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FREE ONLINE MARKETING TOOLS- CASE: BAB.LA

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Title

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Abstract

The aim of the present paper is to analyze the effectiveness of online marketing tools and their implementation with low or zero capital using the example of the internet-based company bab.la, which offers language learning services. Apart from that, the advantages of online marketing compared to traditional marketing are discussed, and particular tools of online marketing are described.

The study is quantitative by nature. An online survey was conducted to collect information about the website bab.la as well as about internet habits concerning learning foreign languages and social networks as a way of online marketing. The internal information of the company with the help of the Google Analytics tool was used to make an insight of the traffic sources of bab.la and the effects of other online marketing tools.

The research showed that the most significant marketing tool for the website bab.la is search engine optimization. However, additional tools such as social media marketing, email marketing and blog maintenance also play important roles.

Language

Pages 38

English

Appendices 2

Keywords

Online marketing, linguistic portal bab.la, analysis, online survey, questionnaire

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

With the advancement of the internet, new internet functions are being created and, consequently new internet tools for implementing marketing online are being developed. This paper is going to examine free online marketing tools, with the exception of labour input needed to utilize these tools. Hence, all kinds of paid internet advertisements and other tools requiring financial contributions are excluded from this discussion. The effectiveness of free of charge online marketing tools and their effects on a company's operations are going to be discussed.

1.2 Aim of the study

The aim of this thesis report is to answer the following questions:

- Is it possible to operate marketing activities successfully investing zero or having a small budget for its implementation?
- How some tools, such as search engine optimisation, social media marketing, blogging, affect bab.la's operations?
- What are different functions of online marketing tools used by bab.la?

1.3 Outline

First, theoretical aspects of online marketing are described, i.e. a comparison of traditional marketing and online marketing, SWOT analysis of online marketing, as well as the description of several basic online marketing free tools. The theory will provide the basis for the empirical part of the thesis. For the empirical part of the study two types of data were used, primary and secondary data. In order to collect primary data a

survey for internet users, including users of bab.la, was chosen. For the secondary data the internal information of the company bab.la was used to analyse the results of its marketing activities with the help of Google Analytics.

1.4 Description of the company

bab.la GmbH is a linguistic portal offering numerous services for learning foreign languages for free on the website <http://bab.la/>. The company was founded in 2007 by Dr. Andreas Schroeter, Dr. Thomas Schroeter and Patrick Uecker, but it has already gained quite wide recognition among internet users, especially those who need help in foreign languages more often.

The online platform provides quite a wide range of products for language learners, such as:

- 39 dictionaries for 28 languages
- A language forum
- Vocabulary lessons
- Language quizzes
- Verb conjugations
- Phrasebooks on different topics
- Internship platform
- Language blog

The bab.la portal functions in a wiki style, giving users the opportunity to suggest translations of words, to add new words to the dictionary, to create own quizzes and so on. Users can contribute to the website sharing knowledge of their native languages with others, therefore improving the quality of dictionaries. (bab.la 2014).

The profit of the bab.la is generated through several channels. First of all, paid advertisement is posted on the website. Apart from that, bab.la sells its applications in Apple iTunes. These applications include dictionaries for different language pairs. At last, in April 2015 bab.la joined the Oxford Dictionaries' family when Oxford

University Pressed became the parent company of bab.la. Hence, Oxford University Press also finances bab.la's development and extension. (bab.la 2015).

bab.la's aim is to become the world's largest online dictionary. The company's workforce is truly international and multilingual working to communicate with website users from all over the world. (bab.la 2014).

2 ONLINE MARKETING

Online marketing is a part of direct marketing which places efforts on market products and services and builds customer relationships over the internet. As use of the internet in everyday life is increasing, the usage of web marketing in daily operations of businesses is also becoming more and more popular. The widespread use of the internet has significant impact on customers as well as on the marketers who serve them. (Kotler & Armstrong 2014, 525.)

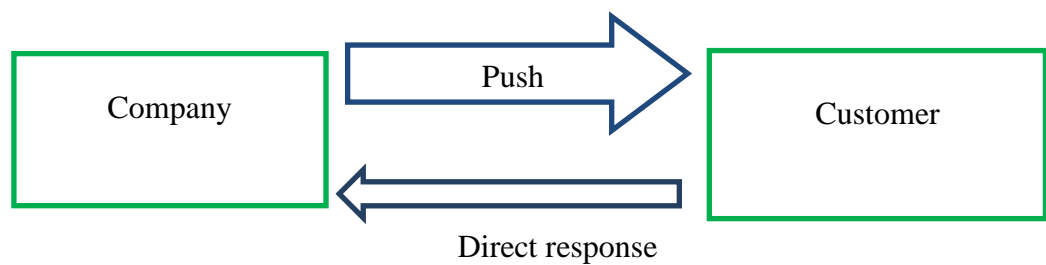
The internet has changed the marketing of businesses. The type and size of a company do not matter; the internet is going to be an essential part of its marketing strategy. It has opened various opportunities for companies, offering rather cheap options for promoting their businesses. Companies' websites, blogs, emails, social networks and many other web channels might be effectively used for promoting businesses and making companies more successful in a market. (The Marketing Donut 2015).

2.1 Online marketing vs traditional marketing

Online marketing has significant differences compared to traditional marketing communications. The internet makes it possible to have new forms of interaction between customers and marketers as well as new options for information exchange. In particular, the following features differentiate online marketing, or e-marketing, from traditional marketing: interactivity, intelligence, individualization, integration, industry restructuring and independence of location. (Chaffey et al. 2006, 21-26.)

- **Interactivity:** The internet allows users to interact with marketing procuring. Unlike in traditional marketing, which mainly has a *push* strategy (marketing message is sent from a company to customer), in e-marketing a customer often starts a contact and searches for information on a website. That is to say, e-marketing has a *pull* model, and a dialogue with a customer instead of a monologue.

a) **Traditional marketing**



b) **Online marketing**

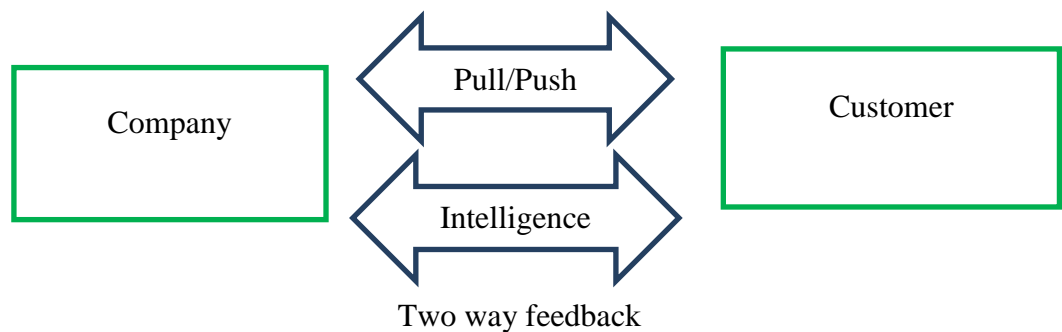


Figure 1. Communication models for: a) traditional marketing, b) online marketing.

- **Intelligence:** The Internet gives an excellent opportunity to do a market research at relatively low costs compared to old methods. Customer overview or information about how products or services are perceived can be collected quite easily, for instance, with the help of an online questionnaire or web analytics tools.

- **Individualisation:** Another significant characteristic of online marketing is that a marketing message can be personalised for different customers, i.e. an individualistic approach to customers might be implemented at a relatively low cost unlike with traditional marketing, where the same message is sent to all individuals. The example can be websites, which recommend different products based on previous choices or purchases.
- **Integration:** The Internet offers a further scope for integrated marketing communications through numerous channels provided for customers. (Figure 2). There are two perspectives on internet communication. The first is outgoing internet based communication from a company to a customer, when a website or e-mail marketing sends individualized communications to customers. The second is incoming internet based communication from a customer to a company, when customers request through a website form or a given e-mail.

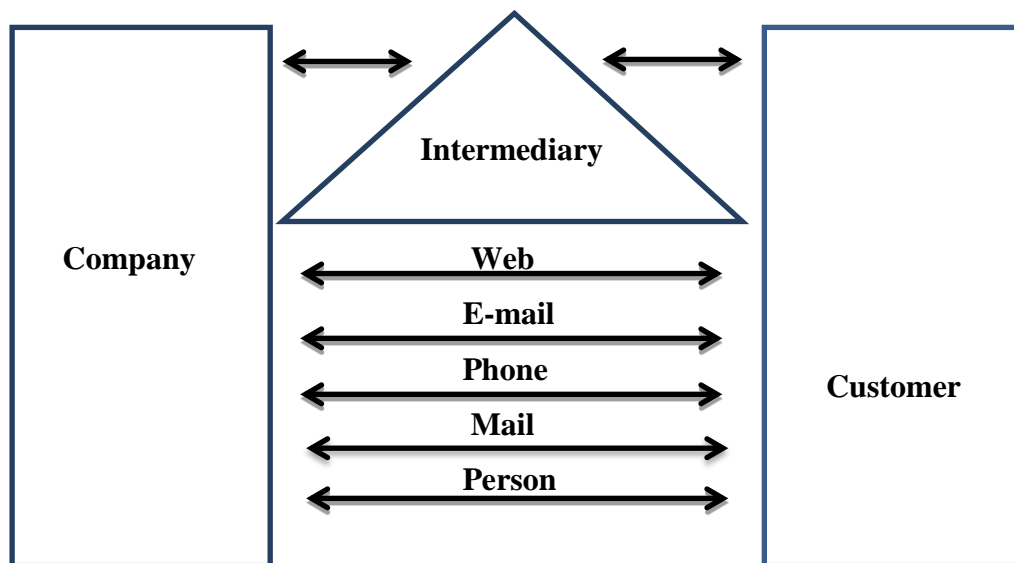


Figure 2. Channels of integrated e-marketing strategy.

- **Industry Restructuring:** Two key concepts defining industry restructuring are disintermediation and reintermediation. Disintermediation occurs in internet marketing when an intermediary party is removed from the marketing process. Reintermediation is the creation of *new* intermediaries between customers and

suppliers. In the context of online marketing, intermediary websites become very important, as they give answers to such questions as by what kind of website is a company represented and what are the benefits and exceptional features of a company compared to the offerings of competitors.

- **Independence of location:** Another significant feature of online marketing is the increased reach of marketing communication to a global market. What was not possible before becomes possible with the internet: selling products to international markets without local sales or customer service personnel, the ability to reach a consumer anywhere via computer or smartphone, and so on. The internet has broadened opportunities for international purchases for marketers as well as for customers.

2.2 Free of charge online marketing tools

The internet provides a variety of online tools to help marketers understand their market position and operate their daily marketing activities easier and more efficiently. Users can find tools that will be more suitable for their businesses and improve the marketing strategy of a company by observing customers' searches, context and number of mentioned brand name of a company etc.

2.2.1 Search Engine Optimisation and Search Engine Marketing

Search Engine Optimisation and Search Engine Marketing are similar but they actually mean different things. The SEO includes strategies and methods which will result in a high-ranking position of a website in a search engine (e.g. Google, Yahoo and others).

Visitors coming from a search engine, such as Google.com, result in organic traffic. Direct traffic refers to traffic generated by visitors typing the URL of the website directly into their browser. Referral traffic means that visitors were directed to the website by its link on another website. At last, social traffic is generated by marketing in social networks. (Park 2009).

The higher the position of a website in an organic search is, the more visits a website gets. SEO consists of the following tactics for improving the website ranking: creating the valuable content of a website, using keywords, working on a website navigation to improve convenience of a website, and so on. (Odden 2015).

Search Engine Marketing (SEM) is a broader term than SEO and it covers various methods available to use search engines for marketing purposes. SEM includes SEO, paid listings and other search engine related services which help to increase the traffic of a website. (Beal, 2013).

2.2.2 Google tools

Google offers a huge variety of different services besides a basic search engine. All of them are really useful for the organisation of work, and some of them might be an excellent asset for operating online marketing activities. (Jensen, 2015.) Below is an overview of several tools that, in my opinion, are most helpful for marketing and which have been used by the case company bab.la.

- **Google Analytics** is a useful tool for navigating the traffic of a website and where this traffic comes from. Apart from that it shows the number of new users compared to returning ones, average time people spend on a website, which particular pages they are most interested in and other related functions. The important feature is that Google Analytics gives the graph view, i.e. the visual sight of how the traffic goes up or down which helps to analyse causes and take right actions. (Chaffey 2015).
- **Google Webmaster Tools** gives an insight of a website's situation from Google's point of view. There are certain factors in a website organisation which might prevent it from appearing in search results. For example, pages with duplicate content, loss of inbound links and others. Google Webmaster tools makes analysis of a website and tells which kind of mistakes there are that prevent it from being found in search results. (Vaughan 2015).

- **Google AdWords Keywords Planner** is a tool helping companies to boost the organic SEO. It is initially made for planning an advertisement campaign, e.g. keywords to use in ads, but it might be also very useful for composing keywords for a website that are most searched by users. (Vaughan 2015). With the help of keywords research marketers can get new keywords ideas for the content of a website and be reached by the right users.
- **Google Alerts** gives an opportunity to monitor the internet for mentioning a particular word or a phrase. It can be an incredibly useful tool for marketing, as it gives a chance to get notifications about the number of times the brand name of a company was mentioned in a web, as well as monitor competitors or particular products. (Chaffey 2015.) With the help of this tool one can find out who talks about a company and how to react to those results.

2.2.3 Social networks

The internet has resulted in the high popularity of social networks and different online communities among internet users. For example, the social network Facebook has more than 1.44 billion monthly active users as of March 2015 (Newsroom Facebook 2015). Such a number of users makes networks like Facebook attractive places for marketers to implement online marketing activities in a new manner. There are two ways how marketers can engage in online communities: they can take part in existing ones or create new communities for their company by their own. Other popular networks with high numbers of users are Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Google + and others. By creating an account or a community in a social network a company gets the opportunity to market its product or service for free, increase brand awareness and website traffic, create positive brand association, and a new way to communicate and interact with its key audience. It is essential to have a clear social strategy when starting to implement marketing through social networks. It is important as well to follow this strategy along the process by planning the content according to the target audience's interest and staying updated with keeping the interest of followers. (Wordstream 2015.)

2.2.4 Email

Email is one of the most convenient and effective tools for small-sized businesses. The benefits of using email are various. First of all, it has low cost, unlike Internet advertising, which might be quite expensive. Second, email marketing is interactive. Email software makes it easy for marketers to send interactive messages including not only related information such as contact information but also attach pictures or videos to give a recipient a visual idea. Apart from that email software has various useful features to make the lives of marketers easier. (Gaiennie 2015).

As an example, in the case company bab.la the software Linkbird (<https://www.linkbird.com/en/>) is used every day to build links. The software is very easy to use, as it provides many automatic settings. One of them is automatically sent a “redminder”, the option to send a message, which was written and prepared in advance, on a chosen number of days after an original message. This gives the chance for a sender to get a response from a recipient who could forget to answer or did not have time to do so after the first message. This function saves a lot of time, as there is no need to send reminders manually every week. Another significant benefit of email marketing is that the message is sent directly to the target audience chosen. This gives the opportunity to personalize every message and reach better communication with a recipient. (Forootan 2014).

2.2.5 Blogs

Another way to make business content remembered and make a good impression of a business on customers is through creating an informative and engaging blog. Maintaining a blog can have various positive effects on a business. Blogging is an excellent method to make a connection with customers, tell them about a company’s work and the story behind it. If a blog has content that is attractive to the audience, it can make a company bigger on the internet and generate a word-of-mouth effect. (Piscopo 2015.)

There is the possibility to gain more interaction with customers as well, as they can leave comments for articles in a blog. From a personal point of view, a blog allows people to see a more personal side of a business and gives a chance to interact with customers in a more personal manner reaching better relationships. This is always significant for a company. According to a study, 61% of consumers say they feel better about a business that offers custom content and, in turn, are more likely to buy from that company. (Royer, 2013.)

When deciding whether or not to put efforts into creating and maintaining a blog, the answer is definitely “yes”; an informative and interesting blog will bring extra connection to a company and customers, will show them another side of business and generate word-of-mouth interest.

2.3 SWOT analysis of online marketing

With the help of a SWOT analysis the advantages and disadvantages of online marketing compared to traditional marketing methods are described. The information was collected from the following electronic resources: Gregorio (2015) and Silvia (2013) and, in addition, from the e-version of the book “Internet marketing strategy implementation” by Chaffey et al. 2006.

Strengths:

Internet marketing is available 24/7. The internet does not have opening hours and this allows small businesses to manage their operations 24 hours 7 days per week and be competitive in the digital market.

Internet marketing is cost-effective. Unlike traditional marketing, which requires quite high investments to make marketing campaigns, online marketing uses much less financial resources. Moreover, in many cases websites can generate traffic even for free. Another aspect which makes online marketing cheaper is low inventory costs in e-commerce businesses. The stock can be ordered depending on the demand; thus there are no high costs for rental, maintenance and storage.

Internet marketing results are measurable. Online marketing operations are easily monitored and results are available in real time. Every visit to a web-page or time spent on a page and every purchase can be accurately measured. This helps marketers to know instantly which marketing tools work better for them and bring better results. Apart from that, marketers have the opportunity to get better insight about their target customers, their origin and purchasing behaviour.

Internet marketing allows for having a personalized approach to different customers. Offers can be customized depending on the customer profile and online behavior. This helps marketers to reach a target audience more easily, while for customers it means that they have a better insight of products they are searching for. Apart from that personalized online marketing messages enable closer interaction with end customer, as two way communication is possible. Hence, better and more loyal relationships between consumer and marketer are reached through real-time interaction.

Weaknesses

Internet marketing is highly dependent on technology which might have sudden errors. Erroneous results caused by breakdown in internet technology can have severe effects for internet businesses. Broken links to important pages or non-working buttons for making purchases can seriously damage successful business operations.

Many customers think that purchasing through the internet is not reliable. One aspect is the online method of payment. This is not trusted by all customers: many of them refuse to buy online for this reason. Another thing preventing consumers from online purchasing is missing the possibility to closely see an object or even touch it. Because of that, many customers do not buy online, as merchandise might be different from what it seemed to be on a webpage. Thought, guaranteeing the possibility to return a product and get a full refund can increase customers' purchasing online.

Opportunities

Internet marketing can reach a wider audience. When marketing on the internet barriers of distance and borders become meaningless. Online marketing now allows businesses from one part of the world to market to another without local presence. Exporting business is possible without a network of distributors in different countries. Reaching

and interacting with target customers is now much easier than it was with traditional marketing.

Thanks to the online marketing, the difference in the size of companies and number of personnel is not a defining factor anymore. The effective use of online marketing channels allows small companies be competitive on along with big companies. Increased competition at the same time gives advantage to customers, since they have a bigger supply of products and services to choose from.

Threats

One of the serious external threats in internet marketing is that a particular marketing campaign can be easily copied by a competitor. Frauds can use a logo or a trademark of another company and use this to defraud customers and deprive a significant market share from somebody's business. They can also be used to give misleading information about a competitor's brand, which can also seriously affect the image of a business.

Online marketing can get drowned by too much online advertisement. With the increasing use of online marketing it gets more difficult for marketers to be noticed by a target audience. The internet is full of online ad clutter, and many customers have a tendency to simply ignore online advertising. This makes some businesses lose significant traffic and as a consequence lose revenue.

3 RESEARCH METHODS

A research question is the main factor in defining the most suitable and effective method. Research can be made through qualitative or quantitative methods, and the question is which one of them to choose for a particular project or how to combine both of them.

Qualitative research is used to get an understanding of fundamental reasons, opinions and motivations. It provides a complete and detailed description of a research topic. The instruments used for collecting data through qualitative method are in-depth interviews, narratives, documentary analysis and other strategies where the researcher serves as the main gathering instrument. (Wyse 2011.)

On the other hand, quantitative research gathers and analyses measurable data, i.e. it generates numerical data or data that can be transformed into helpful statistics. It is used to quantify behaviours, opinions and attitudes, as well as generalize facts and discover certain patterns in research. Surveying is the most used method for collecting data in quantitative research; it includes online surveys, paper surveys, mobile surveys, as well as some types of interviews. These might be, for example, face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews etc. (Wyse 2011.)

In this study the most suitable method to collect information was through quantitative research, as certain users' behavioural patterns were required to be collected and analysed.

3.1 Primary data

For this particular case an online survey was conducted to collect the necessary information. It was sent to young people of different nationalities and different backgrounds through the social network Facebook. Since the website of the case is international and operates in different languages and different markets, the questionnaire respondents are also multinational to get a more correct picture of results. The reason why only young people were taken into consideration is because the majority of the bab.la audience is people between 18 and 34 years old. (Internal data from bab.la, 2015. Figure 3.)

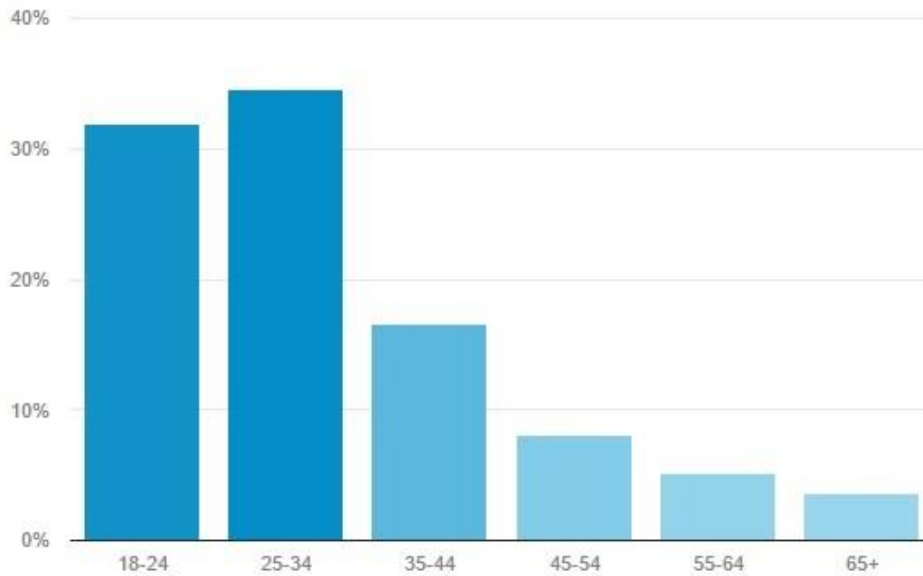


Figure 3. Review of the age of bab.la visitors.

Almost 2/3 of all respondents of the survey are students (124 people). 18.5% are graduates, and 13.4% had working experience of less than 5 years. Only 3 people had working experience of more than 5 years. (Figure 4).

Table 1. Status of respondents.

Student	66.2%
Graduate	18.5%
Working experience less than 5 years	13.4%
Working experience more than 5 years	1.9%

The survey respondents included the following nationalities: Russian, Spanish, German, Finnish, USA, Chinese, Polish, Italian, Slovak, Latvian, Brazilian, Belgian, Bangladesh, South Korean, Indonesian, Jordanian, Swiss, Czech, Cypriot, Turkish, Ukrainian, Indian, French, Salvadorian, Georgian, and Romanian. Since the website of the research is a linguistic portal, it has a truly multinational audience. Users from all over the world

access the website when they need help with foreign languages. That is why the questionnaire was sent to people of different nationalities in order to get a picture from differentiated prospective.

The survey is presented in Appendices 1 and 2 and it can also be found in the Google Docs [page](#).

Apart from the English version, there was also the form in Spanish language made in order to collect information among Spanish users of the website bab.la. It can be found [here](#).

Responses of the survey were collected in July 2015. The total number of respondents is 157. Full analysis of the survey responses can be found in Chapter 4.

3.2 Secondary data (Google Analytics)

As a source of secondary data, the Google Analytics tool was used. The purpose of this part of the research was to make an insight into the website bab.la's internal information, such as the demographics of users, analyses of traffic and channels generating traffic as well as effects of social media marketing on the company's operations.

The bab.la website has its own blog – www.lexiofiles.com, where articles related to languages and cultures are published every day. Several times per year the bab.la and Lexiofiles blog launch international competition of blogs worldwide. One of them is the Top Language Lovers competition (TLL), which was launched in May 2015. This competition aims to find the 100 best blogs related to languages from the whole world, and every year more and more bloggers take part in it. (In 2014 there were 1,276 nominees). The idea of the competition is selecting and nominating different language blogs to participate, and thanks to that they get the opportunity to promote their blogs and be known to wider audience. bab.la gets the biggest advantage from the voting phase of the competition when participants share the competition and blog in social networks to ask people to vote for their blog. As a result, not only nominees but also people who want to vote for them access the Lexiofiles blog and the bab.la website. Hence, this marketing campaign aims to help the bab.la gain more recognition among

people, whose work is related to languages or translations or who are simply fond of learning foreign languages.

In the secondary data part the analysis of Top Language Lovers competition and its effects on social channels of traffic is provided. All the data from Google Analytics was retrieved in July 2015, and different periods of time were taken to analyse the consequences of marketing activities on a company's operations.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Survey respondents

Among all the respondents almost 23% knew about the linguistic portal bab.la before.

Among those people who knew about bab.la, 4 people use bab.la every day, 9 respondents said they use it 1-2 times per week, 3 people use it 1-3 times per month, and the majority said they use the website quite rarely (20 people out of 36). (Figure 4).

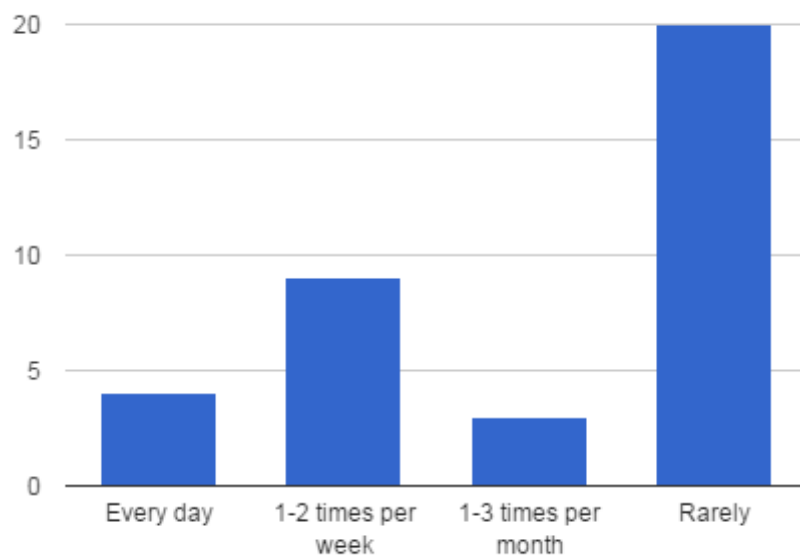


Figure 4. Frequency of use of the website bab.la.

Most of the respondents (25 people) knew about bab.la from search engine results, when they were searching for help with foreign languages. The rest found the website in the section “useful links” on another website, in social networks or then the link was provided to them by their university. Four respondents had heard about the website from a friend. (Figure 5).

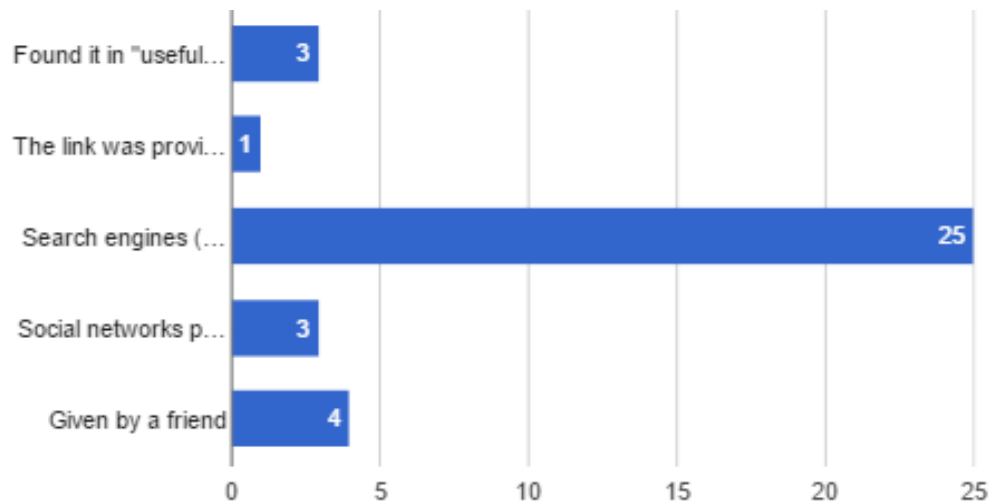


Figure 5. Sources of information about the website bab.la.

The most popular service of the linguistic portal bab.la among the respondents was the dictionary, which accounted for 33 answers choosing it as the important one (Figure 6). The internship platform and phrasebook were the second and third most popular services accounting for 8 and 6 answers, respectively.

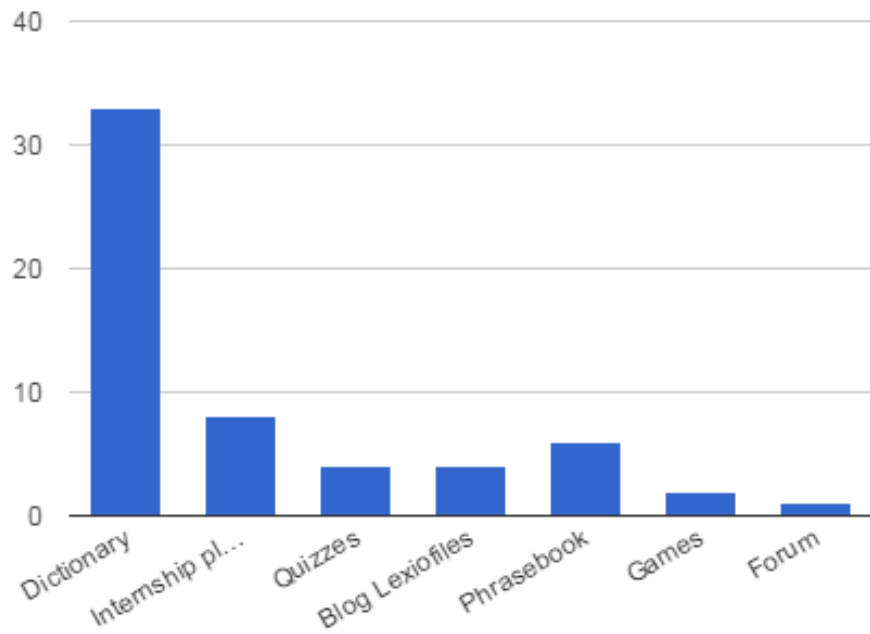


Figure 6. Most useful services of bab.la.

One-third of the respondents (12) knowing about the website are active users, i.e. they interact with the website trying to help in developing dictionaries, suggesting translations, adding new words etc. Twenty-four of the respondents do not actively interact with the website in this way.

More than 30% of respondents who use bab.la (11 answers) also follow its page in social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter or Google +.

Among all respondents more than 75% answered that they follow some companies' pages in social networks. This fact supports the idea that companies' presence in social networks and interaction with followers is an essential part of online marketing and has a potential to grow as a way of marketing products and services.

Reading blogs or articles has a connection to the blog of bab.la Lexiofiles, which has language related content. Is it reasonable to maintain a blog spending time on writing and publishing articles every day, as the personnel of bab.la does? Almost 64% of the

respondents of different nationalities and statuses read blogs or articles regarding foreign languages and different cultures. So, even though the Lexiofiles blog has not yet reached a wide audience, it certainly has potential and reason to be maintained and bring a closer connection with its users.

Regarding the frequency of needed help with foreign languages, 34 respondents out of 157 said they need help every day. The majority of the respondents answered that they need help in foreign languages 1-2 times per week (48 people); 39 people said they need help from external sources only 1-3 times per month, and 36 people indicated they *rarely* need help with languages. (Figure 7).

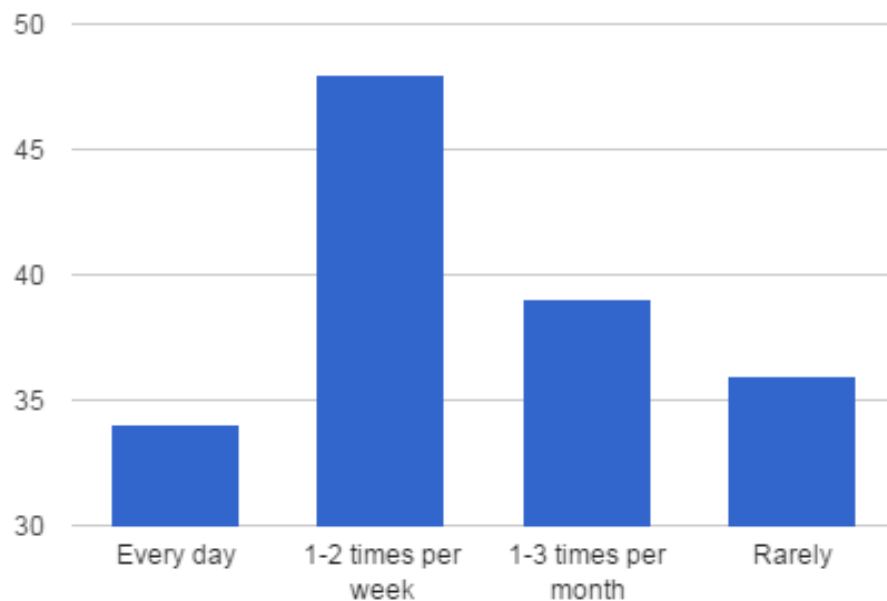


Figure 7. How often do you need help in foreign languages?

Most respondents (124) use search engines as a way to find useful websites when they need help with foreign languages (Figure 8). The second most popular way to find websites was language related blogs or articles (34 respondents). The “Useful links” section of a school or other websites (33 respondents) was followed by forum and social networks with 26 and 22 answers, respectively. 6 respondents also chose the option “other” with the following answers: native speakers, Google translator, friend’s suggestion, www.wordreference.com, www.dict.tu-chemnitz.de.

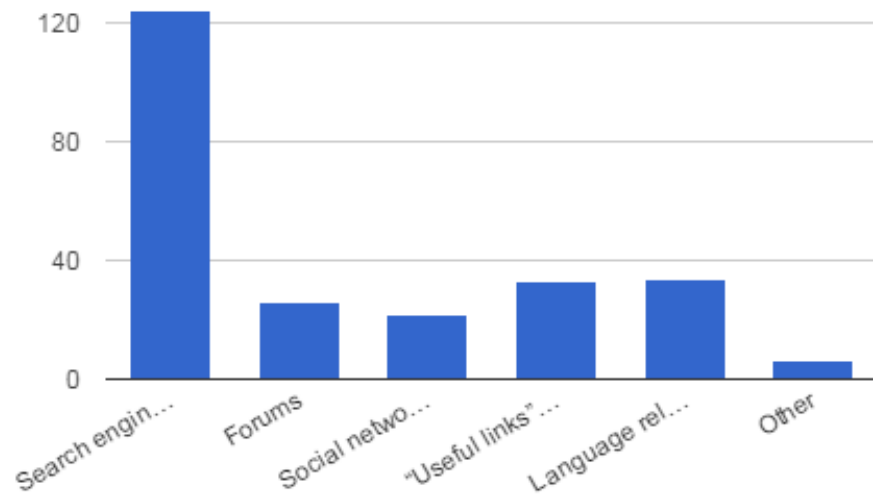


Figure 8. Searching useful websites related to languages.

The main preference in language supporting websites among the respondents is that the service has to be free to use. 120 people chose it as one of the defining characteristics. Fast access to a website and its reliability both had 80 people who found these options as their preferences in language supporting websites. Many people (68) also thought that the website has to be easy to use, and 13 people would access a website if they got positive feedback from other people. (Figure 9).

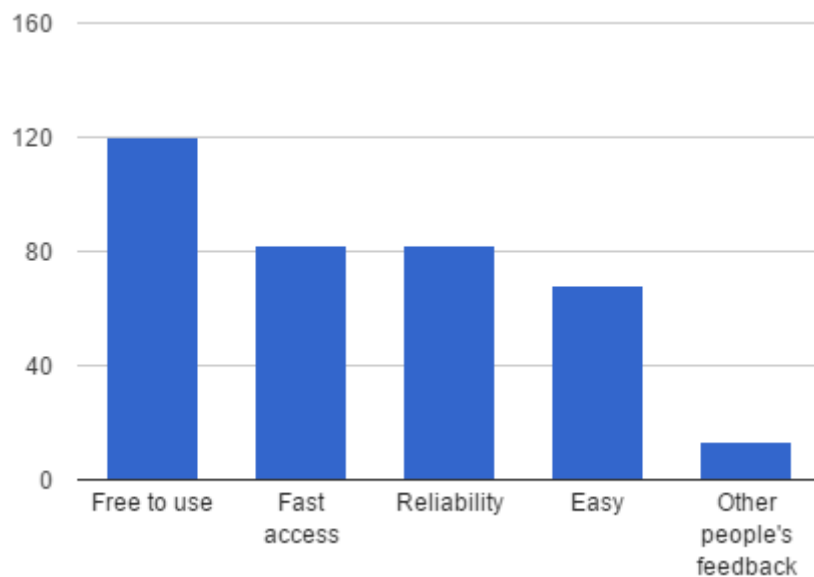


Figure 9. Preferences in language supporting websites.

4.2 Google Analytics Data

When retrieving the data from Google Analytics tool for bab.la, the following analyses were considered: traffic and its sources, social networks' impact on traffic and the marketing campaign effect. In general, the main source of traffic for a company like bab.la is an organic search. This search engine optimisation is extremely important for the website to ensure its high position in search results of internet users. Regarding the social media marketing, the total share of traffic generated from the social channel is rather small; it accounts for only 0.05% - 0.07% of the total traffic. However, the presence of the company in social networks is still significant, and the trend of following companies among users is increasing. bab.la is not an exception and is getting more and more followers in social networks every day. Next, detailed information about social networks marketing and traffic of the website bab.la is provided.

4.2.1 An analysis of the traffic of bab.la website and its sources

During July 2015 the bab.la website was visited 45,983,358 times including new and returning users. Table 2 shows that almost half of all visitors (47%) are returning ones, i.e. they knew about the website already. The rest were first timers. In general visitors went through 2-3 pages with an average session duration of 2 minutes 51 second. The bounce rate is 68%, which means that this number of users jumped off of the page right after visiting.

Table 2. Audience Behaviour Overview.

Sessions	45.9 mil
Users	30.8 mil
New visitor	24.4 mil (53% of total sessions)
Returning visitor	21.6 mil (47% of total sessions)
Page views	112.9 mil
Pages/Sessions	2.45
Avg. Session Duration	00:02:51
Bounce Rate	68.04%

Table 3. An overview of the traffic of the bab.la website and its sources.

Organic Search	~38.1 mil	82.80%
Direct	~7.6 mil	16.43%
Referral	~0.3 mil	0.72%
Social	~0.02 mil	0.05%

Organic searches comprise the biggest source of traffic to the website accounting for almost 83% of all traffic channels (Table 3). Direct traffic is in second position bringing 7,555,581 (16.43%) sessions per month. This is followed by referral and social channels, which account for 0.72% and 0.05% respectively. Table 4 shows which particular search engines are used by bab.la visitors.

Table 4. An overview of search engines for accessing the bab.la website.

Google	94.88%
Yandex	2.15%
Bing	1.08%
Yahoo	1.03%
Go.mail.ru	0.30%
Ask	0.24%
Seznam	0.17%
Onet	0.3%
Rambler	0.2%
Globo	0.2%

The most used search engine Google accounts for 94.9%. It is followed by Yandex (2.15%), Bing (1.08%), Yahoo (1.03%) and other search engines, which account for less than 1% of the overall number.

4.2.2 An analysis of social networks' impact on traffic

Among social networks, Facebook is the most effective source of traffic for bab.la. Half of all traffic generated by social channels is brought by Facebook. However, the impact of social channels on the website in general is relatively small, accounting only for 0.05% of total traffic. (Table 5).

Table 5. An overview of the social channel of traffic

Social networks	% of total share of social channel of traffic
Facebook	50.13%
Blogger	28.45%
Vkontakte	8.16%
YouTube	2.37%
Twitter	1.62%
Gutefrage.net	1.60%
Naver	1.59%
StumbleUpon	1.18%
Reddit	0.93%

Having a webpage in Facebook helps to increase awareness of the company among social network users. The internal data from bab.la provides an overview of the evolution of Facebook likes that bab.la page received from the 6th of January 2014 to the 6th of May, 2015. With the exception of a small decrease in March 2015, which was caused by the recently launched Facebook policy regarding the removal of certain inactive accounts, there was a constant increase in the number of likes during the period lasting one and one-half years. The number rose from less than 60,000 likes to more than 75,000. This means that the awareness of bab.la among Facebook users is increasing, and more and more people keep following the pages of companies in social networks.

The same continuous increase is observed in the overview of Twitter followers from the 3rd of January, 2014 to the 25th of May, 2015. During one and one-half years, the number grew from less than 9,000 to 12,000 Twitter followers.

4.2.3 An analysis of marketing campaign effects: blog Lexiofiles and Top Language Lovers competition

Figure 10 illustrates the comparison of two months' traffic in bab.la generated by social channels. The Top Language Lovers competition launched on the 7th of May affected the traffic generated from social channels significantly. The average traffic in an ordinary month (any month without such marketing campaign as TLL) does not exceed 1,000 sessions per day. However, during the competition period, particularly the timing of the final results (end of May), there is a significant increase in the number of sessions, reaching 3,500 sessions on the 27th of May. This accounts for an almost 400% change compared to the same date in April.

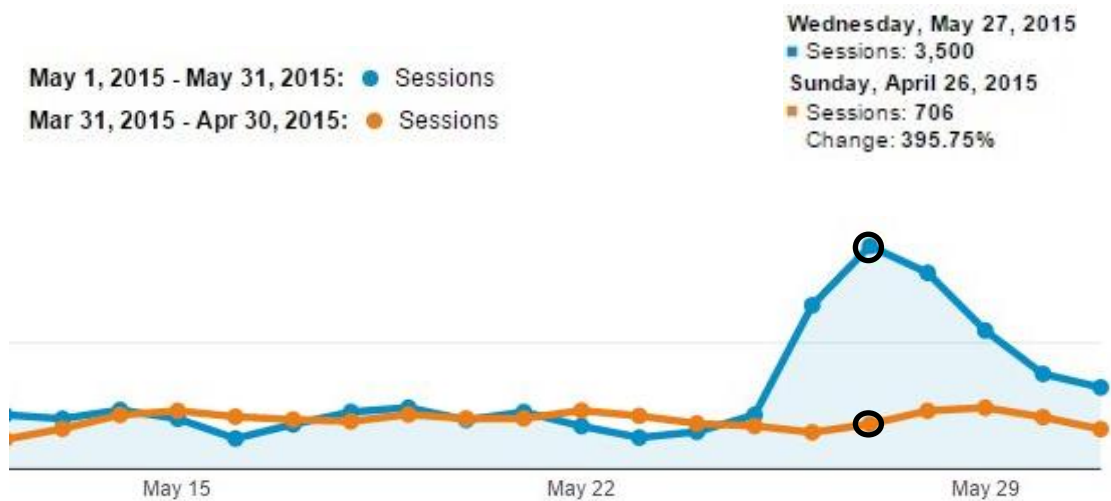


Figure 10. Impact of TLL competition on traffic generated by social channels.

Table 6 describes the percentage of change in traffic generated by particular social networks. Only the three networks with the most significant changes were taken into account. Facebook had the highest traffic among all social networks. The TLL competition launched in May affected the traffic from Facebook users accounting for 73.9% of the change compared to the traffic generated in April. Twitter is in the second position accounting for 1,795 sessions in May, but the percentage of change between two months is 400%, which is significantly higher than for Facebook. Twitter is followed by Blogger, with 13.2% of the change in traffic between two months. (Table 6).

Table 6. Changes in traffic generated by social networks.

Social Network	Acquisition	
	Sessions	New users
% change of social traffic	47.21%↑	55.95% ↑
Facebook		
May 1,2015 – May 31, 2015	19,859 (59.60%)	12,853 (61.61%)
Mar 31, 2015 – Apr 30,	11,420 (50.45%)	6,725 (50.27%)
% change	73.90%	91.12%
Twitter		
May 1, 2015 – May 31,	1,795 (5.39%)	1,133 (5.43%)
Mar 31, 2015 – Apr 30,	359 (1.59%)	268 (2.00%)
% change	400%	322.76%
Blogger		
May 1, 2015 – May 31,	7,204 (21.62%)	4,075 (19.53%)
Mar 31, 2015 – Apr 30,	6,363 (28.11%)	3,687 (27.56%)
% change	13.22%	10.52%

Regarding the total traffic from all channels, there was no visible change when comparing the period of the TLL competition and a normal month. Organic, direct and referral channels were not influenced by the launched competition, i.e. it does not play a decisive role in the marketing activities of bab.la.

5 SUMMARY

Apart from traditional marketing methods, the internet provides numerous opportunities for companies to market their products and services via online channels. It allows organisations to implement marketing activities with very low or even zero investment.

Such used online tools include SEO and SEM, social media marketing, email marketing and various Google services.

The marketing activities of the linguistic portal bab.la were analysed, and the effects of particular marketing tools on the company's operations were evaluated. As a research method, a survey was conducted to find out about users' perception of the website bab.la, its presence in social networks as well as about language related habits of users. Google Analytics was also used to analyse traffic of the website bab.la, its sources, an overview of its audience and marketing campaign effects.

Is it possible to operate marketing activities successfully while investing little or nothing in its implementation?

The research showed that the linguistic portal bab.la is not so widely known, as only 23% of all respondents from different countries and with different backgrounds had already known about the website and had used it before. However, in spite of the fact that the number of respondents knowing about the website is relatively low, the general amount of traffic, according to the information from Google Analytics, is rather high, accounting for almost 46 million sessions per month. It means on average there are more than 1 million sessions per day, which is quite a high number. It is fair to say that, while investing little or nothing in the implementation of marketing for the company, bab.la has successfully operated its activities for nine years and is continuing to grow as a company.

How do some tools, such as search engine optimisation, social media marketing, blogging, affect bab.la's operations?

The main source of finding the website by bab.la users, as well as the main source of its traffic, is search engines, with Google.com the most common. This means that Search Engine Optimisation is an extremely important tool for online marketing, as its successful implementation might bring a truly great amount of traffic to the website.

Regarding bab.la's presence in social networks, the survey showed that 30% of the respondents who already knew about bab.la are also followers in Facebook, Twitter or Google +. However, the social source of traffic accounts for only 0.05% of the total amount of traffic. In spite of this fact, marketing in social networks is still significant for companies, as it has a different function (this is discussed in the next question).

Apart from that, maintaining a blog is also a good marketing method for bab.la as well as for other companies. The research showed that almost 64% of all respondents sometimes read blogs or articles about languages and cultures. In the particular case of bab.la, the blog Lexiofiles is used to implement a competition of blogs from all over the world. There are different annual competitions launched, all related to foreign languages, internationalism and cultures. The competition Top 100 Language Lovers blog, which was held by bab.la in May 2015, made quite a significant impact on the traffic generated by social channels, as the increase in the number of sessions was almost 400% in the period of voting phase of the competition. The share of traffic generated by social sources is quite low, so the overall effect of marketing campaigns on the total number of sessions of the website bab.la is also rather small and is only visible during the period of the competition.

Which are different functions of online marketing tools used by bab.la?

Having a page in social networks does not generate a lot of traffic through attracting new visitors. However, it helps to make a more close and loyal relationship with already existing visitors, keeping their interest by maintaining a page in social networks, interacting and communicating with them in real time and providing the latest news about the company. Social media marketing for internet-based companies like bab.la is a complementary way of marketing which does not generate much traffic but has an overall positive effect on the company's image and keeps relationships with users more open.

Providing additional information about languages and different cultures by posting articles in different languages in blog, as bab.la does, gives users of the website a picture from inside of the company and helps users to learn languages in a different way. In a manner similar to social media marketing, blogging gives users an opportunity

to better know the company and its perspective. It does not generate much traffic but gives users additional field to follow on the website they use all the time. Launching competitions for blogs is also a complementary action to keep the interest of the existing users of the website and to attract more readers to the blog Lexiofiles. The overall traffic of the website is not significantly influenced by the launched competitions.

In spite of the fact that the linguistic portal bab.la does not have world-wide recognition yet, the company has more traffic and more users following it in social networks every day. Continuing concentration on most important traffic sources as well as bringing new products to offer users will help the website to develop and reach its future goals.

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Survey for **bab.la** – linguistic portal

The language portal **bab.la** is a free online platform for language lovers. Offering various language related services (dictionaries, quizzes, phrasebooks etc) **bab.la** is working hand in hand with its users to make the website better by taking into account users' suggestions. Please, spend 3 minutes to fill this questionnaire and help **bab.la** improve its service! Thank you in advance!

1. Have you heard of the website **bab.la** (<http://bab.la>) before?
 - Yes
 - No (If no, please move to the question 10)
2. How often do you use it?
 - Every day
 - 1-2 times per week
 - 1-3 times per month
 - Rarely
3. How did you learn about **bab.la**? (You can select more than one option)
 - Found it in “useful links” on another website
 - The link was provided by university
 - Search engines (google, bing etc...)
 - Social networks posts (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn)
 - Other (please, specify):
4. Which services of the **bab.la** are important for you? (You can select more than one option)
 - Dictionary
 - Internship platform
 - Quizzes
 - Games
 - Phrasebook
 - Blog Lexiofiles
 - Forum
 - Others (please, specify):
5. The **bab.la** functions in a wiki-style, i.e. users can suggest translations, make own quizzes etc. Have you ever interacted with the website in this way suggesting translations, adding new words, asking/answering questions in a forum?
 - Yes
 - No
6. Do you follow **bab.la** in social networks (Facebook, Twitter etc)?
 - Yes
 - No
7. Do you follow any companies in social networks?

- Yes
 - No
 - 8. Do you read any blogs or articles about languages and cultures?
 - Yes
 - No
 - 9. How often do you need help in foreign languages?
 - Every day
 - 1-2 times per week
 - 1-3 times per month
 - Rarely
 - 10. How do you find websites useful for helping you with foreign languages? (You can select more than one answer).
 - Search engines
 - Forums
 - Social networks
 - “Useful links” section of your school website or other websites
 - Language related blogs or articles
 - Other(please, specify):
 - 11. What are your preferences in language supporting websites? (You can select more than one option).
 - Easy
 - Fast access
 - Free to use
 - Reliability
 - Other people’s feedback
 - Other (please, specify):
 - 12. Your status
 - Student
 - Graduate
 - Working experience less than 5 years
 - Working experience more than 5 years
 - Other (Please, specify):
 - 13. Your gender
 - Female
 - Male
 - 14. Your nationality
-

Thank you for your time! If you have any specific suggestions about how to improve the website of linguistic portal **bab.la**, you are welcome to share your ideas here:

Encuesta de bab.la - portal lingüístico

Bab.la-portal lingüístico, es una plataforma en línea gratis para los amantes del lenguaje. Ofreciendo diversos servicios lingüísticos (diccionarios, concursos, Libro de frases, etc.) bab.la está trabajando de la mano con sus usuarios para mejorar el sitio web, teniendo en cuenta las sugerencias de los usuarios. Por favor, tómese 3 minutos para rellenar este cuestionario y ayudar a bab.la a mejorar su servicio. ¡Gracias de antemano!

1. ¿Ha oído hablar de la página web bab.la (<http://bab.la>) antes?
 - Sí
 - No (Si no, pase a la pregunta 10)

2. ¿Con qué frecuencia la utiliza?
 - Cada día
 - 1-2 veces por semana
 - 1-3 veces al mes
 - Rara vez

3. ¿Cómo conoció bab.la? (Puede seleccionar más de una opción)
 - La encontré en "enlaces útiles" en otro sitio web
 - El enlace fue proporcionado por la universidad
 - Por los motores de búsqueda (google, bing, etc ...)
 - Redes sociales (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn)
 - Otro (por favor, especifique):

4. ¿Qué servicios de bab.la son importantes para usted? (Puede seleccionar más de una opción)
 - Diccionario
 - Plataforma de prácticas
 - Cuestionarios
 - Juegos
 - Libro de Frases
 - Lexiofiles blog
 - Foro
 - Otros (por favor, especifique):

5. bab.la funciona al estilo wiki, es decir, los usuarios pueden sugerir traducciones, realizar tests etc. ¿Alguna vez has interactuado con el sitio web de esta manera, sugiriendo traducciones, añadiendo nuevas palabras, preguntando / respondiendo a las preguntas en el foro?
 - Sí
 - No

6. ¿Sigues a bab.la en las redes sociales (Facebook, Twitter, etc)?
 - Sí
 - No

7. ¿Sigue a alguna empresa en las redes sociales?
- Si
 - No
8. ¿Ha leído algún blog o artículos sobre otras lenguas y culturas?
- Si
 - No
9. ¿Con qué frecuencia usted necesita ayuda en lenguas extranjeras?
- Cada día
 - 1-2 veces por semana
 - 1-3 veces al mes
 - Rara vez
10. ¿Cómo suele encontrar sitios web útiles para ayudarle con las lenguas extranjeras? (Puede seleccionar más de una respuesta).
- Los motores de búsqueda
 - Foros
 - Redes sociales
 - Sección "Enlaces de interés" de su sitio web de la escuela o de otros sitios web
 - Blogs o artículos relacionados con el idioma
 - Otro (por favor, especifique):
11. ¿Cuáles son sus preferencias en un sitio web de apoyo al lenguaje? (Puede seleccionar más de una opción).
- Fácil
 - Acceso rápido
 - De uso libre
 - Confiabilidad
 - Retroalimentación de otros usuarios
 - Otro (por favor, especifique):
12. ¿Cuál es su estado actual?
- Estudiante
 - Graduado
 - Experiencia de trabajo de menos de 5 años
 - Experiencia de trabajo de más de 5 años
 - Otros (Por favor, especifique):
13. Su sexo:
- Mujer
 - Hombre
14. Su nacionalidad:

¡Gracias por su tiempo! Si tiene alguna sugerencia específica sobre cómo mejorar la página web de bab.la-portal lingüístico, le invitamos a compartir sus ideas aquí: