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GROWTH HACKING A GLOBAL COMMUNITY

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Bachelor's thesis
Spring 2015
Degree Programme in International
Business
Liiketalouden koulutusohjelma
Oulu University of Applied Sciences

ABSTRACT

Oulu University of Applied Sciences
International Business, Liiketalouden koulutusohjelma

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Title of thesis: Growth hacking a global community

Supervisor(s): Outi Sutinen

Term and year when the thesis was submitted: Spring 2015 Number of pages: 60

As technology is developing at a fast phase people are engaging in community activities more and more online, either by extending their offline social life or by creating themselves a whole new parallel life as a member of virtual community. Companies behind communities are rivaling for attention and need to come up with increasingly clever tactics to attract and engage new members.

In this thesis the relatively new phenomenon of growth hacking, the use of unconventional methods in order to reach rapid growth, is being researched through benchmarking three different case companies: Spotify, Google Student Ambassador Program and BuzzFeed. Social and community theories are used to support the study and to find solutions on how to engage new members and keep them active. The aim is to provide the commissioner, ZEF, new ideas and inspiration and to justify the use of growth hacking as a marketing tool for a new global online community.

The research is qualitative and uses desktop study and literature sources as its tools. Highly valuable sources of information are the personal interviews and discussions conducted with community specialist Dr. Tiago Ferreira Lopes and Google Student Ambassador Mr. Ha Luong. Main findings of the study include the relationship between growth hacking and data, and the potential of growth hacking when implemented correctly. Another important notion is that by finding the few right key people to concentrate on the audience multiplies. Thus growth hacking tactic does not necessarily have to focus on masses. When it comes to engaging community members, a vital finding was made: an online community cannot be built without member contribution. What a company can do is to build suitable frames to support the activities through which members create the sense of community.

Keywords: growth hacking, benchmarking, online community, engaging members

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1 INTRODUCTION

The internet and online world are developing at a fast phase. People are creating and joining communities in cyber space and forming themselves another parallel life online. Companies and organizations have acknowledged this and are taking advantage of it. Rapidly increasing selection of communities makes it difficult for people to choose, and even more difficult for companies to stand out from the crowd. During the recent years small start-up companies have come up with more and more clever 'hacks' for growth-centered marketing, leading to invention of the term growth hacking. The aim of this thesis is to search for inspiration and best practices for our commissioner, ZEF.

1.1 Commissioner

ZEF is an Oulu-based IT -company providing different kinds of tools for companies as a cloud service. The company was founded in 1997 with their goal of supporting democracy in the world and being "the number one decision helping community with billion fans".

Their software includes tools to help decision making. In 2006 the most popular VotingAid app was created for the Presidential Elections in Finland. After that the popularity of their software has grown creating the most widely used chat software in Finland and the most popular quizzes. In 2012 ZEF received its international breakthrough with VotingAid tool. It has since been used in many international elections such as the USA's Presidential Elections in 2012 and in British General Elections in spring 2015. In 2014 ZEF's turnover was 2,2 million euros.

To briefly introduce the software, *VotingAid* is a decision making tool created to help and engage voters. It is currently the most popular tool in the world for that purpose. It is used for example in parliamentary and presidential elections to help voters choose the most suitable candidate for them. For candidates, *VotingAid* provides a platform to express their political opinions. How it works is that both candidates and voters answer the questions of *VotingAid* and in the end voter gets a list of most suitable candidates based on his answers. In this spring 2015 *VotingAid* is used in the Finnish Parliamentary Elections widely since 90% of the voting tools online are provided by ZEF.

Matchit is a tool for creating different kinds of product selectors and tests. It can be used as an online salesman or for making a market survey or pricing counter. With *ZEFsurvey* one can create and send different kind of surveys. This tool can be used for example for measuring teamwork or to create a customer survey or employee survey. *LiveZhat* is an online customer service tool which helps businesses connect their site visitors. It enables serving customers real-time, boosting sales and getting statistics and data about the visitors in webpage.

ZEF has a very unique corporate culture. Their core values are love, passion and bravery and all actions from recruitment to business decisions are based on those. All 32 employees are called ZEF Warriors and whole organization is considered as a family. ZEF has offices - or Warriors' Caves as they like to call them - in Oulu and Espoo. The young and innovative team of 'ZEF Warriors' is highly aware of the newest trends in their field of business. This is what brings us in front of a challenge: how to provide something new for a team of up-to-date professionals? ZEF is currently planning on building a global community revolving around tests. Regarding this they commissioned us to research growth hacking and its usefulness and to find ways to activate new members. Due to confidentiality towards our commissioner we have agreed not to describe their plans in more detail.

1.2 Research questions and objectives

When discussing with ZEF's Creativity Professor about our commission, he especially wanted us to create a piece of good reading for the whole company, something that would point out the usefulness of growth hacking and act as an idea bank for marketing a global online community. There was also one specific subject in mind that needed some research and possible solutions: when new members join the community, what can be done in order to keep them active and interested? After this discussion our two research questions were formed:

1. Why would it be successful to growth hack?
2. How to activate a newborn community member?

For us there was only one possible research method in mind that would perfectly fit these two goals: benchmarking. Out of the research tools that can be used to justify solutions, benchmarking was the one that allowed the most creativity and inspiration creation.

1.3 Key terms

The key terms for this thesis are growth hacking, online communities and benchmarking. Growth hacking is defined as a marketing technique which aims at rapid growth by using unconventional, usually inexpensive methods that have special focus on virality. Growth hacker as a professional is basically a marketer with a programmer-designer twist; in today's world this is the essential combination for viral online marketing (Holiday 2013, 20; Chenn 2012).

An online or virtual community exists in the cyber space. It focuses on interaction between its participants while emphasizing their relationship and the role of IT, by which its activities are supported. (Bock & Yap 2005. Cited 30.3.2015.)

Benchmarking, on the other hand, is a research method focusing on something that has already been done – it is all about learning from others. Traditionally in benchmarking targets are being researched in order to determine the best performers and the gap between their performance and yours. The best practices of those who perform the best are examined and usually adapted into use in order to lift performance to at least the same level. (Stapenhurst 2009, 5-6.)

These three key terms will be explained further in the following chapters.

1.4 Method of research

In this thesis we will benchmark in-depth some of the biggest agents of the industry, which we know have had interesting growth hacking styled tactics leading them towards success. Our chosen method is qualitative in nature, using desktop study, literary sources and interviews as its tools.

Due to their different nature, combining growth hacking and benchmarking can be seen challenging. We believe however that it is the flexibility of benchmarking that makes it possible. In benchmarking there is always comparison and interest towards how others operate, but all the other aspects are open (Karjalainen 2002). We believe there is a lot to be learnt, even if we did not want to adapt or copy any procedures as such.

2 GROWTH HACKING

Growth hacking is a relatively new term in marketing world. The term itself explains that the aim of this method is to create growth. However, the methods used to reach this goal are exceptional and demand a very special type of marketer to implement them. In the next chapter we will explain more in detail what a growth hacker is, how this method is used in marketing and how it differs from traditional marketing.

2.1 Definition

Growth hacking is a marketing method that aims for as rapid growth as possible. This technique is different from traditional marketing in a way that there is no budget required necessarily or it can be done with a very low budget. Also the tools and methods used are very different. The attitude of using new, experimental ways is one of the determining factors in all growth hacking definitions. (Nykänen 2014.)

There are many different definitions about what a growth hacker is and what this person does. The term growth hacking was developed by technology start-ups. It integrated into California's Silicon Valley's corporate culture, where the emphasis was put on the fact that coding and technical chops are now an essential part of being a great marketer. That being said, Ryan Holiday (2013, 20) defines a growth hacker as a combination of a programmer, designer and a marketer. Also Andrew Chen (2012) mentions in his article that growth hacker is a hybrid of marketer and coder. Brody Hartley (2012. Cited 5.3.2015.), the growth hacker of HubSpot, on the other hand wants to highlight the term coder and give less emphasis on the term marketer. He sees his major responsibilities as a growth hacker are to ensure more visits, leads and customers through the tools he builds, and to find the ongoing trends and statistics from the hard data. However it has to be taken into consideration that their marketing does not focus on creating a viral loop. The definition seems to vary depending on the company needs.

When a start-up company is aiming for the markets, the first thing it needs is growth. This is what a growth hacker does. Every tactic, strategy or initiative is driven by the hopes of growing. A growth hacker is not a replacement for a traditional marketer, it is just different. When a focus is

kept on growth, it gives the opportunity to create new methods, tools and practices that are not included in traditional marketing. (Patel & Taylor 2013.)

The term growth hacking is descriptive. First part of the word refers to the pursuit of extreme growth, whereas the ending 'hack' can be understood either as a compliment or an insult. If you do something in an ugly way it is called a hack. When you do something clever, innovative and even manage to break the system that is also called a hack. But what these two have in common is that they break the rules. (Paulgraham 2004. Cited 20.4.2015.)

One of the biggest growth hacking stories was created by email server Hotmail. In 1996 at the end of every email the Hotmail team added a simple phrase "PS. I love you". This tactic proved itself successful hence 18 months later Hotmail had 12 million users. At that time the whole internet had only 20 million users. More to the story, one email sent to India by one of the Hotmail team founders increased the user amount up to 300 000 in India in three weeks only. (Digitalistnetwork 2014. Cited 10.5.2015)

2.2 Methods used

The statement "thinking outside the box" would be accurate, though maybe even understatement when used of growth hacking. In growth hacking, no traditional marketing tools are used. Those would include for example advertising in newspapers and other printed material, broadcasting for example via television, direct mail or telemarketing (Marketing Schools 2012. Cited 26.12.2014).

Experimenting with new methods

Although growth hackers' aim is the same as most marketers', they use basically everything else besides traditional marketing. Low budget, new innovative ideas and as mentioned earlier, programming are all a part of growth hacking. A growth hacker uses methods that are testable, tractable and scalable; everything has to be able to be measured. Those tools include emails, pay-per-click ads, blogs and platform APIs (application programming interfaces). (Holiday 2013, 18.)

Not playing by the traditional playbook of marketing, a growth hacker is given an opportunity to invent and operate their own self-propagating growth machine that can take a start-up from

nothing to something. (Holiday 2013, 18.) Instead of taking the time to strategize a marketing plan, growth hacker tests different methods to find out what works. (Yahoo! Finance 2015. Cited 10.5.2015.)

Financing

Another major difference between traditional marketing and growth hacking is money. All print, telemarketing and advertising campaigns used in traditional marketing need financing. Growth hacking uses little or no budget at all; some companies that are nowadays huge billion dollar companies, such as Spotify, Pinterest and Groupon, started with no money and no experience (Holiday 2013, 12). Because they had no access to budget or proper training, they needed to get creative to immense advantage. (Fastcompany, 2012. Cited 5.1.2015.) Instead of purchasing banner ads, the companies who growth hack build features that encourage viral sharing to friends and colleagues. (Wired 2013. Cited 5.1.2015.)

Viral marketing and word of mouth

In viral marketing, a company or its products and services are promoted through persuasive message, which is planned to spread online from person to person. In the beginning viral marketing was started by email, but since that governmental restrictions regarding email advertising have tightened. Newsletters are used as an extension to email, and can be very effective if they include valuable information. Video clips on website can keep interest up and increase traffic. (Kirby&Marsden 2006, XVIII.)

Even though growth hacking often relies on virality, it has to be taken into consideration that one viral post does not make it a hack. A hack is something that creates long-term benefits for the company, like in the Hotmail case mentioned earlier. Sometimes something has gone viral by accident and not as a result of intentional testing which makes it impossible to multiply. (Digitalistnetwork 2014. Cited 10.5.2015.)

Word of mouth is one form of viral marketing and it uses similar tools. In word of mouth marketing the aim is to get people talk positively about the company, its products or services. The rapid uptake of digital media has enabled messages to spread faster and more exponentially than ever before. Blogs, social networks, chat rooms, forums and other technologies provided are the most significant contributors to the growth of word of mouth marketing. (Digitalistnetwork 2014. Cited 10.5.2015.)

The process

Every marketing process starts with defining and focusing on a narrow and actionable goal. This is very crucial since the first mistake can be too broad a goal, which can make the task meaningless. The goal needs to be broken into smaller tasks to achieve the desired end result, growth. (Patel & Taylor 2013.)

The picture below is set as an example of a goal that has been broken into smaller tasks. It presents the method on how to increase daily active users (later referred to as DAU) for a product. That as a goal is too broad, so it needs to be broken into smaller achievable goals. In this case what you want to do is to grow the whole start-up and DAU. But those goals alone are again too broad. Instead, growing DAU by two is more appropriate: as a goal it is much more clear and achievable. It can also be measured, which is one of the defining factors in growth hacking. (Patel & Taylor 2013.) First the focus needs to be on helping current customers create content by themselves. Numbers show that when someone becomes a content creator within your product their activity on the page increases greatly. That leads to retention which leads to increased DAU. (idib.)

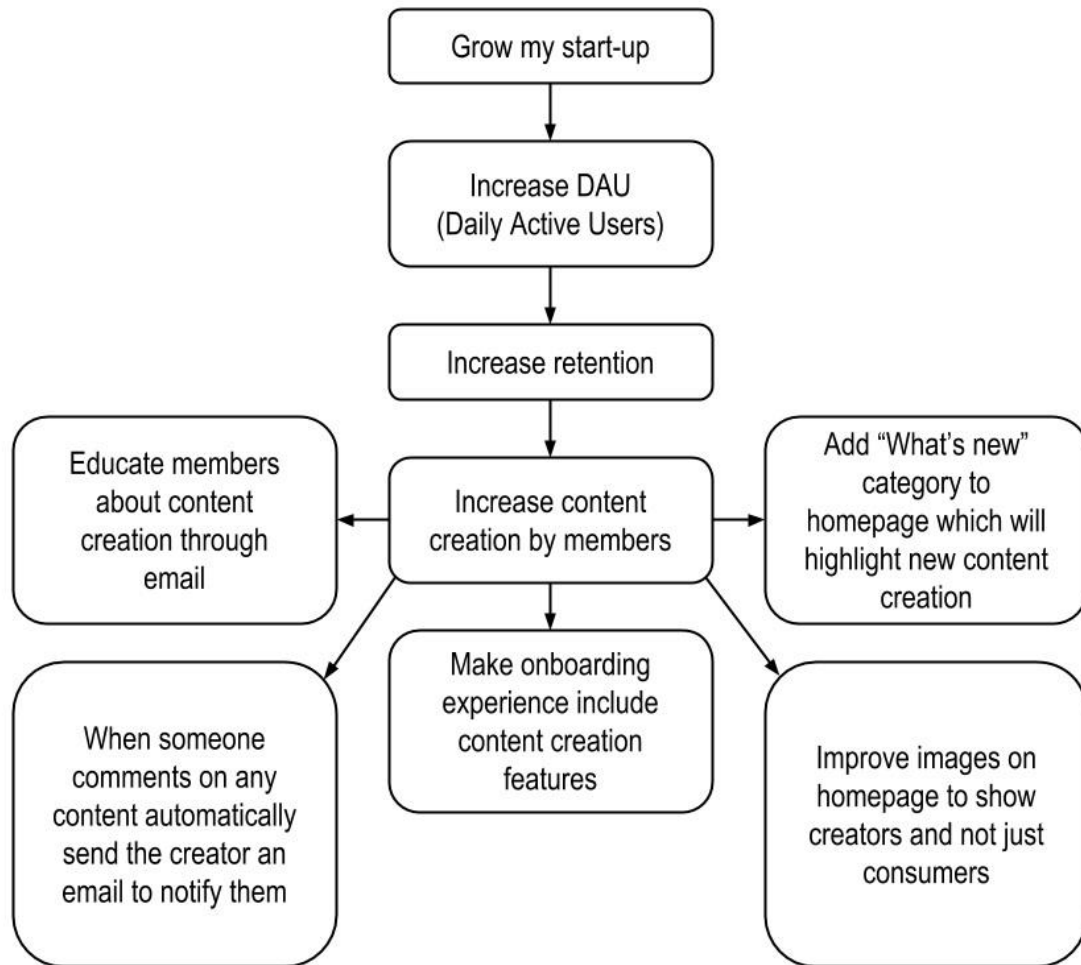


FIGURE 1: Defining actionable goals (Patel & Taylor 2013).

The role of Web 2.0 and online communities

Growth hacking can be seen as a result of the development of internet and its usage. The revolution of so-called Web 2.0 concept plays a big role here. What is meant by Web 2.0 is the current 'new' type of internet techniques that enables users create their own content and act interactively online. Once again this enables for example social media, blogs and other types of online communities. The perks of having community activities on website include increased return rate, time spent and overall traffic on page. This may lead to increased sales and ROI (return on investment). (Zimmermann 2009, 134.)

3 ONLINE COMMUNITIES

Online communities and social theories behind them being such a new topic for us, we started our research by seeking new insight and expert knowledge. We had a chance to do an interview with ZEF's VotingAid professor Mr. Tiago Ferreira Lopes who has a Ph.D. in International Relations and is an expert in community theories. He also gave us the idea that although we are discovering answers to our research questions it is also very important to figure out more questions for the next researchers to discover. We had a rewarding discussion with him and he gave us plenty of information and resources to discover, especially regarding community theories. His interview can be found in the appendix. In this chapter we will discuss how online communities are formed and why people are joining them.

3.1 Definition and classifications

The most cited definitions of virtual communities date back almost two decades. Based on these definitions by Rheingold (1993), Hagel and Armstrong (1997) and Jones and Rafaeli (2000) a combined definition can be identified. A virtual community exists in the cyber space and focuses on interaction between its participants while emphasizing their relationship and the role of IT, by which its activities are supported. It is sometimes divided into two different types, work-related community and social community, the latter focusing for example on games, entertainment or special interest. (Bock & Yap 2005. Cited 30.3.2015.)

There are also several other kinds of classifications for virtual communities. A popular example of a content-based classification is that of Stanoevska-Slabeva and Schmidt based on their 2001 study. In their model virtual communities are divided into discussion communities, goal oriented communities, virtual worlds and hybrids. *Discussion communities* are further on divided into direct person-to-person communities such as relationship communities, topic oriented communities such as a sports discussion group, communities of practice for professionals of certain field and indirect communication communities such as Trip Advisor's review community. *Goal oriented communities* are divided into design communities such as open source communities, online learning communities and finally transaction communities such as Etsy, which includes interactive

buying and selling. *Virtual worlds* usually revolve around games whereas a *hybrid community* is a combination of two or more of the previously stated types. (Äkkinen 2005, 11-12.)

3.2 Sense of virtual community

According to Blanchard and Markus (2004, 66-77), building an online community is not just about creating a virtual place for people to meet. In order to build an actual community alongside a bare virtual settlement, a set of community-like processes and behavior are needed. A true virtual community may thus be difficult to create under commercial purposes. In order to become a genuine functioning community, a *sense of community* (referred to as SOC) is needed. The concept of SOC has been discussed among community theorists since the 1960s, because it has benefits that would otherwise not exist. According to a study by MacMillan and Chavis, these benefits include satisfaction and commitment which further on increase involvement in the community activities. (Blanchard and Markus 2004, 66-67.)

MacMillan and Chavis (1986) created a framework for describing the dimensions of sense of community. This was however more applicable on actual communities instead of virtual ones, which led to Blanchard and Markus conducting a study on virtual community MSN in order to identify the dimensions of *sense of virtual community* (referred to as SOVC). MSN, or Multiple Sports Newsgroup, was a group for those people who are interested in multiple sports such as triathlon. It was an asynchronous way of communication with members typing their posts, such as questions on specific subject, and others reading them later. In the study three types of members were identified among the 17,000 members. *Leaders* were the core group of three to five members who also did most of the maintenance activities in the group, 260 *participants* were the ones who posted messages but were not identified as leaders, while the remaining majority of the members were not posting at all and were thus considered as *lurkers*. Both public participation (posts in group) and private participation (private messages to individual members) were examined. Based on this study Blanchard and Markus created their framework for dimensions of SOVC. (Blanchard & Markus 2004, 71-74.) Below is a table comparing these two frameworks, after which we will further explain these aspects as described in the original study. As the theory on sense of virtual community is based on this one study only, it needs to be remembered that some of the aspects derive from the nature of MSN community and might vary on other virtual communities.

TABLE 1. Comparison of SOC and SOVC (Blanchard and Markus 2004, 75).

| Sense of community by MacMillan & Chavis 1986 | Sense of virtual community by Blanchard & Markus 2004 |
|--|--|
| <p><i>Feeling of membership</i> Member's feeling of belonging to, and identifying with, the community</p> | <p><i>Recognition</i> Recognizing other members, for example their names in postings</p> |
| <p><i>Feeling of influence</i> The feeling of having influence on and being influenced by the community</p> | <p><i>Not applicable</i></p> |
| <p><i>Integration and fulfillment of needs</i> The feeling of supporting others and being supported by them within the community</p> | <p><i>Exchanging support</i> Information exchange seen as the most important behavior. Socio-emotional support privately with separate members.</p> |
| <p><i>Shared emotional connection</i> Feelings of relationship, shared history and community spirit</p> | <p><i>Emotional attachment</i> Various levels of attachment. Influenced by member's activity level and perception of personal benefit.</p> |
| | <p><i>Obligation</i> Different levels of obligation on different member activity levels.</p> |
| <p><i>Not applicable</i></p> | <p><i>Creation of identity and the identification</i> Members create themselves an identity that is accepted by other members. Different levels of identification from recognizing names to anticipating certain behavior.</p> |
| | <p><i>Relationships with individual community members</i> Relationships were observed or formed depending on member's activity level. Every activity level saw relationships as an important part of community.</p> |

In traditional sense of community framework by MacMillan and Chavis, *feeling of membership* arises for example from boundaries established by community, member's feeling of belonging, personal investment on community and common system of symbols. The MSN study revealed that in virtual communities the feeling of membership stems from *recognizing* other members of community, starting from others' names on postings. *Identity and identification* in SOVC on the other hand did not match SOC feeling of membership, even though it is recognition taken further. What distinguishes the two theories regarding this aspect is that in SOC framework identity was about sharing the group identity, whereas in SOVC about individuation from the group identity – acquiring an identity that separates you from the other members so you can be identified. An example of establishing an identity is to add a signature file, something that is shown below member's every post on message board, or a witty quote at the end of the post. (Blanchard & Markus 2004, 67-75.)

Feeling of influence in sense of community is something that was lacking from the sense of virtual community in MSN study. One possible explanation for this is that MSN has norms established to the point where members are not any more aware of influencing and being influenced. Even those members that could be given a leader status were barely referred to as a core group. It is possible that feeling of influence has been present in the early days of MSN, when norms were not yet strongly established. (ibid. 75.)

The equivalent for *integration and fulfillment* of SOC was *exchanging support* in MSN study. Members felt there was both informational and socio-emotional support present, the latter one appearing more in private participation. Informational support, getting answers to your questions, was considered to be the most important support the group could offer. Even lurkers, the ones who did not post themselves, felt they got informational support when they saw the answers they were looking for in someone else's post. (ibid. 72-75.)

Emotional attachment and obligation in MSN study were the evidence of *shared emotional connection* which in traditional SOC was perceived through relationships, mutual history and the community spirit. The main affecters to emotional attachment were the member's activity level and perceived amount of benefits received. When it comes to obligation, it was more personally felt by leaders rather than participants or lurkers. Despite this, the two latter groups identified the

obligations leaders had toward the community and considered their dedication as an important part of the community's functioning. (ibid. 72-73.)

In MSN study those members who had a stronger sense of virtual community, saw this as a result of personal friendships they had created within the community mostly through private messaging. Also those members, including lurkers, who didn't form relationships, reported having seen them happening between other members and admitted the importance of relationships to strength of the community. What separates these cyber relationships from the real world relationships is their stronger influence on the sense of community. Relationships help anonymous virtual settlements develop into true virtual communities. (Blanchard & Markus 2004, 72-75.) On Abraham H. Maslow's classic theory on human motivation, also known as Maslow's hierarchy of needs, personal relationships contribute to feeling of belonging and love which are a basic psychological human need behind motivation. (Maslow 1943, 380-381.)

The exchange of support and creating identities and identification can be seen as community-like behavior. Third of the same kind that was also strongly present in MSN was the production of trust. Trust was promoted through a norm of using one's real name somewhere visible in his profile, and by discussing online about the face-to-face meetings some members had had. As members reported having more relationships in MSN than some other online communities, they felt they have to probe their trustworthiness by considering carefully what they post. Thus it can be concluded that these three processes increase the sense of community and therefore strengthen the commitment of members. (Blanchard & Markus 2004, 73-74.)

3.3 Theories on active membership

There are various reasons for people to belong and contribute to online communities. Based on these reasons researchers have come up with roughly three different types of theories explaining this behavior.

Economic theories

The resource-based model for online social structures highlights the importance of perceived benefits to the member and their ratio towards resources sacrificed. The main resources of members of social structure are time, energy, attention and knowledge. The benefits include opportunities to influence people and form relationships, the exchange of social support, sharing

of ideas and inspiration and collective activities such as political action. If membership and contribution sacrifice more resources than there are benefits, increasing number of members choose to leave the community instead of staying. On the other hand, when the benefits are greater than the sacrifices, a community will create value for its members resulting as satisfaction and even growth. Continued involvement of individuals needs to be seen as the basic pillar of a social structure even if its purpose was commercial, such as developing market for a product. (Butler 2001, 346.)

Studies of online communities have shown that in online social structures such as discussion boards incentives are needed in order to increase member contribution. In their study of discussion boards Gu and Järvenpää (2003) found out that incentives such as status titles for members with certain amounts of contributions (for example title *expert* for those with more than one hundred postings) help increase member's activity. But what they also pointed out was it is not just the incentives that increase the amount of contribution, but also the competition these incentives provoke. Examples of such incentives that stimulate competition include for example weekly lists for top competitors. (Gu & Järvenpää 2003, 111.)

Social theories

Beside economic there are also social reasons why people contribute within communities, both offline and online. One classic theory in sociology is called the social exchange theory, which was first introduced and developed in the late 1950's. According to social exchange theory people contribute out of reciprocity; they expect to get a social reward, such as approval or respect, in return. This expectation motivates them to use their time and knowledge beyond equilibrium predicted in the economic models. (Gu & Järvenpää, 2003, 111; Äkkinen 2005, 25.)

Another perspective, the social identity theory by Tajfel and Turner (1979), relies more on individual's identification within a group he belongs to. The stronger sense of unity community members have, the more likely they are to cooperate and more motivated to contribute. (Gu & Järvenpää 2003, 112.)

Interest-based theories

There are various theories presenting different ways on how to classify interest-based reasons on belonging and contributing to online communities. Wasko and Faraj (2000) have divided these reasons to three groups: tangible returns, intangible returns and community interest. Tangible

reasons are something concrete, for example getting answer to a specific question or general usefulness. Intangible reasons are more abstract and personal, such as self-actualization, personal learning experience or entertainment. Community interest reasons relate to being able to share knowledge interactively which is specifically important in professions where most interaction with colleagues happens online. People have the need to give back to the community in order to keep it active and functioning. This is the most altruistic of these three reasons. (Äkkinen 2005, 31-32.)

Another more specific division is the so called value-interest framework by Äkkinen and Tuunainen (2005). As can be seen from the table below, in this framework four different values are highlighted and all of these can be observed from both self-interest and community-interest perspectives. *Purposive values* are those that serve for example the purpose of sharing information: from the self-interest viewpoint it is the actions of receiving and sharing information, whereas community-wise it could be for example a collective task of gathering a mutual common questions topic to serve every member. *Self-discovery values* are those of self-actualization and learning, while from community perspective they can be seen as a need to belong to a group. *Social enhancement values* include building a status and receiving approvement and appraisal, but also the formation of personal relationships online. When talking about community-interest these turn into peer support and reciprocity. Entertainment values are a way to spend time and relax, but in order to be able to do that within a community there needs to be involvement from other members too – thus a community-interest example could be for example multi-user online games. (Äkkinen 2005, 33-35.)

TABLE 2. Value-interest framework for reasons to join and belong to online communities (Äkkinen 2005, 34).

| Value \ Interest | Self-interest | Community-interest |
|--------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| Purposive values | – Receiving and sharing information | – Performing a collective task |
| Self-discovery | – Reflecting own thoughts – Learning | – Need to belong to a group |
| Social enhancement | – Appraisal and status – Online acquaintances | – Peer support – Reciprocity |
| Entertainment | – Way to spend free-time – Relaxing | – Multi-user online games |

As a conclusion, there are many factors which create the sense of virtual community and separate the community from a bare settlement. The main factors based on the MSN study are the exchange of support, creating identities, identification from others and production of trust. Without this sense of virtual community the community does not exist.

Members also need to be engaged and encouraged to actively contribute to the functioning of the community. Therefore it is important to recognize why people want to belong to communities. These reasons can be categorized into economic reasons such as benefits and incentives, and social reasons such as reciprocity and sense of unity. Third type of theory categorizes the reasons based on member's interests, a very throughout example of this being the value-interest framework by Äkkinen and Tuunainen. A community has to understand and answer to members' needs in order to keep them active.

4 BENCHMARKING

One of the goals of this study was to provide inspiration and new ideas for our commissioner ZEF regarding growth hacking a global community. Benchmarking seemed the most reasonable research method due to its flexible nature; it enables certain creativity and on the other hand suits well the original idea of an idea bank.

Our chosen style of benchmarking falls somewhere between competitive and functional. Since we wanted to provide the best possible ideas and inspiration we carefully selected our three companies to study: Google Student Ambassador Program, Spotify and BuzzFeed. Being among the industry leaders they are all big and international, but that is where ZEF, and the whole concept of growth hacking for that matter, ultimately aims at. We also wanted to keep the same industry and the community aspect in order to give an answer to our second research question “How to activate a newborn community member?”

The most important data collection methods in this research were desktop study and literary sources, since the companies researched were difficult to reach for example via email. We had however agreed on an interview with one Google Student Ambassador and got valuable information from it. This type of benchmarking with no partners, meaning targets or competitors not knowing they are being researched, is called shadow benchmarking (McGonagle & Vella 1999, 56).

4.1 Definition

Benchmarking is a research method built on the concept of ‘learning from others’. It always includes comparison and interest towards how others operate, everything else being open and flexible (Karjalainen 2002, 1). Benchmarking focuses on comparing practices of the best performers in order to find ways to improve your own performance. Usually it is most reasonable and useful to compare against your competitors or industry leaders. (Stapenhurst 2009, 3-4.)

It was first Xerox in the 1970’s that developed benchmarking into an efficient company performance improvement tactic by investigating their desired business operations one by one.

Their goal was to find the best performer of each of those areas and learn from them in order to reach superiority in every field. Since that benchmarking has been widely adapted as part of established business life all around the world. (Stapenhurst 2009, 8-10.)

As can be seen from the figure 1 below, benchmarking in its basic form consists of two phases. First phase is to benchmark the performance of others and you in order to determine the best performers, their best practices and the gap between their performance and yours. In the second phase some of the identified practices and new ideas that stem from them are adopted to your company in order to improve performance levels. It is however to be noted that benchmarking is not about copying what others do as such, but using that information for molding new ideas and methods that suit your company and purposes (ibid., 5-6). To put it more simple, you first find and define the benchmarks of performance and set your goals according to them. Then you will apply newly found ideas and practices in order to reach those goals. (Karjalainen 2002, 4.)

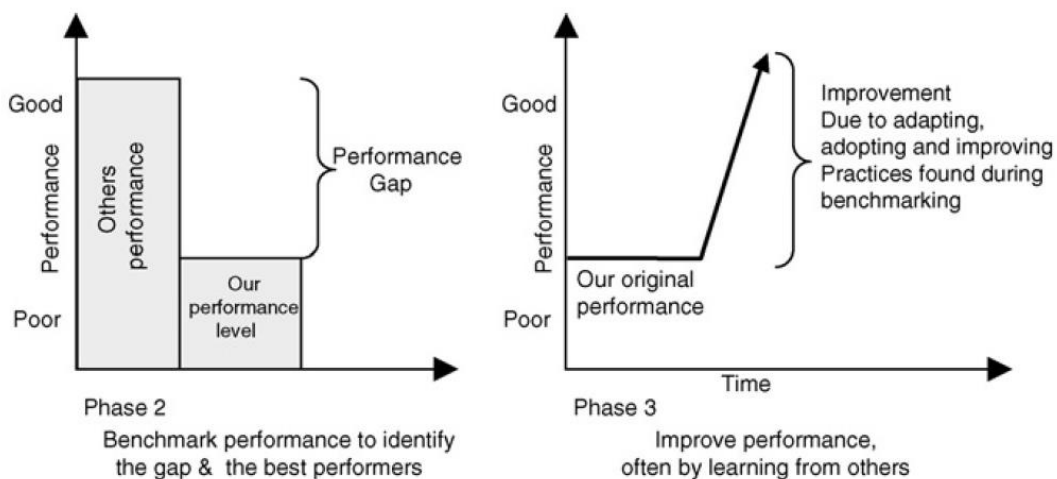


FIGURE 2. Phases of benchmarking (Stapenhurst 2009, 5).

As previously stated, benchmarking as a method is relatively flexible. The actual evaluation and learning process no doubt require information retrieval of the reference companies, but the methods for gathering this information vary. Some classic methods include questionnaires and company visits; Xerox paid several visits to the companies researched in order to study their practices. In some cases company visits are not necessary or even possible. This is a situation where desktop study, previous studies and other literary sources form the foundation of information retrieval. (Stapenhurst 2009, 19-20, 45-46.)

4.2 Types of benchmarking

There is a great variation on classifications of benchmarking mainly depending on the source. For example in her 2003 study Paula Kyrö came up with a model of three factors, the benchmarker, a target and a partner, and six categories which interactively are able to form 27 different options.

The division presented below was first invented by Robert Camp in 1989. Since that many new types have been discussed, although according to a study new additions still seem to fall in these four categories when closely inspected. (Smith et al. 1999, 59.)

It should be remembered that as already stated, benchmarking is relatively open and flexible meaning these types can be mixed and combined freely in order to best suit the purpose of the study.

Internal

Internal benchmarking compares the practices within an organization in order to find the best performing unit and aim to improve the rest to meet the same level and standards. Since in internal benchmarking you only study your own company, you might get short on new extraverted ideas. (Elmuti & Kathawala 1997, 231-232.) In some cases internal benchmarking is used as a basis for beginning an external study, three types of which are presented as follows.

Competitive

In competitive benchmarking you study your direct competitors. What makes it challenging is that in most cases they are not willing to hand over information and voluntarily take part in your study which ultimately aims at you improving your position at their expense. (ibid., 232.)

BuzzFeed, our third researched company can be seen as a potential future competitor regarding their community features. This is where our functional viewpoint mixes with competitive type of benchmarking.

Functional

Functional benchmarking, also known as industry benchmarking, is an external study of the best performers or functions within the industry. In this type of benchmarking the companies studied may be more willing to share information, since it is not a matter of competition but more like a partnership with mutual benefits. The problem is however, that industry leaders tend to be busy, meaning they might not have the time for involvement from their side. (Elmuti & Kathawala 1997,

232.) This is the same challenge we faced when choosing such large companies as our case companies. We could not rely on getting sufficient answers to our emails which is why we needed to be prepared to find the correct information elsewhere.

Generic

Generic or process benchmarking can be done to companies from totally different industries, since it concentrates on similar processes between organizations. It is considered to be highly effective when carried out properly, but the challenge is that it demands good understanding of the procedures and business processes as a whole. (Elmuti & Kathawala 1997, 232.)

In September 2014 Google Analytics brought back its benchmarking tool for companies. Those Analytics users who allow anonymous data collection will in return see benchmarking reports from the same field of industry. The report shows the trends of the industry in general, and can be specified location-, channel or device-wise. This means you can compare for example your website's bounce rate (if a visitor leaves the page immediately after entering) or session quantity (amount of visits to the page) against the industry in general. Specifying location enables you to see how you attract visitors for example from the US compared to other companies. By specifying certain channel you get to know whether you are doing better or worse than others when it comes to for example email campaigns. Device setting gives you information on how you are doing with for example mobile users, again compared to other companies from the same industry. (DeMers 2014; Waisberg 2014.) Google Analytics already had this feature, although a more primitive version, in 2008. In a few years it was transformed into a benchmarking newsletter, which was kind of like going back in development. Now that this feature has made a successful return we want to highlight the tool as modernization of an old and even sometimes unintentionally heavy research method. It is a perfect example of the flexibility of benchmarking.

4.3 Why benchmark?

Benchmarking can be seen as a short-cut to improvement, since it points directly towards the current best practices; one does not need to spend that much time on the process of analyzing, trial and error. It also gives insight on the realistic improvement percentages to aim at. (Stapenhurst 2009, 12.) In the case of growth hacking this is of course problematic, since growth hacking is all about finding a new even revolutionary way of doing things – not copying or even

adopting other companies' practices. We believe however, that via benchmarking there are sources of inspiration to be found.

Benchmarking is often used to solve a certain problem or to justify a solution that has already been considered. In this case, companies with a similar problem or solution are examined carefully in order to find the best practices and possibly justify whether or not you should go on with the solution planned. (Stapenhurst 2009, 13.) We chose to study three different kinds of growth hacking stories through benchmarking. These three vary from each other from product to methods used to their final goal achieved, but we agree that this is a perfect mix of examples on well-used growth hacking tactics. *Spotify* is a company that our commissioner requested us to research. Its growth story is interesting since Spotify started with barely any financing but has grown to become a multimillion dollar company. Our commissioner wanted us to find out their techniques and strategies on how this growth was created. *Google Student Ambassador Program* on the other hand was chosen due to its clever way of using enthusiastic students as messengers of the company. We also personally know a student who has worked as a GSA so we knew we could get true insight to the topic through an interview. Since our research focuses on online community building particularly, for the third case we decided to choose a company which has done exactly that. *Buzzfeed* might be ZEFs biggest competitor when it comes to online communities revolving around tests. They have managed to build a community that users want to be part of, and where users want to share with the community and to be heard.

5 GOOGLE STUDENT AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

The Google Student Ambassador Program (later on referred to as GSA Program) is created for students who are given an opportunity to act as liaisons between Google and their universities. In this program the students chosen learn about Google products and programs. They also plan and host events on campus and act as a campus contact for Google teams. This way the students help Google to better understand each university's culture. The length of the duty is one school year. (Google for Education 2014. Cited 3.1.2015.) Both parties benefit for students get to network, develop their leadership and communicational skills and Google gets promoted virally.

This project has developed a lot since its starting. It actually started as the "Google Pizza Program" where the main idea involved the ambassadors buying pizza for their fellow computer scientist peers around deadlines and tough times. That helped Google to create buzz around the company and form ties with top-level-talented programmers, who the organization would later on love to recruit. By giving out free pizza Google bonded with their future consumers and established a base for good recruitments. (Parcell 2014. Cited 3.4.2015.)

In the US, Latin America and Europe selection is only done via nomination. In other areas students interested can apply to the program by filling in an online application on Google for Education website (application periods vary). The students chosen need to be involved in their school communities, excited about technology and enthusiastic about Google and familiar with their products. They need to be full-time undergraduate or postgraduate students and have to be available to spend 10 hours every month on Google evangelist work. There are students from varying majors. (Google for Education 2014. Cited 3.1.2015.)

5.1 Interview with Mr. Ha Luong

To do more research on how the GSA Program works in practice we decided to interview someone who has been working as Google Ambassador. We met Mr. Ha Luong in fall 2013 during our exchange semester in Hanoi Vietnam where he told us about his participation to this project. We wanted to find out what he has gotten out of this project and how Google has

benefited from his participation. This interview with ten carefully selected questions was concluded via email and can be found as an appendix.

From Mr. Ha Luong's interview it was clear that support for the theories of SOC and SOVC was found in his experience while working as an ambassador. In case like Google the community extends to both online and offline worlds and thus parts of both theories become valid.

Mr. Luong mentions that he supports Google and could not imagine what his life would be without it. He has also created very tight relationships with other GSAs. They care and help each other with many things and in his words this has created a true sense of community. He feels that the person he is today has a lot to do with the influence he got out of GSA program. He also uses terms like "Googley", which means the overall Google culture and "Googler" referred as a person of Google community. These aspects strongly refer to the feeling of membership and shared emotional connection of SOC.

According to Mr. Luong, it is not only the ambassadors who form a close community with each other. They have succeeded in introducing Google to new users and also in drawing interest from already existing Google fans. As a result they have founded a Google fan community in which they share information, news and updates from Google including interesting internship placements and student programs. In the SOVC model by Blanchard and Marcus presented in chapter three this sharing of information is called exchanging support and it is seen as the most important behavior in an online community.

Being a GSA is a great responsibility where one needs to apply separately. However, students who apply for the program are aware of that and they genuinely want to be part of it. They are given tasks to spread the word of Google by various ways. Mr. Luong told that he hosted nine events with a total amount of participants of nearly 2,000. Overall he seems to be very proud of what he has achieved as an ambassador and also grateful for having the opportunity. SOC and SOVC observe these kinds of feelings as every community members having their tasks and obligations.

When it comes to benefiting Google, it is clear that these strategically placed ambassadors help them reach thousands and thousands of other students. What furthermore affects is that in a collective culture like in Vietnam young people engage in community activities a lot more than in

for example Finland. Mr. Luong also touches this viewpoint when pointing out to youth in Southeast Asia being excellent in both caring for each other and bringing the sense of a true community. In addition to drawing in new interested users ambassadors act as trainers of Google products. Good familiarization with the product makes it easier for the user to like it. According to Mr. Luong ambassadors are also encouraged to invent new creative ideas on for example events. What this means in practice is that Google outsources part of their marketing to the ambassadors. What the ambassadors get in return is good experience to add on their CV.

5.2 Why student ambassador programs?

“Transforming your passionate customers into your company’s marketing team might sound crazy, but just might work”

Google is not the only company organizing ambassador programs for students. Also Apple, Microsoft and Firefox hold their own programs where students learn about their technology and then pass on their knowledge on their peers. (Suzuno 2014. Cited 23.4.2015.)

With these kind of student ambassador programs one student can reach big masses. Former Khan Academy intern David Hu posted a video of his internship experience in YouTube, which has now gained more than 25,000 views. Actual marketing materials are irrelevant in these kind of programs. It is all about what students tell each other, not what a brochure might imply. All this buzz created by the student ambassadors comes down to the importance of word of mouth marketing. Although nowadays there is plenty of technology available to us, it is the personal recommendations that seem to make the most impact. Blogs, social networks, chat rooms, forums and other technologies provided are the most significant contributors to the growth of word of mouth marketing. (ibid.)

Hiring student as an ambassador gives the company several opportunities. In addition to putting the brand name out there, you get the students to talk about the company in a positive light to their peers. This program can also be used to test out new products and services and get honest feedback before they are launched to the general public. (ibid.)

Even though student ambassadors do not form an online community as such, the whole extended community of active users does. For example in the case of Google, their enormous extended community including all the fans and other active users, ambassadors and employees interacts both online and offline. They form a network of communication and – concluding from Mr. Ha Luong's interview – have members with a strong sense of community.

6 SPOTIFY

Spotify is a company of Swedish origin currently having their headquarters in London UK. The concept behind is having millions of songs stored into an online cloud from where users can listen to them, form and share their own playlists and see what their friends are listening. (Gilmour 2012.) The basic version is free, but contains advertisements between songs and certain limitations for listening. At the moment the paid version bought directly from their website, having no advertisement or limitations, costs 9,99€ per month in Finland. (Spotify AB 2015. Cited 5.1.2015.)

Competitors of Spotify include for example Rhapsody, Napster and iCloud, which is a service from Apple. There are also some newcomers such as MOG, Deezer, Grooveshark, Rdio, We7 and Simfy. (Gilmour 2012.)

Currently Spotify has over 60 million active users (active within 30 days) and 15 million paying subscribers. The amount of paying customers is 20% of the amount of active free users. There are over 30 million songs in total and more than 20 000 added daily. The total number of playlists created exceeds 15 billion. The aim behind Spotify is to offer an alternative for illegal downloading and thus enable artists to get paid for their music. Since its 2008 launch Spotify has paid a total revenue of 2 billion dollars to rights holders. (Spotify Ltd. 2015. Cited 5.1.2015.)

Spotify was first launched in October 2008 in UK, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Finland, Norway, and Sweden with \$21,6 million of Series A funding, Series A meaning the first significant round of funding. After this it has gone through six more rounds of funding the last one being in 2012. Driven by the buzz and anticipation after its launch in Europe, Spotify successfully launched in the United States in July 2011. (Brown 2015. Cited 15.03.2015; CrunchBase 2014. Cited 20.04.2015.)

6.1 Growth levers

According to the Kano Model developed by Professor Noriaki Kano in the 1980's, all the features of a product can be divided into three categories. *Delighters* are the nice-to-have extra features

that separate your product from the competitors. These features do not necessarily have to be perfectly functioning, because they are not the key features of the product. *Performance features* are the features that can be found from all the competing products, but the level of their quality varies. *Must-have features* on the other hand are the key feature of the product, and the one that needs to be functioning flawlessly. When technology develops delighters turn into performance features, and performance features into must-haves. (Dahan & Hauser 2002, 186-187.)

When Spotify was first launched, there already were services like Pandora that were streaming music but would not let you choose the songs, or iTunes where you could buy the tracks you wanted. What Spotify did was that it introduced a new system and pricing model where you pay fixed monthly amount to listen to the music you want. This feature of user control developed from a delighter into a must-have in a very fast phase resulting in Spotify's rapid growth. What furthermore contributed to Spotify's growth over for example iTunes was that it allowed users to upload tracks from their computer to Spotify. Thus they could also listen to their old playlists without opening iTunes. In 2011, Spotify developed an algorithm-based feature which learns the user's taste of music and makes predictions on which artists or songs the person could be interested in. Spotify would then recommend these to the user. Spotify also introduced their browser-based and mobile versions to increase availability and usability, and offered 320 kbps sound quality compared to 128 kbps of other services. What makes their stream fast and free of distractions is something they have borrowed from illegal file sharing services such as The Pirate Bay; if the track user is listening to cannot be found from his own computer hard drive, first 15 seconds of the song are played from the nearest server. During these seconds the program searches copies of the track from the hard drives of nearby users - this enables a fluent listening experience by utilizing file sharing. The benefit of borrowing for Spotify could be explained by the 80/20 percent rule by Andrew Chen: a company can save both time and effort by borrowing 80% from another successful product and reinventing the 20% that makes the difference towards better. These delighters or performance features depending on the viewpoint made Spotify the best on the market contributing to its early growth. (Brown 2015. Cited 15.03.2015.)

Beside these features that made Spotify superior to its competitors, there was a reason for illegal downloaders to shift from piracy to Spotify. There was now an alternative between free-of-charge illegal downloading and pay-per-track model of iTunes: Spotify Free. Spotify Free tier utilizes the so called freemium business model where there are certain limitations for free use that encourage user to move on to the paid version. In Spotify Free user will hear advertisements between the

tracks and are only able to play ready playlists on the mobile version. According to Spotify themselves, out of their 50 million total users the huge market of 37,5 million free users would be either downloading illegally, listening from YouTube or not listening at all if there was no free version available. It is also to be noted that 80% of Premium users first started with the free version (Brown 2015. Cited 15.03.2015.)

The buzz around Spotify in Europe created enormous anticipation in the US, where Spotify landed three years later in 2011. With strategic partnerships with Coca Cola, Sprite, Chevrolet, Motorola, Reebok, Sonos and The Daily, Spotify's word started to spread. The limited amount of registration invitations for early adopters was apt to generate anticipation. The reason for controlling growth by limiting registration was that Spotify wanted to prevent site from crashing and ensure the quality of listening experience for every user. (Brown 2015. Cited 15.03.2015; Cionci 2011. Cited 20.4.2015; Nash 2012. Cited 20.4.2015.)

What furthermore increased the user amounts on 2011 was Spotify announcing its Facebook integration in Facebook's f8 developer conference a couple months later. This integration would bring user the opportunity to share on Facebook what he was listening. The idea of sharing music to your friends was derived from piracy but realized in a legal manner: if a Facebook user wanted to listen to the same song his friend was listening, he could click the notification on Facebook timeline and be directed to that track on Spotify. Only day after the conference, the amount of Facebook integrated daily active users rose from 1.2 million to 3.25 million. The amount of monthly active users was increased by total of one million. (Brown 2015. Cited 15.03.2015; TechCrunch 2012. Cited 20.4.2014.) Spotify's integration with Facebook is seen as one of the most classic examples of a successful growth hack.

6.2 Activating members

During the year 2011, one of their early years, Spotify acquired 1,9 million users per month. But figures reveal they were only able to keep 200 000 of them active. Managing the churn-rate, which is amount of members leaving a collective group, is the overriding strategic objective of subscription business - this retention seems to be a fundamental issue with freemium model. Spotify's Daniel Ek defines this in a Twitter conversation as a problem specifically with all those businesses whose free tier requires registration. (Mulligan 2013. Cited 25.4..2015.)

For Spotify one major engaging feature is the multi-platform of the app: one can add songs to playlists on desktop and continue listening to them on mobile. Thus personalized Spotify is always there available for its user. According to Spotify for Brands (2015. Cited 24.4.2015) an average multi-platform user spends 148 minutes with Spotify every day. Another important feature is the social nature of Spotify: not also the ability to see your friends' activities and share playlists, but also to be able to connect your Facebook account. This makes it possible for Spotify to create a music social sub-graph of friends who have similar taste. (TechCrunch 2015. Cited 24.4.2015.) In addition to these it is of course the previously discussed must-have, performance and delighter features that make a difference in the user engagement level.

6.3 Looking into the future

Despite the growth, Spotify has claimed not to be profitable. According to a report by PrivCo based on its financial disclosures, Spotify has lost a total of \$200 million since it was founded (Brustein 2014. Cited 20.4.2015). This is mainly seen as an inherent problem of music streaming business. Also Spotify has had its share of problems with artists withdrawing their full production from the service due to insufficient royalties. No matter if this was a problem with their recording label, Spotify and its users are the ones who lose. (Brown 2015. Cited 15.03.2015.)



FIGURE 3. Countries where Spotify is currently available (Spotify Artists 2015)

There are new markets to expand to and new partnerships to form. Lately Spotify has released software development kits for Android and iOS and integrated with Uber, an app that brings together taxi drivers and passengers. In the future Uber passengers can control the music in their Uber taxi by connecting their Spotify and Uber accounts. Despite their popularity, Spotify still has not gone global. Figure 1 above maps the current area where Spotify is available. For example in Canada the service was not available until autumn 2014. Continued international expansion provides more growth opportunities and both free and paying premium members. (Brown 2015. Cited 15.03.2015.)

7 BUZZFEED

BuzzFeed is an American online news media company launched in 2006. It focuses on social and entertainment news by having a special algorithm monitor over 120 million separate media portal web pages such as Time and TMZ. This algorithm takes into account the amount of shares on various social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Reddit and StumbleUpon just to mention a few. Every time a piece of news seems to be going viral, BuzzFeed's editorial team gets an alert. BuzzFeed has a global audience of 200 million. (BuzzFeed 2015. Cited 6.1.2015; Stryker 2011.)

7.1 Active community

Not only does BuzzFeed use different online communities as a source material, but it also has a community of its own. Community members are able to create and publish new posts and just wait for them to become viral. In order to become part of the BuzzFeed Community, one needs to apply by signing up and create a post to suggest to BuzzFeed editors. If it is interesting enough, it might get featured on the community page. Every signed up member will get one chance to suggest a post per day. Every featured post you create increases your cat power and as your cat power level increases you get to suggest more posts per day. (BuzzFeed 2015. Cited 6.1.2015.)

Economic, social and interest-based theories of belonging and contributing to a community discussed on the community section of this thesis are well valid with BuzzFeed. If you write a post that is good enough you will get publicity, recognition and maybe even your name on the top list. These kinds of incentives have proved to be highly successful motivators for increased contribution. In addition, writing funny and witty posts is a form of self-actualization and a way to pass free-time.

7.2 Growth levers

In 2012 BuzzFeed hired Dao Nguyen as their Growth Director. During the first two years she managed to increase the amount of unique monthly visitors from 28 million to 150 million. To cite BuzzFeed's CEO Jonah Peretti: *"It's just like incredible to hire someone and say 'your job is growth,' and then you look, and she just like knocked it out of the park."* Later on in 2014 Dao

Nguyen was promoted to Publisher. Nguyen bases her tactic on data; she is extremely good in seeing what the figures mean, even though she herself has told the data does not indicate why something is happening but merely what is happening. (Lagorio-Chafkin 2014. Cited 15.4.2015.)

Data gives an indication on if something is profitable. On Quora thread from 2013 a world-renowned viral marketer B.J. Mendelson (November 4, 2013) mentions the best growth hack he has heard of: *“BuzzFeed adjusts their headlines, text, and images in real time to see what will increase sharing. Sort of like an A/B test but there are multiple variables being changed simultaneously and in real time. The results speak for themselves.”*

As an example of studying data behind virality, RJMetrics team conducted a data research on which number on the heading of a BuzzFeed article draws most clicks. By sorting posts by view count and going through different rounds of measurements they found most appealing numbers to be on a range from 21 to 27, such as on the post *“21 Pictures That Will Restore Your Faith In Humanity”*. They also did some other notions while researching the numbers. One was that the top contributors from the community had thousands of posts out of which not all had more views than on average. Another one was that time did not make a notable difference on view count, since old posts did not have the tendency to go viral anymore. (Lang 2013. Cited 15.4.2015.) Out of this it can be concluded that the more contents there were created the better chance there was for a piece to go viral. On the other hand if a post was not successful, it would be noticed in a relatively short amount of time. The act of creating lots of content on a rapid phase in order to get an audience and a voice as a result is called content marketing, which has become increasingly popular among start-up companies (Norris 2015. Cited 16.4.2015).

Despite growth being indicated through numbers and figures, the relationship between data sciences and growth hacking can be seen as controversial. For example data scientist Vincent Granville (March 15, 2015) discusses this relationship in his guest blog post *“Can You Be a Growth Hacker Without Being a Data Scientist?”* in Data Science Central. It seems that companies searching for a growth hacker search for different kinds of qualities knowledge of data science being not always required.

Another typical way of generating growth is by expanding internationally. In the case of BuzzFeed this has meant translating their webpage and articles into different languages. In 2013 BuzzFeed announced a co-operation with Duolingo, an increasingly popular language learning platform.

With the help of Duolingo's students articles would be translated into Spanish, French and Portuguese. What makes this revolutionary is that Duolingo is a free app for its users, but it would generate revenue from its contract with BuzzFeed still enabling the latter to get translation services at a cost of just a fraction of that of professional services. After completing some exercises a Duolingo user gets to choose if he wants to try translating a real-life case which reveals to be a BuzzFeed article. After this a special algorithm combines the best translations to form one professional-level translation. (Manjoo 2013. Cited 15.5.2015; BuzzFeed 2013. Cited 15.5.2015.)

8 CONCLUSION

When talking about growth hacking, methods used and the aims of it, it is obvious that these are not new things. Growing visibility of one's company, getting more buzz in social media and getting more users – these all have been done before also in traditional marketing. But what new growth hacking brings is pure data which means one is working based on pure facts. Simple social media advertising is no longer enough. The ways used need to be more clever. This is where tracking data, smart algorithms, understanding and playing with analytics comes along. Data rightly used can potentially lead to massive growth and more visibility. When working with actual, tractable data one can find interesting upcoming trends and statistics. That helps to predict what people want to hear, share and follow. This prediction and right, possibly bold, actions driven by it, can lead to more visits, customers and leads and as a result – growth. This was exactly the case with BuzzFeed. But what needs to be kept in mind is that it is not as simple as it sounds: one needs to find the right data to look at and to remember that as BuzzFeed's Dao Nguyen said data only tells what is happening, not why. The advantage ZEF has is their experience with collecting data, reporting and analyzing it, since it is the core of what their products do. It could be that the potential for a perfect growth hack lies in ZEF's own products, one just needs to "think outside the box" and find new ways to experiment with familiar tools.

One of the most surprising findings that has not been revealed in any of the previous growth hacking studies was the fact that although the basic idea of growth hacking is to reach masses and preferably at once, this many times happens through few right key people. Thus the process is a social event. To take an example from Spotify and Facebook integration: when people see what you are listening, they become interested and start using Spotify themselves. In the interview we had with Mr. Ha Luong, he also mentioned that his peers have started to use more Google apps in general and even more effectively at work due to his endorsement while working as a Google Ambassador. Although the chapter about GSA program was all about hiring students, the same theory applies also to regular customers and users. When a company has enthusiastic customers or even fans of their products, those people can be harnessed as ambassadors of the company. Like mentioned earlier it is the personal recommendations that seem to make the most impact. One well-prepared and enthusiastic ambassador brings back ROI, "investment" being himself and "return" his friends and peers. In Google's case the ambassadors tend to be from countries of more collective cultures. This can be a challenge in a

country like Finland, and if some type of ambassador or “Herald Warrior” (referring to warrior culture at ZEF) marketing would be carried out it would require careful consideration on whom to select to maximize the possible return on investment.

Also when looking at the big picture with these three companies, we have noticed that the relationship with product and its users vary. Google and Spotify have products that are a part of people’s everyday lives. These core products need to have their “must have” features fully working and functioning, and the major focus needs to be on fitting them into the lives of people flawlessly. BuzzFeed on the other hand rides on content marketing and every piece they produce only gets a chance to be a hit for an extremely short period of time. They are in a position where it is useful to keep pushing out new content and accept the fact that not every piece can or will be a success – some even being pure waste of time. Google or Spotify cannot afford this with their core products, at least not at the same fast phase. For example when Spotify was expanding, they had to control their growth by limiting registration in order to ensure smooth experience for every user. Also the GSA we interviewed, Mr. Ha Luong, highlights the customer-friendliness of technology and good familiarization of the product as important aspects of engaging users. Despite concentrating on functionality, trends cannot be completely disregarded. Technology is developing fast and in order to keep up with increasing demands of trendy customers companies need to be one step ahead: delighters are always good to have. By being one step ahead you ensure you are leading your followers, not vice versa. That way you will always be able to offer them something new to wait for to keep them engaged. However it needs to be kept in mind that these kinds of actions do require a lot of time and effort since trends and peoples’ interests do change quickly.

As an example we can talk about having a new phone application which is created for community building purpose. Interesting topics are added to increase peoples’ interest. As a result we can track down which topics, articles, games etc. people are liking, sharing and following. By analyzing this data we can leave out less interesting things and add more “buzz” by adding the things that people like to follow. By tracking these popular, trendy topics we can make predictions and then take actions that would lead more followers and in the end growth. From that tracked data one can draw actual growth patterns. So in this case we “hack” what people like by following the data on trends.

What could also be done to better understand how growth hacking works, and how to figure out growth patterns for specific companies, is to actually test what works for each company. In all our three study case companies, the methods used for growth are different. Because although all of them were aiming for growth the actual goal was different. That is why each company, including ZEF, needs to find its own way of figuring out the right growth pattern.

So as a conclusion, growth hacking not only gives very innovative ways of spreading the word about both product and the company but also produces actual tractable data from which one can draw statistical conclusions and base next actions to. The methods used are countless and one can vary them according to what outcome is desired. When creating an online community in 2015 it is clear that growth hacking is the strategy that a company should use. Its innovative nature and potential to generate growth give company the best tools to stand out from the crowd. Since there are plenty of options to try out with growth hacking, the strategies used need to be well considered.

When it comes to psychological and sociological ways of engaging and keeping members active, the sense of virtual community and motivating reasons behind active contribution have a major role. How ZEF can ensure the sense of virtual community to develop, is to support community activities such as exchange of support, creating identities, identification from others and production of trust. Members also need to be engaged and encouraged to actively contribute to the functioning of the community. Therefore it is important to recognize why people want to belong to communities: by taking into account the economic, social and other reasons behind motivation ZEF can build a platform which naturally furthers motivation to develop.

Why would it be successful to growth hack? The aspects we want to highlight regarding this first research questions are:

- Since the focus is strictly on creating growth, a growth hacker is free and even forced to get creative with methods that would reach it.
- Due to its nature of relying on data and thus being tractable, scalable and testable one is working with pure facts and does not have to make assumptions. Data provides the information of customer behavior.
- The most resource effective way to reach masses is through few right key people

Regarding our second research question, how to activate a newborn community member, we want to highlight the following:

- Be one step ahead to retain interest.
- Support community activities in order to create a setting which facilitates the sense of virtual community to develop.
- A true community only exists if its members have a sense of community

We also suggest ZEF to use their already possessed knowledge and tools when implementing growth hacking tactics and engaging audience - utilizing already existing resources to the maximum saves both money and effort. The strongest tactics tend to stem from features that are profound to the company.

9 DISCUSSION

During the process of writing this thesis we noticed our original schedule was honestly impossible. This kind of topic needs lots of time for research only, because it is relatively new and no thesis before has been written about it. Our personal work schedules caused the original plan to delay and we also faced the problems of doing the thesis together, as fitting our schedules together sometimes felt unfeasible.

Although we needed to postpone our schedule it had an upside to our research. Some of the resources used in this thesis are from early 2015 so we had fresh information for us to use. Especially when it comes to growth hacking, the amount of information provided online has rapidly grown from fall 2014 when we started this process. An issue that we ran into was the fact that there seemed to be as many definitions of growth hacking as there were people writing about it. Some definitions were even contradictory with one another. In some contexts growth hacking was half marketing and half coding, in others it had only little to do with marketing. We decided to combine both definitions in the theory part but chose to use what we thought is the best for our research which is marketing and coding combined.

We also faced some troubles with getting the information for our benchmarking research. For example we contacted Spotify by email asking for further insight to their initial marketing tactics. They sent us a reply but unfortunately we did not get the in-depth information we needed. Luckily we still managed to do our research and found the vital information, although we could have gone deeper if we had had the source for that.

With this kind of topic which had not been researched before as a thesis there was a risk of growing it too big and wide. We did some editing so that we would stay in the main point. There are plenty of directions where this topic could be lead to. Just to mention one aspect that we left out was the government's opinion and reactions to online communities. In modern western countries they have become a norm, but are still almost a taboo in third world socialistic countries. Several things need to be taken into consideration when researching that and we regret it not being possible within the frames of our Bachelor's thesis. As mentioned in the chapter about online communities we made the notion that during the research it is important not only to discover answers to our own research questions but to also figure out new ones. One of

the most important aspects we found out is the growth control issue. How to effectively control growth in online world which in most of the cases is really unpredictable. This is a very relative issue with a company that aims for rapid growth. Our research provides a basis for others to continue this study and an opportunity to dig deeper into the subject.

We had an inspiring discussion with ZEF's VotingAid Professor Mr. Tiago Ferreira Lopes about his insights on building an online community. He gave us an idea to research especially social theories that are crucial on understanding how a group of people becomes a community.

We started learning about online communities and growth hacking from the scratch. We had very little knowledge on the topic so it was an interesting learning experience and an eye opener for us. We can utilize the knowledge accumulated by this research in so many ways in our future careers.

In a nutshell, growth hacking alone is a fruitful topic to research and when combined with creating an online community, possibilities are countless. Although we were aware that we were writing this for up-to-date professionals we hope that we have given our commissioner new insight to the topic and maybe some guidelines or tools to work with. Despite all the difficulties we had we can honestly say we did our research and wrote this thesis with Love, Passion and Bravery.

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General questions

“Some background information about Google Student Ambassador.

Google Student Ambassador Program is designed to establish and strengthen the link between Google and University in terms of applying technology in education. Starting in the USA, it spreads to other regions in the world, including Southeast Asia, include some ASEAN countries (except Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar until 2014) and Pakistan.

Each year, GSA Program opens its application usually in March, the results are out in April, and the training summit is in May-June. The number of applicants from each country is determined by Google in that area. (For Southeast Asia, it's Google Pacific Asia in Singapore to decide)

Each GSA after chosen is required to attend a regional training summit about Google and its applications (Google Apps for Education – GAfE) in a specific country (Singapore 2012, Indonesia 2013, and the Philippines in 2014). They are fully-funded to attend this summit, from airfare to accommodation and food. During the summit of about 3-4 days, GSAs receive training about various Google apps, meeting with Googlers and other GSAs, working together for a homework project. It is a very great opportunity to experience Google culture, or “Googley”.”

1. During which period did you act as a Google Student Ambassador?

“I was chosen to become a GSA in May 2013, and served 1 year with that title till May 2014.

That year is the first time GSA Program was introduced to Vietnam. In 2012, the first time GSA Program in Southeast Asia was host in Singapore with the participation from Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines only.”

2. What did you do as a Google Student Ambassador and did you have a specific goal?

“A GSA after the training summit is expected to host at least 05 community events to help spread the effective way of using Google Apps, especially GAfE. Our target audience is students (from high schools and universities).

During 1 year, I hosted 09 events with a total of nearly 2,000 participants to help raise the effectiveness of using Google products for their study and work.”

3. What kind of methods did you use to achieve your goal (i.e. hold events, lectures, competitions)?

“Each GSA is encouraged to come up with various ideas, including training event, competition, or even movie premiere.

I had several training events about GAFE, where participants learn about how to use Google apps more effectively from GSAs and some members from Google Developer Group (GDG – a community of IT and technical members). Each event has about 30-50 students.

I hosted some competition, from online ones like Online Exam for Students with Google Drive, to offline events like “Doodle for Google” art competition towards children.”

4. Have you managed to “spread the word of Google” amongst your peers?

“Through my activities online and offline, my peers start to pay more attention about using Google Apps more effectively for their study and work. These apps have many benefits and currently being used widely, but there are more possibilities that students can just need to learn more for better efficiency: customizing their Gmails, managing their inboxes with labels, or searching with right key words on Google.”

5. Do you feel your contribution has helped to increase interest towards Google and its services?

“I believe so. Through all activities that my team has done, we can show many students that Google and its apps are very useful and customer-friendly, not only about technical and suitable just for IT men.”

Deeper insight

6. How did you (or continue to) benefit from being a Google Ambassador?

“I received the training and knowledge about Google and its apps through online and offline activities. This helps me become more familiar with technology and feel more comfortable applying it to my life.

I have a network of GSAs in Vietnam and other countries in Southeast Asia. We still keep in touch with each other through online methods. Although we have completed our term, seeing others’ achievements has encouraged me to try harder. Even when I visit some countries, I can contact them for local tour guide, which is very nice.”

7. How did Google benefit from you?

“We served as its student ambassadors, introducing and spreading the effective way of using Google apps. In addition to making people love Google more through many funny activities, we also created a community of students in favor of its products. We shared new updates and even opportunities from Google like internships and student programs.”

8. Do you see yourself as a part of the extended Google community?

“Yes, I support Google and its useful apps. I cannot imagine what my life would be like without it. When Google host some events, I also attend and help with what I can.”

9. Have you developed personal relationships with other Google Student Ambassadors? If yes, have these relationships strengthened your feeling of community?

“Yes, we have a tight relationship with some GSAs. As I mentioned above, we help each other with many things: from local tour guide when someone visits other countries in the region, to cooperation in some activities like calling for fund to support the Philippines after the Haiyan tornado (about \$1,000 after 1 month). These make me believe that the youth in Southeast Asia are excellent as well as caring for each other, bringing the sense of a true community.”

10. After your experience with Google community, do you feel it is something that stays with you for the rest of your life? In other words, do you feel it has contributed to who you are?

“This experience has opened my horizon when meeting many great people, including Googlers and other GSAs from different countries. Who I am today can be attributed to the valuable lessons I have obtained from this program.”

Marita: Maybe I should show you the contents

Tiago: Yes that would be good

Laura: So actually the part that we are lacking almost completely is the community part. We need good theories on...

Tiago: Building communities, yes.

Marita: I think that is where we really could apply some theories. Like here we have about growth hacking, benchmarking as a study method..

Tiago: Yes that's important

Marita: And these are now all that we have for the theoretical background basically

Tiago: So you need something about the communities online. And that goes a lot into media studies and cultural studies with media studies. It's 70's 80's and 90's research. It goes a lot into this idea of subsets because online communities are basically subsets of the global community. They have their own language and their own intentions. You have something with a lot of tools you can use. So don't be afraid you have a lot of research material.

Laura: We already found one - i think it was master's thesis probably

Marita: I found it like two days ago and we haven't had the time to read it through but it had some pretty good theory in there

Laura: I have it opened here

Marita: Could you show at least the contents so he could take a look if it looks good or not

Tiago: Usually in master's they do a good job

Marita: I hate that we have to narrow this bachelor down so much

Laura: Yeah, this is not a master's thesis, it is bachelor's so...

Tiago: ... so it should be simpler, yes.

Laura: So this is the contents of it

Tiago: Exactly there you go! Virtual communities ... (etc) Social identity theory

Tiago: One other that could be good... but I will see if there this anything easier since this is difficult to read, but it's Pierre Bourdieu. Cause he has his theory of the cultural background that is on how communities are built. It is meant for physical communities but it is easy to transpose to...

Marita: Yeah I think most of theory applies to both

Tiago: Exactly. Definitely you should go into theory of the diffusion of innovation in technology. I will send you a short powerpoint that I was giving to my bachelor students in Turkey. It's easy to

understand it's basically how the community is built from early users to the opinion leaders to the generalised and to the late users. For example Facebook is now in the late user stage where our parents invade Facebook too. While for example six years ago in Portugal and Turkey it was in the early stage. Spotify right now is opening itself. Blogger for example is now in its late user stage. And it's a very easy reading to understand. Just because this is bachelor's there's no use for both of you to complicate this.

Marita: Yes. We still want to provide something useful for ZEF so it's good to get your insight.

Tiago: Yeah... what could also be good in this case... well, this should not be a bachelor's thesis this should be a master's. You have master's in your hand. But this goes well with the project to have, our global community. Something about interaction theories, Leif Lagerfeldt.. But I will check these references because I have them in my pc. I will send you the theory.

Marita: There was also that one French name

Tiago: Yes Bourdieu is good it's really good. But the problem is his background is philosophic/sociologist, so he has very dense writing. He has good things in English. And I can find some easy materials already mastergate. There is something you both could do, this is an exercise for you to do. It's to do the V model. There is this thing called V model that tests the strength of the thesis. And it's very easy it gives you like nine questions, you reply to every question with one or two words. And all the questions need to reply to each other. If question two is not replied by all the others, something is wrong with the thesis. You should... if the thesis goes to that V model. If you search V model online it is applied to software development so you find these questions that are not to be asked. But there is one I have on my pc that was made by a British professor, about how to apply this V idea to social sciences. It is difficult to find online but I will send it to you. Because it's really good to find the correct keywords, does this and this reply to my object of study. If something is not good, it's because the thesis is not strong, if it's good it justifies your professor why you should keep everything as it is.

Laura: That's really good if we apply something like that that is really extra, takes it to another level. Nobody uses these. I've heard of them but not seen.

Tiago: Yeah I've been talking about this to people around the world whom I've been giving advice on thesis and usually no one uses it. And when they use it it actually strengthens their thesis. And you will find yourselves correcting your thesis. I corrected my thesis after this. It was filled with flaws. I was like oh my god this doesn't reply to this and haha.

Tiago: How are you planning to do this study, what is your methodology? Cause that's important.

Marita: It's mostly desktop and literary study but then we have one Google Student Ambassador to interview. I was thinking should we have more of them? To send the same questions to.

Laura: Like should we have more interviews?

Tiago: Could be semi closed interviews. So not thinking of (...) cause those take a lot of time and you don't want to go to content analysis. But you could have those semi closed questions, they would help you.

Tiago: So what do you have more?

Marita: Yeah, well um... About this Spotify, we think most about that is going to be from online sources. Not with actual interactions. Though we were advised to maybe call to Spotify headquarters.

Tiago: Try to call them. They actually might reply or email them. These online communities, they work a lot with emails. But send your email. Present yourself in the beginning like "This is a thesis we are working with. You are one of our study cases and we want you to help us. My advice for you on emails also is to do this very annoying technique that you send one email, you give them one week to reply, after that you send the same email every day at the same time. And they always reply! (...) It always works. Always. But these online communities usually reply emails quite easily. Especially because Spotify, to them in some level it is publicity.

Laura: We should definitely do that. We have been slightly skeptical whether that would actually work. Mostly about the calling part though.

Tiago: They will reply. The Royal Archives of London. I was doing a research project about Royal Family, the scandals and the good and the great part. And they send me everything, the good and the bad. They asked me, "What do you want?" So these (...) will surely reply. And Spotify for sure they will reply.

Marita: That would be great if they replied.

Tiago: What you could also do, because you're doing this on growth and so on. You could have online, for a short time. This is something that you need to discuss with your supervisor. You could have online a survey for the users, to understand basically not just why they use it but how they started to use it. Because if you understand how these people are using it, you will understand the growth pattern.

In this part of the interview there was a conversation concerning specific details about the idea of ZEF's online community. That part is left out of the transcription due to confidentiality.

Tiago: So these kind of questions on why people are using these communities? And the question that I would ask do you recommend these to your friends? Because these communities go a lot

under of viral theories, academic theories. And even (...) theories, which are very (...). But don't go there now. You are at bachelor level, don't destroy your brain at this level.

Tiago: Um. What you could also do more. I'm very surprised how bachelors are studying these kinds of theories. I'm very impressed.

Marita: But yeah about BuzzFeed we were thinking that we could actually sign up as contributors there and then write a text that we... Because their editors will read that.

Tiago: That's good. That's a very good idea to go.

Marita: Yes, because we wanted to use their own roots to like contact them.

Tiago: Um. I'm thinking who would I contact on this. I'm still impressed by... This is not bachelor level. You should definitely continue this on masters.

Tiago: How many pages you have? That's very important.

Laura: So far or?

Tiago: What the faculty allows you to do? Because usually there are limits on that.

Marita: Now we have... like including all the content pages and these pages that has actually nothing to do with the text... We have 27 pages and if it goes over 100 then they will start saying that this is too much.

Laura: I'm on the impression that 80 is a lot already.

Tiago: I'm thinking that in your case you should have maximum 15 pages of theory. And then something like 40 of study cases

Marita: We were actually planning to go deep on the subject.

Tiago: And then 5 pages of conclusions. Don't forget some things that people tend to forget in conclusions. The good part of conclusion, even on the Ph.D and Masters level is that you've opened doors for other researchers. In the end in your conclusions you also need to understand what are the doors that your thesis opens. Also what you close, but especially what you open up. We resolved this small part, but now we have these new 10 questions that are there for the next ones to come. That is very important. The idea of continuity.

Marita: We have a slight problem with what our school wants us to do, since they always require that we have to give some concrete solutions or ideas for the company.

Tiago: But you can do that. By looking in to the theories, using for example... You can draft the schematics about theories, see where the theory fails, since all theories (...) have failed. And where your thesis can complement and how you can introduce that into a real company. So imagine: if you feel that Google hacking can be used is more important than opinion leaders in for example viral communities. You can replace the concept, explain why, and then try to test it. You

can even try to test it if you have time, with the company. Well the Spotify would be easy to test. The Student Ambassador I think will be tough to test.

Marita: With Sami, we talked that we could find a way to justify the use of growth hacking when marketing/working the community.

Tiago: You can also do that. Or you can also try to build a positive narrative because growth hacking -there's a very negative impact on it. Because hacking is coupled with the word stealing. You can try to explain that hacking could also be an act of sharing.

Laura: I have been supposed to discuss it and that we maybe need to open up the word.

Tiago: So you should go to content. And then you need to go little bit more of content analysis, but only a little bit. There is a triangle of object and research... Um, that is not difficult to understand. It's very simple. To every word, you have a sign, you have a reference and you have a reference. And it is... direction that you change the word hacking from negative to positive. Because, as an example, you see a dog in the street, that could be your reference. But the thing is that, what is a dog to an English person, it's something else in Finnish - You'll have 1 or 10 words for it. That could be something more for a Russian, that's the word and the sound of it. But then it's also the image that you're associated with the dog. What is a dog to you? How do you classify it? So it's the same now with the word hacking. What you're trying to do is move hacking from negative feeling to a positive feeling, and how do you do it. And how these communities can profit from it? Because some of these communities are still looked by some big companies as semi-legal. They associate for example Spotify with Pirate Bay, with Torrents community. What you also might want to reference briefly is that how governments are reacting on growth hacking communities. How for example in Finland - because it's your base - government is reacting? What you can also suggest to your supervisor is... I'm just talking about suggestions here, because of our first meeting. So what you can also suggest is that you will study these companies and so on, but in the end you can also have a little bit of some draft suggestion policy even to the governmental level. You can have them! Because then it's practical. Because Finland is right now going through a security law considering data. So how that influences the hacking?

Marita: I was also thinking about that because it's the hacking yes, but it's also the growth part. Because if you just concentrate on growth, something is... It's not good. Because we also need to justify why in this case it's like the growth, growth, growth it's right now the most important part.

Tiago: How do you control growth? Or how do you understand growth. Especially epidemic growth. Because it's very irrational hoe thing grow online, or most of the time it is.

Marita: Yes, that is true. Even though we wouldn't have any particular concrete ideas, like do this and do that, what we want to do is provide something that would create new ideas. We want to give inspiration and ideas.

Tiago: Well, that is very possible with this one.

Marita: We've been thinking that we should ask you or Sami or someone on how much we can mention about ZEFs plan in this. I understood that we don't...

Tiago: Give a general image. It's only because the idea of the community is now in transformation so it might change a little, but don't compromise yourselves too much. You can even put a note explaining that you cannot go too deep into this subject in this thesis, because the idea is in transformation. But yes, give general idea, don't go into details.

Laura: Yes, probably all we're gonna say is going to be like ZEF is planning on to build a global community revolving around tests. And that's it.

Tiago: Yes, something like that. Go general. But this work is on a very good track. You chose a good topic, you showed that you already have work done.

Laura&Marita: Yes, but thank you so much for your time!

Tiago: You're welcome!

EMAIL INQUIRY TO SPOTIFY

APPENDIX 3

Sender: k0sala00@students.oamk.fi

Receiver: office@spotify.com

Dear Sir or Madam,

We are two university students from Oulu, Finland. We are currently working on our thesis with a topic "Growth Hacking a Global Community" and Spotify as one of our research subjects. Our special interest is on how you started from scratch and became huge in a relatively short time.

There is a lot of material to be found online, but we would be extremely grateful if we could get your own insight on this too. Thus we have a couple of questions for you, to which you can answer as shortly or broadly as you wish. We would be very happy for anything :-)

Our question number one is, in the very beginning, what was your target market, who were to be the pioneer users? By this we mean, did you first aim at getting the attention in Sweden or some other specific group of people before introducing it to the whole European audience?

Did you make growth plans country by country (or area by area), or was your basic tactics the same everywhere?

What were the key things in marketing that contributed to your growth?

We would also be very grateful for any other material you might have that could be useful to our study, for example precise statistics of user amounts, articles or just recommendations of good reading.

Thank you for reading this through, we hope to hear from you and wish all of you there a nice spring!

Best Regards,

Laura Sarkkinen

k0sala00@students.oamk.fi

Marita Rauhala

k1rama00@students.oamk.fi

Sender: support@spotify.com

Receiver: k0sala00@students.oamk.fi

Hey Laura,

Thanks for taking the time to get in touch with the Spotify team!

You may want to take a look at this link here, where you'll be able to find all the info you guys are looking for.

Also, there's an specific section on there where you can submit your questions and will get back to you as soon as we can.

All the best! :)

Juan O. 🎵🎵

"And those who were seen dancing were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music." - Friedrich Nietzsche

Spotify Customer Support

Did you know we have an extensive help section on our website? You can find it at <https://support.spotify.com>

This e-mail (including any attachments) may contain information that is confidential and/or privileged. It is intended only for the recipient(s). If you have reason to believe that you are not the intended recipient of this e-mail, please contact the sender immediately and delete the e-mail from your computer.

No trees were harmed to send this message, but a large number of electrons were terribly inconvenienced.

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