers and meet the commercial interests that the company has established. To successfully implement a strategy that includes content marketing, companies can partner with celebrities or post about themselves on websites. (Chaffey & Chadwick, 2019, p. 36).

It is important to keep in mind that if a company wants to achieve the best results with content, the company must keep an eye on its key performance indicators. One such metric is the

frequency with which a company's created content is shared on social media. To improve these metrics, a company needs to engage with customers on social media by responding to questions and feedback. One of the consequences of proper content marketing is increased consumer attention to search engines. By creating regular content, search engines will favor the one who does it qualitatively and regularly, thus bringing the company to the first pages of the search. (Chaffey & Chadwick, 2019, p. 38).

2.4.2 Company created content

The content created by the company is branded content that increases the brand's attractiveness. By distributing that content, the company positions the brand and interacts more effectively with the audience. The study finds that branded content has a much higher positive response from users, with the researchers commenting that the type of content does not affect the number of user reactions but the engagement. Furthermore, it is also pointed out that branded content has better feedback, which means there are more positive comments in publications of this kind. (Castillo-Abdul et al., 2022, p.194).

2.4.3 User generated content

User-generated content is a very profitable tool for brand promotion, mainly because no effort is required from the company to promote it. It represents a kind of "word of mouth." This is important since, as established by research, any commercial content is recognized by users as imposed, which creates an overcome effect, meaning that the message is processed more critically; in the case of user-generated content, the message is perceived more loyally. (Mayrhofer et al., 2019, p.168).

The recommendations from the user side do not look like a business proposition, and they are viewed in a friendly manner by other users. The researchers conclude that even branded content presented on behalf of users is ostensibly subjective in nature. In consequence, a company can effectively conduct covert marketing on social media by presenting advertising content in the form of user-generated content. (Mayrhofer et al., 2019, p.179).

2.5 Search engine optimization

The authors highlight the critical role of search engine optimization in online marketing in their book, "Integrated Advertising, Promotion and Marketing Communications". They highlight that a significant part of online marketing involves search engine optimization. For example, this can be observed in the fact that 50% of online marketing expenditure and 80% of web traffic starts with search engines. Consequently, the statement that search engine optimization is critical to successful marketing is supported by these numbers. Search engine optimization is a technique that involves improving a company's website so that it appears at the top of the search results, thereby increasing website traffic (Clow & Baack, 2015, p. 264).

Search engine optimization needs to be considered when introducing a business. According to one study, search was the largest generator of online advertising revenue in 2009. Research proves that 90 percent of visitors will at least use search engines, whether the end user knows the page address or not (Sheehan, 2010, p. 37). For effective search engine optimization, a company needs to update and create new content and links on a regular basis (Chaffey & Chadwick, 2019, p. 406).

Rick Allen, the former marketing head at a company that provides private vacation homes, compares search engine rankings to the real estate's physical location. He highlights that a location on the first page compares favorably to a prime location in a busy shopping district. While ranking on the fifth page of the search is compared to being on a secluded side street with few visitors. (Clow & Baack, 2015, p. 264).

There are two types of how search engine optimization can be implemented. The first method is organic search, the natural method. The technique of this method is to use popular keywords and phrases to ensure high ranking of search results. The second method is through search engine marketing. The main difference from the first method is that the company allocates funding to search engines to artificially appear and keep in the top search results. Search engine marketing is also commonly known as paid placement or search engine advertising. (Clow & Baack, 2015, p. 265).

Based on the collected information, it is possible to derive some tips for authors that can increase the reader's interest in articles. There are five "golden rules" which are used when operating with

search engine optimization. These tips are universal for attracting attention and focusing the reader on the target information that the author wants to bring to the public in the first place. (Cushman, 2018, p.180).

A search-friendly article title: The title should be short and straightforward, with keywords in the first 65 characters. If the title is too long, consider moving some of it into the first sentences of the abstract.

Optimize the abstract: The first couple of sentences are the most important for search engines due to their algorithms, so you should make them essential; you need to put there your main conclusions and keywords. Try to repeat the keywords 3-6 times in the abstract to focus the reader's attention. Keep your conclusions brief and concise.

Try to repeat your keywords: Once you have included them in the title and abstract. You should mention them in the keywords on the manuscript submission site, include them in article titles, and use them in the text. But keep in mind that search engines penalize works for “keyword stuffing,” which can lead to removal of the work from the search engine, so be careful not to overdo it. Article titles are an important part of structuring your work and help search engines find it, especially if keywords are included.

Consecutive author names: When formatting sources as well as mentioning authors, use authors' names/initials consistently in published papers; for example, keep the middle initial each time.

Create links to your published article: A lot of work is promoted in search engines by working with a lot of “inbound links”. This way articles are easier for search engines to find (they move up the list of results). Try to popularize the article through social media, on institutional websites, and other sources of information distribution. In addition, it is also worth pointing out that Google values sites ending in “.edu” and gives them more promotion. It is also a good idea to write a blog about your article. Also, if the theme of your paper is on Wikipedia, add information to that Wikipedia page about your article and link to the article. (Cushman, 2018, p.180).

2.6 Email marketing

One of the main key components in the list of digital marketing tools is email marketing. It is a valuable tool that allows a company to establish personalized communication with its customers. This technique involves sending targeted emails to a company's customer list. One of the features of technology is that emails that have been sent as part of executing an email marketing strategy usually contain a sales offer and a "call to action" that encourages the user, or potential buyer, to interact with the links embedded in the email (Ryan & Jones, 2012, p. 127). However, it is noted that customers tend to disregard random or unexpected emails, which demonstrates the need for and importance of building a customer list consisting of people who have expressed their desire for electronic communication. The optimal solution when building a customer list is to provide promotions to customers who have agreed to receive emails from the company. (Ryan & Jones, 2012, p. 129).

There are two critical components of an email marketing strategy that need to be considered, outbound as well as inbound email marketing. Outbound email marketing is emails on behalf of a company that are sent to customers to encourage them to make purchases. Inbound email marketing is the management of customer inquiries and responding to them via email. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2019, p. 527). The integral email marketing program balances effective outbound email marketing with skillful handling of inbound customer emails. This synergy results in increased conversion of potential customers and retention of existing customers. (Chaffey & Smith, 2017, p. 484).

The main advantage of email marketing is that it is a versatile tool to keep customers informed and tailor marketing messages to a specific target audience. Despite this advantage, this technology has a significant disadvantage, which is that by constantly sending marketing emails, potential and current customers can become more irritated with a company's brand. Company newsletters, sales promotions, and exclusive offers for customers are examples of an email marketing campaign. The email marketing strategy is flexible and allows a company to target specific customer segments or individual recipients. One effective example of using this technology is when a company effectively distributes special offers to existing customer segments.

One of the most important advantages of email marketing is the ability to deliver your communication message directly to the target, where there is a virtually 100 percent guarantee that the

user will view it in person. Although E-mail marketing is considered an outdated digital marketing tool, it is still effective and forms the basis of many digital marketing strategies. (Ryan & Jones, 2012, p.203).

3 Research methodology

This section of the thesis focuses on the methodology section, presenting a comprehensive overview of the methods used in the research work. This section provides a theoretical component and an explanation of what processes and methods were involved in the design and implementation phase. As a result of reading this section, the reader is informed about the process behind the creation of the final product, which contributes to a clearer understanding of its need and purpose.

There are questions that need to be answered during the study. The researcher collects primary data for this purpose. However, to collect primary data, it is necessary to choose a method that is appropriate for this activity. As part of data collection, the researcher can use surveys, experiments, observations, and interviews. The researcher must choose a method that is appropriate for the specific research task. (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010, p. 103).

There is qualitative research, which allows the researcher to explore information based on a small sample. Researchers turn to qualitative research when they need to study a research subject for the first time. The advantage of qualitative research is that new ideas and products can be evaluated as part of the research. (Harrison et al., 2016, p.46). The most common methods of qualitative data collection are interviews, focus groups and observation.

This thesis utilizes a qualitative approach, which in the opinion of the author of the study, is considered the most appropriate approach for creating a social media marketing plan. Data was collected from both primary sources and secondary sources. Conducting an interview with a company representative was chosen as the primary source of information. As secondary data, scientific publications were used to select appropriate tools to improve the social media marketing position.

3.1 Semi-structured interview

A semi-structured interview is an in-depth interview, the main idea of which is based on a semi-structured interview guide, which is a schematic outline of the questions or themes to be explored

by the interviewer. The respondent must answer pre-determined open-ended questions; various professionals widely use this type of interview; it can be conducted with an individual or a group of people, and the interview duration ranges from 30 minutes to more than one hour. To optimize the use of time, interview guides allow you to focus the interview on the preferred line of action. According to the guide, the questions should consist of one central question and a variety of related questions related to the main question, which in turn are refined through the trial and error of the interview guide. Recording the interview is a good choice because of the possibility of effectively capturing interview data. (Jamshed, 2014, p.87).

In a semi-structured interview, there are basically five phases of its development, such as: Identify the prerequisites for conducting a semi-structured interview. This step ensures that using a semi-structured interview format is appropriate for collecting data on the selected theme. First, this type of interview is well suited to collecting data for the research because it is well suited to exploring people's perceptions and opinions; in addition, this format allows participants to express themselves more freely while allowing the interviewer to maintain focus on the theme at hand. (Nuzhat et al., 2022, p.45-46).

Utilize previously acquired knowledge. The second phase is based on an in-depth literature review. In the early stages of questionnaire design, the areas considered to be the focus of the interview are first highlighted. These broad areas are then divided into more minor group themes. The second stage aims to thoroughly and fully understand the research area, requiring the researcher to think critically and obtain additional information if required. The literature review thus provides the conceptual framework for the interviews. If knowledge from literature is insufficient, experts in the field should be consulted to obtain the necessary information for the research. (Nuzhat et al., 2022, p.46).

Formulate a preliminary semi-structured interview guide. The third step is to draft a preliminary interview guide. The dialog in a semi-structured interview is conducted around the research theme. An interview guide is a list of questions used as an interview tool. The questions themselves are drafted based on knowledge gained from literature or experts in the field. The questions should be one-sided and open-ended. Follow-up questions are asked after questions on the main theme to maintain and develop the interview. As an informal follow-up, the interviewer may ask the respondent to elaborate on a theme that emerged during the interview. Semi-structured interviews also provide an opportunity to use probes. Probes are prompts that encourage

respondents to talk about their perceptions and experiences. Probing allows for reliable data by inclining the respondents to clarify and elaborate on some of the critical issues they have raised. This provides an opportunity for the interviewer to obtain complete information by further exploring the respondents' perspectives, asking them to recall something from their memory, and explaining any inconsistencies that may arise during the interview. There are two types of probing questions: verbal and non-verbal. Verbal questions involve repeating or paraphrasing the interviewee's words, expressing interest through verbal agreement, or giving the researcher the impression that the researcher knows something important. Non-verbal questions involve maintaining silence and allowing the participant to think aloud so that the participant can fully express his or her opinion. (Nuzhat et al., 2022, p.47).

The pilot tests the prepared guide. The fourth stage of development is pilot testing of the interview guides to improve the toolkit. This stage tests the content, the relevance of the content conveyed the need to adjust questions, and the need to test their appropriateness. The testing eliminates potentially ambiguous questions as well as ethically incorrect questions. This testing is done through internal review by supervisors, and then the draft is evaluated by external experts who are not directly involved in the study. They evaluate the questions' appropriateness and completeness according to the interview's theme and purpose. Moreover, they can provide valuable advice on wording, the order of questions, and whether participants are comfortable answering them. (Nuzhat et al., 2022, p.48).

Present the completed semi-structured interview guide. The fifth step is to produce a clear and logical guide on semi-structured interviewing for data collection. The guide presented meets the study's objectives and provides a series of recommendations for other researchers to use. This guide should reflect and be directly influenced by the previous steps in the design process. (Nuzhat et al., 2022, p.49).

3.2 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method widely used to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns of shared meaning, known as themes, within a given data set. This method can be applied to various data sources such as interviews, focus groups, surveys, or any textual data that

has rich information to analyze. The main goal of thematic analysis is to identify and understand the key themes and patterns found throughout the data sets to create a comprehensive and in-depth representation of the phenomenon under study. (McLeod, 2024, p.1).

A valuable tool in research is thematic analysis, which provides flexibility and versatility to the researcher. It allows for detailed and highly disaggregated descriptions of the data. The researcher can understand how different data elements relate to each other and how they reflect broader trends and meanings. This is achieved through several key steps: exploring and identifying common characteristics in the data set, analyzing similarities and differences, and examining the relationships between different data elements. (Özden, 2024, p.66).

Thematic analysis is used in various fields, from psychology to sociology. (McLeod, 2024, p.1) In every field where the researcher resorts to this method, it helps in understanding and interpreting people's views, opinions, knowledge, and values. Through such a data set, the researcher can explore the depth of various aspects of the theme under study. (Özden, 2024, p.66).

In addition, thematic analysis helps researchers identify hidden patterns and trends that may not be obvious when initially examining the data. It thus provides an opportunity for a deeper and more multifaceted understanding of the phenomenon under study, making it an invaluable tool for qualitative research. (Özden, 2024, p.65).

When using thematic analysis, the researcher may use different methodological approaches that meet the study's specific objectives. These can generally be inductive, applied, deductive, and semantic thematic analysis. (Jowsey et al., 2021, p.473).

Data-driven analysis, or bottom-up analysis, more commonly known as inductive thematic analysis, is about approaching data with a level of openness, allowing patterns, themes, and meanings to emerge organically from the data itself. However, the objectivity of the research is only achievable if researchers inevitably bring their own views and biases that influence the perceptual process to the analysis. Two critical criteria are transparency and reflexivity, given that the researcher openly acknowledges their possible biases. (Jowsey et al., 2021, p.473).

In contrast, in applied and deductive thematic analysis, the researcher has an existing framework that can be obtained from existing literature, developed theories, or philosophical frameworks.

In this case, it serves as the framework through which the data is reviewed, guiding the identification and categorization of themes.

On the other hand, semantic thematic analysis primarily relies on explicit, or surface meanings expressed in an extensive set of data sets. This approach is typically seen as descriptive rather than interpretive. However, researchers systematically code and categorize data with literal content in mind. (Jowsey et al., 2021, p.473).

By understanding the differences between these types of approaches, the researcher can choose the most convenient method for a particular study based on the specific questions and goals of the final research, thus ensuring a thorough and in-depth analysis of the qualitative data for the final work.

According to a research paper by Victoria Clarke and Virginia Braun on the use of thematic analysis in psychology, there are six main stages of analysis that support the researcher. It is essential to realize that, according to Clark and Brown, this is not a guideline but a recommendation. The researcher can move from one stage to the next, depending on the purpose of the research and the information gained during one of the stages required. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.16).

The initial stage of thematic analysis is familiarization, involving the researcher's engagement with the data. The process begins by reading and digging through the data, sometimes including a complete data transcription. Through familiarization, the researcher gains insight into the data, identifying potential themes that may emerge. Initial observations can inform the subsequent coding process. (Rosairo, 2023, p.2).

The second phase in thematic analysis is the creation of initial codes that involve organizing the data into meaningful groups. These codes define the characteristics of the data that may be of interest to the analyst. The essential elements of the analysis are derived from the raw data. They are open to interpretation—the researcher resorts to simplification through coding to set their attention on a particular aspect of the data. The difference with themes is that codes represent broader units of analysis. The coding process depends on whether the themes are data-driven or emerge from theory. Coding is done through software or manually. The advantage of using software is that it allows for faster information processing, while manual research has the advantage of the researcher's intellectual judgment and interpretation of data. Various tools, such as sticky notes or markers, can facilitate manual coding. (Christou, 2022, p.7).

By the third phase, the researcher shifts attention from individual codes to broad themes. They began analyzing the relationship between codes, exploring how different codes can be combined under a common theme. This process involves using visual tools, ranging from tables to mind maps, to organize and categorize codes. Potential sub-themes are identified by the third stage, looking at possible relationships between themes. By the end of this stage, the researcher has a collection of potential themes and subthemes and excerpts of data related to them. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.19-20).

The fourth stage is to analyze the themes. Through this stage - the researcher clarifies and refines the themes identified in the previous stages. The researcher reviews each selected theme in terms of critical evaluation. It is necessary to determine whether it is supported by knowledge and represents a particular concept. As an outcome of this step, the researcher may reduce the number of themes based on whether they overlap or may expand the number of themes when dividing them into separate ones. Internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity are critical evaluation criteria. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.20).

The fifth step is to define and name the themes. For this purpose, it is necessary to have a well-structured theme map. Through this, the researcher clarifies and clearly defines the themes provided in the research paper. This involves discovering the central meaning of each theme and identifying the mapped aspects. Two crucial factors are to ensure that each theme remains focused and consistent, avoiding complexity and variety. This requires the researcher to revisit the data collected for each theme and organize it into a narrative. The main challenge is identifying and explaining what makes the data collected exciting and essential to analyze. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.22).

The final stage of the thematic analysis is reporting writing. The researcher resorts to convincingly summarizing the findings. The essential prerequisite for the report is a straightforward and logically structured narrative. The report should reflect the story revealed in the data within and between specific themes. The narrative should be supported by evidence in the form of specific examples and excerpts from the data, carefully selected to emphasize the critical points of the analysis. To build a strong argument, the examples and excerpts need to be organically integrated into the analytic narrative and focused on the research objectives. (Dawadi, 2020, p.70).

Any type of qualitative research, including thematic analysis, has advantages and disadvantages that make it unique compared to other types. The following things stand out as strengths: The key strength of thematic analysis is its flexibility, which gives the researcher who has chosen a qualitative method considerable flexibility at all stages of the research process. This flexibility is especially valuable when using reflexive case analysis, especially if the researcher constantly re-thinks and adapts their analysis based on new data and insights. In this way, the researcher avoids the possibility of labeling the data and truly delves into the essence of the information, revealing subtle nuances, hidden connections, and unexpected patterns. (Rosairo, 2023, p.2).

Thematic analysis's accessibility allows it to be applied to research on a wide range of issues, from exploring personal experiences to analyzing complex social and cultural phenomena. No matter the task's complexity, thematic analysis provides valuable tools for understanding the underlying meanings and implications hidden within the data. (Rosairo, 2023, p.2).

A critical advantage for the researcher in choosing thematic analysis is its accessibility. Different from many quantitative methods, it does not require in-depth knowledge of statistics or proficiency in sophisticated analytical tools. This makes it attractive to researchers with different levels of expertise and from different fields of study. To perform the analysis, the researcher can use specialized software or manually by carefully reading and coding the data. Specialized software helps to analyze large amounts of information, visualize the connections between themes and codes, and even automate some of the analysis steps. (Rosairo, 2023, p.2).

Thematic analysis has its limitations. In cases where the study requires many potential themes to be identified, it can be challenging to apply. In such cases, the analysis process becomes too time-consuming and challenging to manage, especially with the manual data coding. In addition, thematic analysis relies on language codes defined for a single language. Multilingual data must be translated into a single language before analysis. This is a time-consuming and sometimes costly process, often resulting in the loss of some of the nuances and cultural sensitivities of the original data. (Rosairo, 2023, p.3).

The novice researcher choosing thematic analysis is usually faced with the problem of differentiating between themes and codes. Themes are broader, generalizable ideas that reflect core meanings in the data, while codes are more specific labels and tags assigned to data segments. A deep understanding of the research context and analytical skills are essential criteria for seeing

the connections between codes and combining them into meaningful themes. (Rosairo, 2023, p.3).

The credibility of qualitative research depends on the researcher's ability to extract meaning from the data carefully. Therefore, it is crucial to enhance one's knowledge of qualitative data analysis tools, particularly thematic analysis. While accessible, thematic analysis demands a clear understanding of the methodology and meticulous data organization. This is especially important for researchers new to thematic analysis, as it directly impacts the sensitivity and depth with which they can interpret the data. (Rosairo, 2023, p.3).

4 Implementation of the research

This chapter describes the critical steps in conducting a study to analyze the marketing strategy of Hospitz Oy. The main objective of this chapter is to provide the practical part of the research methodology, applying semantic-theme analysis to systematically examine and analyze the data collected during a semi-structured interview with the CEO of Hospitz Oy. This interview format lets the researcher obtain detailed information about the company's current strategies, social media tools, and effectiveness. At the same time, the thematic analysis enabled the researcher to identify the main trends and problem areas in Hospitz Oy's social media marketing.

This chapter begins with a description of the commissioning of the research, helping better understand the context of the company and its needs. It then details the interview questions, and the themes discussed with the CEO. Through thematic data analysis, the interview reveals the essential findings and themes that were structured and analyzed according to the methodology. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the findings that provides further recommendations for improving the company's marketing strategy, as well as an analysis of the reliability and validity of the findings.

4.1 Commissioning party

The commission is for the Hospitz Hotel in Savonlinna, a historically significant place in Finland. Established in 1933, the hotel was built in the South Savo region on the shores of Lake Saimaa by renowned Finnish architect Vivi Lönn, the first woman in Finnish history to open her architectural firm. Founded initially as a home for travelers and an institution for the Young Women's Christian Association, the building was later used for military purposes during the war. In 1990, the building was converted into a hotel.

This location's essential advantage is easy access to the well-known Olavinlinna Castle, famous for its international opera festival, and Lake Saimaa, the largest lake in Finland. The nearby Savonlinna Airport provides transportation convenience. The hotel is open to everyone and caters for family vacations. Hotel Hospitz offers accommodation, a sauna, a terrace, and mooring for yachts and boats, and during the summer, guests can rent boats with oars and marine equipment.

The hotel has three floors with 21 uniquely decorated rooms, providing a personalized guest experience.

4.2 Semi-structured interview questions and themes

One of the objectives of this research work is to obtain detailed information about the current marketing practices of the client company. Within the context of a comprehensive research work, a semi-structured interview was chosen as the primary data collection method. The prerequisites are as follows: The interview allows more truthful answers than in cases of questionnaires and surveys. In addition, it allows the CEO to provide feedback on the effectiveness of digital marketing tools, which would require more work with alternative data collection methods. This is critical given the limited information available and the fact that the CEO can explain their answers, adding value and insight to the data collected.

To analyze the theoretical literature on marketing to provide a structure for future questions and discussion themes, the researcher resorted to searching for relevant materials in specialized resources such as ResearchGate and CyberLeninka, which provide free access to academic publications by keywords. These were academic publications related to marketing-related concepts such as social media, search engine optimization, and the use of email for marketing. The result was a list of critical themes and issues when discussing the current digital marketing situation with the CEO.

The critical evaluation of the available data was conducted during the analysis of theoretical literature. Despite the researcher's marketing knowledge, information on theoretical approaches was collected and customized to the company's specific context. This enabled the researcher to focus the questions for the CEO on the details of the interaction between the company and social media for marketing. In Appendix 1, one example of this can be found where the researcher clarifies the questions regarding the use of content strategy. (Appendix 1, p.2). Reviewing the literature on social media allowed the researcher to ask a clarifying question regarding the challenges of using social media. (Appendix 1, p.1).

The formation of the preliminary guide explains how the questions were formulated and the structure of the interview, showing the in-depth quality of the data collected. The interview guide

process included several steps: the primary purpose of the interview was to determine what types of digital marketing the client company is currently using. Identify the key themes discussed during the interview with the CEO. Developing key questions were formulated based on open-ended, allowing them to express themselves freely. Planning of additional questions in cases where it was necessary to propose questions to clarify the interviewee's response.

The themes included in the discussion during the interviews were formed based on theoretical literature and specific conditions in which the company operates, such as limited resources and few employees. The primary theme was chosen as "General Information"; the researcher needed to get information about the company's values and where they come from (Appendix 1, p.1). The secondary theme was to determine how important and actively "Social Media Marketing" is used. (Appendix 1, p.2). This was followed by a discussion of search engine optimization, which was highlighted as one of the crucial aspects of a company with a small budget for marketing activities during the analysis of theoretical literature. (Appendix 1, p.3). "Email marketing", because of business process confidentiality, was superficially answered by the interviewee, although providing important information about what the company is doing in this area. (Appendix 1, p.4).

Before conducting full-length interviews with the CEO, the researcher used the assistance of a colleague to conduct a pilot session for 50 minutes to verify that all questions were logically designed and sequenced to reveal the primary purpose of the interview. During the pilot testing, there were a few points that required revision. In particular, some questions needed to be more specific. It was decided to structure the questions regarding how the client company evaluates specific tools and what key performance indicators it keeps track of. For example, in the theme "Search Engine Optimization," the question regarding key performance indicators when working with this tool was clarified. (Appendix 1, p.3). In addition, the pilot test identified the optimal time to conduct interviews where the respondent has a full opportunity to share his or her opinion.

As a result, the researcher prepared a guide for semi-structured interviews. The guide should be clear and logically structured to provide efficiency in data collection during the interview. This includes the following steps: the questions in the guide should be formulated in a way relevant to the research objectives. The questions used in formulating the interview should remain open-ended and allow the respondent to present their thoughts without pressure. However, the opportunity to clarify questions should be reserved. This flexibility is because the researcher is getting detailed information about the research subject.

A literature review should be done as a preparatory measure for the interview. The researcher must have knowledge of the field of study to obtain qualitative and reliable data. In addition, it is necessary to record pre-interview test sessions on a recording tool, which should be listened to to identify inappropriate questions or various problems that may arise due to misunderstandings. This guide will provide a good foundation for preparing a semi-structured interview.

4.3 Thematic analysis

The interview was conducted in November 2023 with Kurepin Mikhail, the CEO of Hospitz Oy. The original information gathered during the semi-structured interview was recorded on a dictaphone and then transcribed onto paper. The original language of the interview was chosen to be Russian, as both individuals understood the language. Subsequently, it was translated into English, allowing the researcher to refer to the data multiple times as the thematic analysis progressed, marking key points and context of responses needed for in-depth analysis. A full transcription of the interview, translated into English, can be found in Appendix 1.

Based on interview responses, key phrases and ideas were extracted and grouped into codes based on the interview responses. For example, the code “personalized communication” encompasses all aspects of personalized customer approaches via email. Another code, “the limited role of social media” reflects the CEO's view that social media does not deliver instant value. The final code, “the importance of search engine optimization,” highlights the significance of SEO in increasing the company's online visibility.

From the initial coding, broad themes were formulated to reflect the main areas and issues discussed in the interviews. Major themes identified in this phase include the effectiveness of email marketing. The topic includes aspects of direct communication with customers through email. Through this, the CEO creates a personalized offer and notes the importance of this channel. The problem with social media. The theme emphasizes the limited role of social media. The role of search engine optimization in marketing strategy. The theme covers the importance of a tool to attract and increase a company's visibility on the internet. Identifying themes allowed the codes to be grouped into more significant categories and data to be prepared for detailed analysis.

These themes were subsequently reviewed to determine their relationship and relevance to the research work. The analysis provided a comprehensive view of the current marketing efforts and identified areas for improvement. For example, while email marketing is considered effective, according to the general manager, the company is not utilizing social media's full potential due to a lack of strategic focus.

This report is formulated using a thematic analysis based on a semi-structured interview with the CEO of Hospitz Oy. The objective of this analysis was to identify critical directions for improvements in company marketing. The researcher identified three main themes:

Effectiveness in using email marketing. During the interview, it was identified that the CEO identified this as an effective tool. This is especially important considering the limited marketing budget and the need to create a personalized approach to customers (Appendix 1, p.1). However, it is noted that the company cannot objectively evaluate the effectiveness now due to the existence of problems and that there is no person related to marketing (Appendix 1, p.4).

The problem with the use of social media marketing. The CEO notes that there is no social media strategy and no publication calendar with ideas and themes for publications (Appendix 1, p.2). The company has active social media accounts such as Facebook and Instagram. There are no criteria to measure the effectiveness of social media marketing (Appendix 1, p.2).

During discussions about search engine optimization, the respondent identified several key goals for the company: increasing brand awareness and sales. Also, the company actively responds to any changes it identifies when working with search engine optimization. (Appendix 1, p.3).

4.4 Results

The result of this research work is recommendations to improve marketing effectiveness in the company, based on the theoretical framework, conducting semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis. Based on the received and processed information, the following recommendations were given:

Improve the experience of implementing email marketing. Initially, it is necessary to implement key performance indicators. Key performance indicators include email open rates, click-through

rates, and conversions. Through this, the company is able to evaluate how well the mailings are working and what elements need to be corrected. Utilizing email marketing automation tools. Such tools can be used to segment the audience and send emails on birthdays or other occasions. As a result, the company increases customer loyalty and improves brand perception in customers' eyes. Automation helps to improve the degree of personalization when sending emails. Tools can identify more accurate data about a customer based on behavior and previous interactions with the company. The customer noticing that they are being treated in a more personalized way increases the probability of a possible booking at the hotel.

A significant part of search engine optimization is proper usage based on the business's specified requirements and realities. Initially, it is necessary to optimize for mobile devices. This is because users prefer to browse the internet from their phones. The essential element of setting up search engine optimization is the writing of keywords; for this purpose, it is necessary to conduct research to identify keywords that are used by competitors or relevant to the tourism industry. In this case, if the website is not updated for a long time or needs to be updated with relevant information, then search engines can lower the site's position in the search results for keywords.

The necessary part is to develop social media recommendations that the company can utilize. Based on family values, a content strategy that responds to how the brand positions itself in the community needs to be formulated. This includes various videos or photos, as well as articles that showcase the characteristics of the region in which they are located. Implement key performance indicators through the use of automation tools such as Meta Insights and Google Analytics. The company gets real-time, up-to-date information on how effective what they are doing is.

The necessary part of a small business is that the company must be able to analyze and adapt to new realities. Marketing needs to regularly analyze the results of marketing tools to make corrections to the strategy based on the data obtained. The client company should be open to new methods and tools.

4.5 Reliability and validity of the results

When evaluating the reliability and validity of a research study based on semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, it is important to consider both positive and critical aspects of the

data's reliability and validity. This approach allows for a balanced view of the research's quality, considering its strengths and paying attention to its limitations.

The choice of methodology and consistency in the analysis ensure the reliability of the data in this research. The semi-structured interview with the CEO was formulated using a pre-designed set of questions. This structured the data collection process and ensured compatibility with the theoretical part of the study. In addition, the interview was recorded and then transcribed, preventing the risk of losing meaningful information by allowing for multiple re-readings at any research stage.

Meanwhile, the main problem in terms of reliability is the limited data sample. The research is formulated on a single interview with the CEO. Despite the respondent's diversified experience in the tourism industry and ability to manage business processes, his point of view remains subjective. It cannot reflect the completeness of information about the company's marketing activities. In addition, such data's reliability is reduced as it depends on a single source with no validation from other sources or other participants in the companies' marketing processes. In addition, a single interview as a data source increases the risk of a mistake on the part of the CEO due to their preferences or beliefs regarding marketing strategy. In such a case, the reality may not coincide with the opinion voiced by the company owner, thus undermining the validity of the research.

However, the reliability of the data is supported by the fact that the thematic analysis was conducted in six phases. Each phase, from reading the data to report writing, was carefully documented to minimize researcher subjectivity and consistent interpretation of the data. However, the potential for human error in the data analysis process remains a crucial factor, introducing subjective interpretations when coding the data and identifying themes. For example, one of the key themes as a limited role in social media was identified based on the respondent's judgment.

The internal validity of the research was ensured through in-depth work with the data and a semi-structured interview approach. The questions were formulated in an open-ended way, allowing the respondent to express their opinions and provide detailed information. Additional questions improved the quality and completeness of the data collected. In the meantime, a critical aspect is that verifying this information is not always possible. For example, the CEO's claim of the high

effectiveness of email marketing was not supported by any actual data. This means the respondent's opinion is based on personal perception rather than actual performance.

The research's external validity is complicated because the information obtained from thematic analysis is difficult to generalize to other companies. The customer's company is a small hotel, which perceives social networks as less demanding than other tools. Larger companies choose social media as an essential marketing strategy tool. As a result, this data is less universal.

The following measures can be used as possible improvements in the follow-up research: Expand the sample and resort to interviews with other company employees who are qualified in marketing. This provides a variety of opinions and perspectives on marketing strategies. Multiple data collection methods are used to evaluate marketing effectiveness objectively; it is necessary to use actual data such as sales statistics. As a method to increase validity, the marketing strategy of the client company can be compared with other hotel companies of similar size. This allows one to ascertain whether the methods used by the company are unique or common.

5 Conclusions

The research provided a recommendation for developing social media marketing for Hospitz Oy. The development process included analyzing theoretical aspects of digital marketing and conducting a semi-structured interview with the company's owner. The outcome was to identify the main challenges and opportunities for improving marketing in the company.

The key findings illustrated a need to improve the company's content strategy and increase the use of automation tools for marketing. This effectively enables the company to interact with customers. The critical aspect is the use of search engine optimization to increase the visibility of the company's website, considering the preferences of mobile device users.

In conclusion, the proposed recommendations, based on theoretical and practical data, can improve the control and correction of marketing improvements, which will allow the company to achieve sustainable growth and strengthen its position in the market.

Reflection is an essential element when conducting a research paper. The researcher's main goal when writing a thesis is to obtain information about the use of social media for marketing purposes. However, this is because the university provides theoretical knowledge while writing a research paper, which allows the researcher to understand how companies use social media for marketing purposes. Compiling a research paper and a list of references with the included academic article provided valuable experience for the researcher, improving competence in marketing. One consequence of this is an increased understanding of how multiple things can be connected in marketing when it comes to marketing for a small company with limited resources and staff. With the skills and knowledge gained during the research work, the researcher is successfully applied daily.

The different marketing elements made setting up the structure at the beginning difficult, especially considering the theoretical part. The author has chosen to focus on aspects that are familiar to him through university studies and work. This is a good foundation for those who read the study and need to familiarize themselves with marketing. Learning social media's different strategies and theoretical components at some stages made writing a research paper much more effortless.

Because this research was done alone, it was the first long-term project for an author. The main goal was to quickly find relevant information and highlight the main points the data on social media marketing reliably supports. Meanwhile, sorting through the many publications on popular topics served as an excellent exercise to improve skills in finding quality sources that will be useful in the future.

Conducting the research part of the study was a challenging experience for the author. This was because the author needed help with the writing at various stages. Under normal circumstances, there would hardly have been any issues. However, these problems were also due to the limited time to write the research paper. In turn, the author would have preferred to make changes to his paper, which would have been to improve the data quality and provide much more material to enable people to improve their literacy after reading the research paper. One such direction is to conduct various interviews with employees whose opinions were not interviewed in the present work.

In conclusion, the author would like to add that in working on this thesis, the author has learned many things, from business management to marketing processes. The experience gained using scientific research methods will undoubtedly improve current qualifications and prove to be a valuable experience for the author.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Thematic interview with Mikhail Kurepin, CEO of Hospitz Oy. November 2023.

Theme: General Information:

Interviewer: Rate the importance of digital marketing tools for your business on a scale of 1 to 5.

Respondent: The most important for us are email marketing (5 points), search engine optimization (3 points), and social media (2 points).

Interviewer: Explain why the channels are rated this way.

Respondent: E-mail marketing is the most effective for the company, as it provides direct communication with the consumer, allows to learn more detailed preferences of interested customers, and makes a personalized, profitable customer offer, search engine optimization is aimed at attracting new customers on the Internet, plays an important role at the first stage, low trust in social networks due to the slow payback of funds invested in such promotion.

Interviewer: Does your company implement a social media marketing strategy?

Respondent: Currently, we don't have a social media marketing strategy. However, of course, there are certain plans and strategies that we will implement in the future, but not now.

Interviewer: Which social media channels do you use for marketing to reach your target audience?

Respondent: We have accounts on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

Interviewer: What marketing trends have you found most effective and beneficial to your business?

Respondent: I will highlight two trends that have the most influence on the development of our social networks. One is personalized communication with clients, we consider their needs and interests. The second is content marketing, we create high-quality and interesting content, from videos to articles in our social networks.

Interviewer: What role do you play in the life of your organization?

Respondent: I'm a relatively new CEO in the company. The company is currently going through a process of modernization and reform within the company. We have certain issues that we are addressing, including working with marketing. I would say that I play an important role in the life of my organization, because we have a small company, and every member of the team contributes to the development.

Interviewer: What are your company's values?

Respondent: I will highlight three core values that we are focused on. These are family values; we are a family hotel, and it is important to us that our customers are families. Service, we strive to provide the best customer service within our operations, and we demonstrate this in our interactions with our customers. Customer focus is important to any business. Accordingly, we make every effort to ensure that we provide our customers with the best possible vacation experience according to their preferences.

Theme: Social Media Marketing:

Interviewer: How do you evaluate the effectiveness of your marketing strategy to track the correlation between marketing and your company's success?

Respondent: We realize that we can't start taking action to improve our marketing and expect instant results. We try to look at it objectively, based on what we see on a weekly basis: how our social media followers are growing, where our sales are growing, and the impact of our actions.

Interviewer: How do you choose what content to create for social media to capture your audience's attention and motivate them to act?

Respondent: Since we don't have a strategy that defines the spectrum of our development, we try to create content that we are interested in from more experienced players in this business segment. Sometimes these are effective publications, sometimes there are fewer reactions and reviews.

Interviewer: What potential audience would you like to attract?

Respondent: We love any kind of audience. However, we position ourselves as a family hotel for families like us. We are interested in attracting those who want to visit our region and touch Finnish culture.

Interviewer: How do you choose how often you post per week on your corporate social media channels?

Respondent: Depends on what kind of week it is. We try to publish content every few days. However, it depends on how prepared our content is and what we have to offer users. The result is new publications. But there's no content schedule as such that can be defined.

Theme: Search Engine Optimization:

Interviewer: What are your main goals when using search engine optimization?

Respondent: Increase brand awareness, increase sales and retain new and current customers with the company.

Interviewer: What key performance indicators do you look at when working with search engine optimization?

Respondent: We are interested in all the indicators, the most important of which is increased sales. But of course, we also pay attention to the increase in traffic to our website, social media and how conversions are growing. If we see any problems or failures, we try to determine the cause.

Theme: Email Marketing:

Interviewer: Does your company have an email marketing strategy?

Respondent: Yes, we do use email marketing. However, I would not want to go into the details of our strategy for business reasons.

Interviewer: What tools do you use to manage your email marketing?

Respondent: We try to use the most popular ones. I would not say that at the current stage we have stopped at something. We are testing and studying which tools will bring the best results with minimal financial investment.

Interviewer: How would you rate the effectiveness of your current email marketing strategy?

Respondent: I think that at the current stage of our company's development, we are at the point where we cannot objectively assess the effectiveness of email marketing. There are some problems which relate to the fact that we do not have a person responsible for marketing, and we do everything on our own.