Saimaa University of Applied Sciences
Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality, Imatra
Degree Programme in Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management

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Social Media Strategy. Case: Imatra Base Camp

Thesis 2015

Abstract

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The purpose of the thesis was to investigate how to create a social media strategy plan for a new brand. Social media plays a significant role in marketing nowadays. Social media is gradually replacing newspapers and journals. Being present on the Internet is necessary for a company or a brand to develop its business and attract new clients.

The study includes theoretical and empirical parts. The theoretical part covers the concept of social media, how it can be beneficial for a company and how to write the social media marketing plan. The empirical part of the thesis is a social media plan itself. The case is Imatra Base Camp, a new tourism brand in Imatra, Finland.

The result of the thesis is a ready-to-implement strategy for the brand Imatra Base Camp. The author hopes that this study will be useful as a template to build and develop their strategy.

Keywords: social media, marketing strategy, brand awareness.

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1 Introduction

This chapter covers the reasons why the author chose such topic for the thesis; furthermore, in this chapter, the aims of the conducted work and expectations are covered.

1.1 Justifications of the topic choice

The process of choosing the thesis topic was not long. The initial ideas covered some sport tourism related subjects, and finally the author was offered to work on a social media presence of a new local brand that is mainly related to sport activities and wellness, Imatra Base Camp.The topic of social media is very popular nowadays. This thesis can be useful as a template for a future career because the principles and the process of creating the strategy are the same for every company or a brand. Moreover, many different subjects that were studied at Saimaa University of Applied Sciences are included in this project, for instance social media, marketing, destination marketing, branding. It is a good idea to have such a mix of topics in one project, because it can summarize all that was studied during the three years at Saimaa UAS.

1.2 The aim of the thesis

The aim of the thesis is to create a social media marketing strategy that can be used by a case-study brand Imatra Base Camp in order to increase the brand recognition, build a brand image, market the destination, attract tourists and provide people with current and useful information about the happenings in Imatra region.

1.3 The thesiscontent

There are several parts of the thesis. First part is a theoretical part that includes the concepts of social media, Internet marketing and branding. Then the author concentrates on social media marketing plan itself and the theory part is about the steps how to create the most efficient strategy for any company. The empirical part includesthe plan and the results of one part of the strategy that was implemented.

2 What is social media?

Social Media Defined website describes Social Media as a future of communication, a countless array of Internet-based tools and platforms that increase and enhance the sharing of information. This new form of media makes the transfer of different content in general increasingly fluid among Internet users. Social Media is not only for regular Internet users but business as well. (Social Media Defined 2014).A unique role of social media is that enabling customers to talk to one another is, in a sense, an extension of traditional word of mouth communication (Mangold & Faulds 2009).

2.1The history of social media

The history of social media started in the twentieth century. After the first computer was invented, people started to think about how to connect those computers with each other, and this led to the creation of Internet.

In the 90s, a "boom" happened in this sphere. It was a period of static web pages: people created forums where users can write their topics and reply to others. The mid-1990ssaw the appearance of first blogs. Yochai Benkler, an author and professor at Harvard University, connects this with the creation of the software that enables to change the web page using a simple and accessible interface.

In 1998,online diaries such as Open Diary was launched. That gave the possibility of commenting on posts and gave an idea of first online social networking. Next year the blog platform LiveJournal was invented.

In 2001, Wikipedia, a multilingual encyclopediawas introduced to people, it allowed users to write and edit articles. In two years MySpace, an online social network, began its history. It allowed to create communities with people who had the similar interests; personal profiles, blogging, posting pictures, video and music content.

The year 2004 was a year of Facebook foundation, according to Facebook (2015) statistics, currently with 968 million daily active users on average. The next popular platform, YouTube was launched next year, 2005. It allowed users to share the video and watch. Microblogging service Twitter was launched later. Itsdistinguishing feature is the limitation of the post size by 140 characters. This format made this platform popular among people and easy to monitor and analyze. (Semenov 2011).

2.2 Social media today

Gardner (2013) defines Social media is as not just an activity; it is an investment of valuable time and resources. Surround yourself with people who not just support you and stay with you, but inform your thinking about ways to 'WOW' your online presence. (Social Commerce 2015).

Social Media is one of the fastest growing online tools. People spend around 110 billion minutes on blogs or different social media websites. The number of social media sites users is growing up every year. The graphbelow shows how much the amount of social network users around the worldincreasedfrom 2010 to 2014 and also somepredictions until 2018.
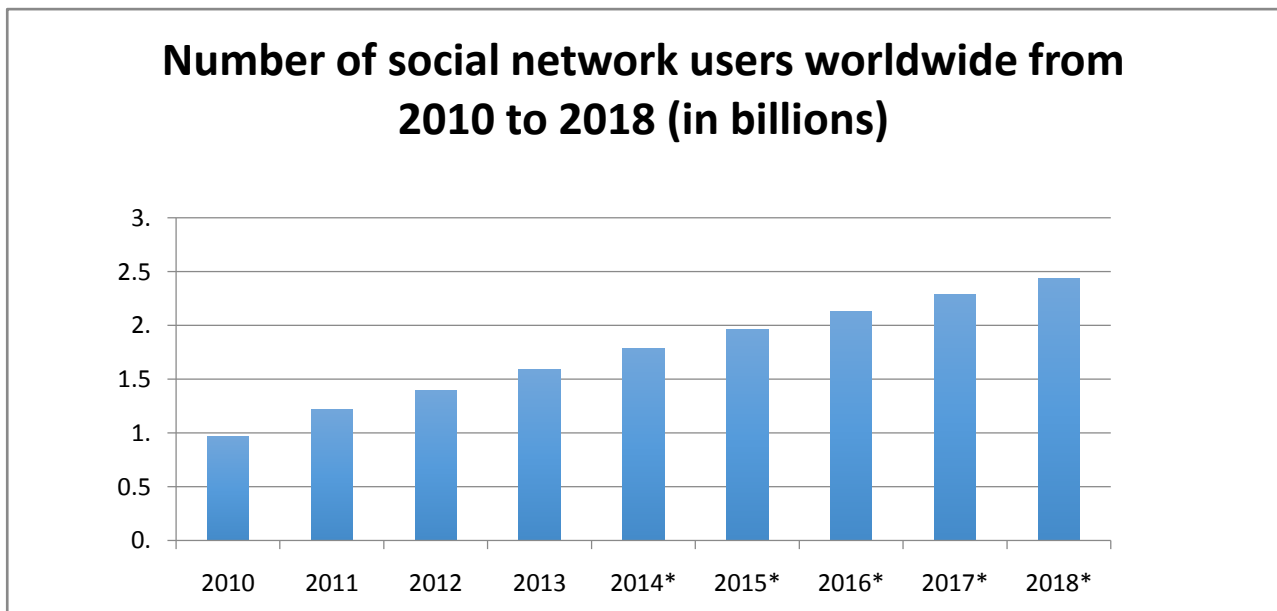

Figure 1. A number of social networks users. (Statista 2015).

The Internet plays avery significant rolein human lives.It is difficultto imagine anyonewho has not heardabout suchconceptsas a "search engine" or "website". The numbers of Internet usersare increasing every yearandthe number ofInternetservices is also growing. The simple view of the site in a browser nowadays cannot satisfy people. The visitors like the platforms where they can actively interact with other visitors with using different tools. The more diverse the site is, for examle, the ability to comment on posts, share pictures, videos, music – the more users it attracts. Such sites like blogs, social networks, together are one concept – Web 2.0.

2.3Marketing through Social Media

Social Media Marketing(SMM) is the process of gaining website traffic or attention through social media sites(Wikipedia 2010). Weinberg (2009) says that it is aprocess that empowers individuals to promote their websites, products, or servicesthrough online social channels and to communicate with and tap into a much largercommunity that may not have been available via traditional advertising channels (Perdue 2010).It is a complex of activities that promote the brand or any other business ideas through social media. SMM is a powerful toolfor working withthe company's image, increasepublicity capitaland loyalty oftarget groups.This is not analternativesearch engine promotionorcontextual advertising, but it canlead to good resultswhen usedin combinationof different instruments.

What is the advantage of being present in social networks? The answer is reach. A company wants its message to reach as many people as possible. To maximize this reach, a business needs to have a presence where the customers are and increasingly they are on social networking sites. (Halligan, Shah, & Scott 2009).

There are many ways of doing Social Media Marketing.The most popularof themis *buildingbrandcommunities*(creation of company's profiles in social media), *workingwith theblogosphere*, *reputation management*, *personal branding*and *unconventionalSMM-promotion.*

Building the brand community:

This concept is not new. People often discuss the common topic in forums, communities or groups. With the development of social networks, such communities have moved to an online environment to social networks. People gather in groups to share their experience about the product, to tell about advantages or problems that they faced. They also offer solutions, share their wishes. What is missing is that the ability to communicate with brand's team, representatives of a brand. Many questions from the users are unanswered and wishes not heard. For effective interaction with an audience, companies should create the brand community by themselves and take them under control.

Working with the blogosphere:

With the development of the Internet and its communication capabilities, blogs are changed and nowadays they are suitable channels for marketing. The blogosphere is a mirror of society, a reflection of people's needs, experiences, problems and a fresh look.

Many companies have taken the opportunity to work with the target audience via blogs for managing consumer preferences, informing a wide audience, making people interested in a brand.

Personal Branding:

Not only brands but people also would like to have a good reputation and fame. Personal brandingis necessary forpeoplewho want tostand outin the industry.

Reputation management:

Consumer Reviews are one of the main factors creating the company's reputation. Customers experience and opinions are one of the key factors while choosing the product. Today, the company's reputation depends on the information field, which is formed on the Internet. Negative feedback can ruin a reputation, positively make your brand a cult.

Don Sorensen, president of Big Blue Robot, who has been working with companies for the past ten years to improve their online reputations (Conner 2014), mentiones five tips for successful reputation management:

1. Own Your Search Engine Results Page;

2. Be Social: claim your brand's social media profiles and use them;

3. Blog: buy a domain that includes the brand name, and then develop the blog with professional, positive information about the company, products, industry trends, support issues and other topics(Conner 2014);

4. Think Outside the Box: for instance, encourage people to show how they are using your product through videos or pictures via different social networks (Conner 2014);

5. Have an Active PR Strategy.

2.4 Social media benefits

Most businesses venture into social media expecting to see a big return on investment. The hope is that new customerswill come in droves and that the benefits and revenue generation will be huge. However, this is rarely the case. It takes time to build momentum with social media, and the benefits are not always as obvious as one would like. (Chandler 2013).

Marketing in social media is very popular nowadays;most of the modern companies useInternet as a channel to attract the audience. This way of marketing can bring many benefits to the business.

Social networks are the largest area that is used by a huge amount of people. Such people have common interests and significantly simplifies the search for the right audience, social networks offer a wide range of search criteria. The Internet targetsdifferent segments and offers different types of information or services according to the user profiles.

By promoting one's brand, idea or website in social networks, one can achieve success much faster than by doing it offline. If people are interested in the brand, they will promote it among their friends. This is called word-of-mouth communication (WOM). It involves the passing of information between a non-commercial communicator and a receiver concerning a brand, a product, or a service (Wikipedia 2010).

The financial issue is one of the key factors. The costs of such promotion are much less than offline promotion. Revenues from marketing in social networks are always much higher than the costs.

Up-to-date information means that the platforms can include the most recent information and with high frequency. The Internet is a good way to provide information in the last hour or minute that is very useful while searching for tickets for example. The Internet allows people to react quickly. Changing the information can be done very fast.

One more big advantage of the Internet,is it can be accessed 24 hours a day and 365 days a year.

A one-stop shop means that good sites offer consumers a one-stop shop, providing all the related information they could want in just one place. They either make use of a whole network of links to other appropriate sites or are "portals", grouping information together under an umbrella site. (Briggs 2001, p.41).

2.5Social media platforms

Olsy Sorokina, a popular social media expert and writer, defines eight types of social media platforms:

1. Relationship networks
2. Media sharing networks

3. Online reviews
4. Discussion forums
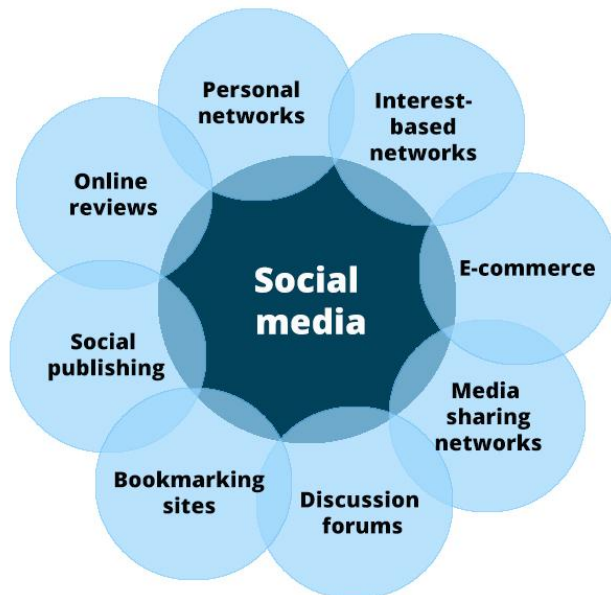5. Social publishing platforms
6. Bookmarking sites
7. E-commerce

Figure 2. Social media platforms. (Sorokina 2015).

Relationship networks:

The major network in this sector is a widely used platform Facebook. Personal networks were one of the first that offered mini-sites, profiles. While using this kind of networks, people have everything, such as walls, messages, shared posts in one place.Relationship networks can be divided into several themes: there are some that are used for recruitment like LinkedIn;whereas other platforms can be used to find love. Relationship networks also offer a unique chance for brands to connect to their users on a personal level. These days, it is necessary for most brands to have a Facebook Page or a Twitter account, to reach out to their audience online and answer any customer service queries that may arise.(Sorokina 2015).

Media sharing networks:

This kind of network is used for sharing among people. The posts in different platforms can have different content: in Facebook and Twitter most of the shared posts contain text,

Instagram and Flickr are focused on images and the main type of communication in YouTube, Vimeo and Snapchat is video.

Online reviews:

Nowadays many users prefer to follow other people recommendations, so the sites such as Yelp, Airbnb and Urbanspoon become very popular. The user reviews become more important than before. Many things can be reviewed – from restaurant to companies. Such kind of a platform contains the public opinion, and people can share their experience or determine if the watched locations are good or not.

Discussion forums:

Forums and message boards, the old school social media, are still one of, if not the most popular, place to ask and answer questions about brands and products (Falls 2012).Discussion forums are one of the oldest types of social media. People use forums to discuss the topics they are interested in. Some forums like Quora and Digg require the real name of the person to register and post. The best way of being present in such type of the platform is to share content to a relevant discussion and participate in many of them as possible. (Sorokina 2015).

Social publishing platforms:

Social publishing platforms are for example blogs, where long and short-form content is shared with other people. Such platforms vary from real-time interaction networks,for instance, Twitter, that is not usually included in the blogging category by most users, to Medium and Tumblr that are battling it out for the title of the best interactive social publishing and to more traditional blogging platforms, such as WordPress.(Sorokina 2015).

Bookmarking sites:

Nowadays, the amount of content on the Internet is very big and sifting through all of it by yourself is impossible. When one know what to search, Google is very useful. However, if one does not know the content they would like to read, there are bookmarking sites, such as Pinterest, where people collect content from somewhere on the Internet and save it to their accounts. Bookmarking is a great way to save things for later follow-up or to revisit on a regular basis. While your browser's built-in bookmarks make for a quick and easy visit to

your favorite sites, external bookmarking sites can extend to images, quotes, articles and more. (Cooper 2011).

Interest-based networks:

Social media offers a great opportunity to unite people with similar interests. There are platforms dedicated to the exploration of interest, for example, Last.fm for people who love music and Goodreads for authors and avid readers.A hobby or interest-based network is a good place to keep up with current trends among fans of a particular industry or its products.(Sorokina 2015).

E-commerce

Nowadays, agreat trend is the ability to purchase products via clicking a button. A platform like Polyvore aggregate products from different retailers in a single online marketplace and services like Etsy allow small businesses and individual crafters to sell their products without an existing brick-and-mortar location.(Sorokina 2015).E-commerce elements can be seen onmany platforms whose primary functionalities place them in different categories like Twitteror Facebook. E-commerce sites or sites with e-commerce capabilities are a good idea for brands that do not yet having an online store on their website. If there is a lack of agreement with a big distributor such as Amazon or EBay, it can be possible soon to have a Buy button in a social network. (Sorokina 2015).

Commonly used social media platforms

There is a large amount of social media tools that can be used. The choice depends on the company's interests, goals and business. To maximize the social media results, there is a need to understand each platform's audience and strengths. Social Media Examiner made a survey with 3,720 participants about the usage of social media. The most widely used ones are shown below:
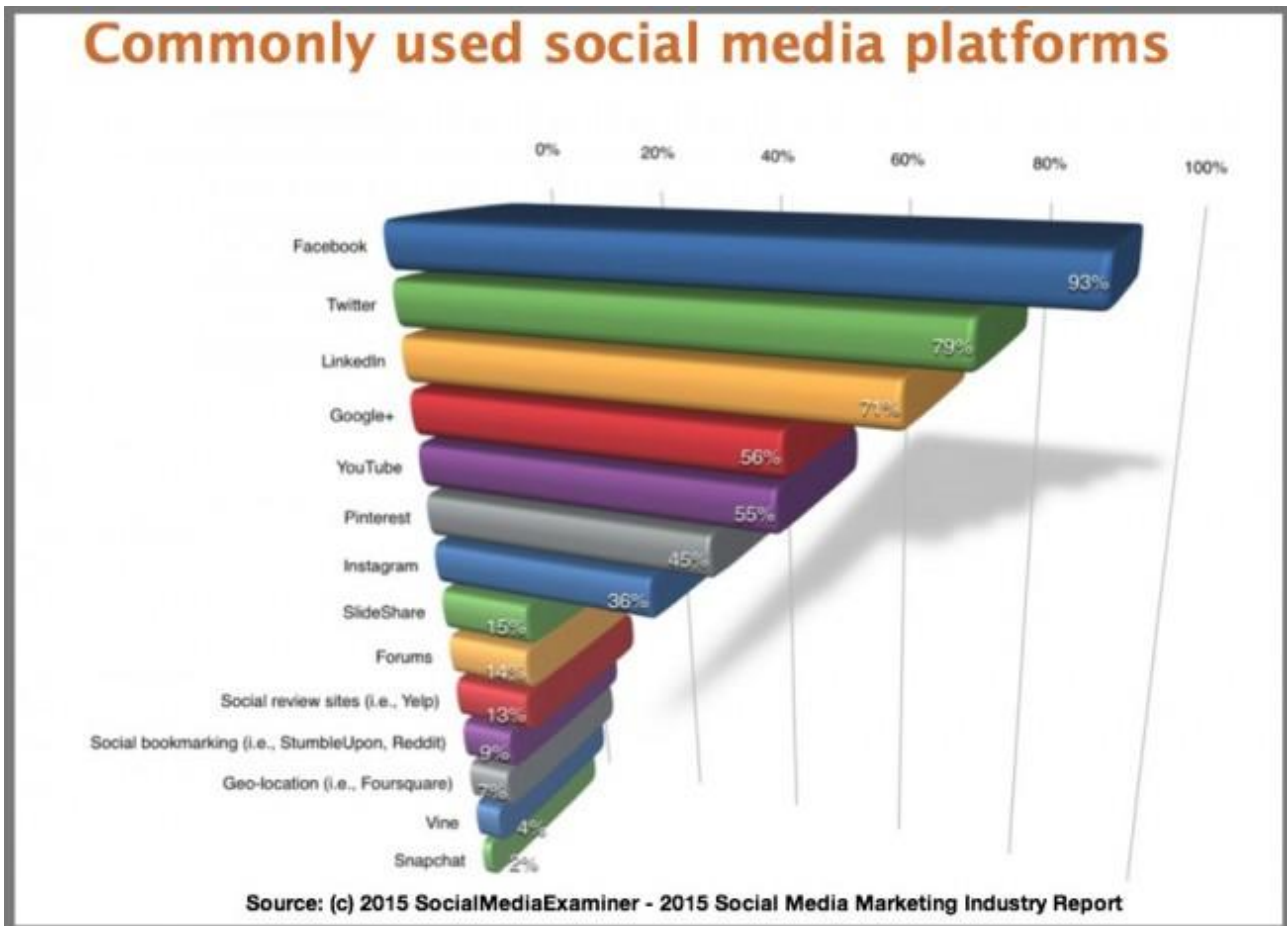
Commonly used social media platforms

Platform	
Facebook	93%
Twitter	79%
LinkedIn	71%
Google+	56%
YouTube	55%
Pinterest	45%
Instagram	36%
SlideShare	15%
Forums	14%
Social review sites (i.e., Yelp)	13%
Social bookmarking (i.e., StumbleUpon, Reddit)	9%
Geo-location (i.e., Foursquare)	7%
Vine	4%
Snapchat	2%

Source: (c) 2015 SocialMediaExaminer - 2015 Social Media Marketing Industry Report

Figure 3. Commonly used social media platforms. (SocialMediaExaminer 2015).

2.6 Future of Social Media

"Our digital future is about enabling better productivity and decisions making to enjoy a better quality of life"(Baroudi 2014).Nowadays, user profiles are not complete. In the near future, social media platforms will pay more attention to making users complete their profiles. This will help marketers to segment their target audience in a more effective way, and their ads will be more focused on individuals.

One of the main obstacles to social media is the amount of content published every minute. The content volume is going to increase, but technology will be changed. It will allow people to target content to a certain person in real time. This will make people read the content that is hand delivered and creates a much stronger proposition for the readers.

Piera Gelardi, a creative director of Refinery 29, popular lifestyle platform, says:

"Mobile is the first step toward the portable future of social media and how we consume it, and I think wearables will be a big part of that. I can see it evolving into an implanted

device in our bodies that will connect to everything around us. I think you will be able to share a taste, a sensation and smell. I think a shared consciousness and a version of telepathic communication are all very likely. Imagine shopping an e-commerce store with a friend, virtually trying things on your avatar that's representative of your likeness and conversing in real time with that friend, all while on the go in different places.We are already seeing increased personalization, more individual-to-individual communication, more humanlike algorithms and more specified, diverse social platforms. I think those trends will continue in the future."

Mark Zuckerberg, an American computer programmer, known as one of the co-finders ofthe most popular social media channel Facebook, gave interview where he mentioned his predictions about the future of social media. He identified three key trends:

1. The number of Internet users will grow strongly;
2. It will be more common to communicate through pictures or SMS, rather than through the old web interface;
3. The future of computers is in augmented reality. (Zuckerberg 2015).

The first trend and the second one are not a surprise, even in India by the year 2018 the number of Internet users will be doubled. (Zuckerberg 2015).

In a few years, text can be replaced by other means of communication, for instance, pictures and videos are becoming much more popular than the text. That is why visual social media platforms like Instagram and Pinterest are gaining a great popularity nowadays.Growth can also be seen in a variety of mechanisms that people use to share with each other, and tools that people need to stay connected. The greatest interest is the expectations for augmented reality. "After some 10-15 years, I imagine, there will be a different platform, which will be much more natural than mobile phones, and will be much better integrated into our lives. I think it is easy to imagine that in the future we will have something that we can put on - and it will look like normal glasses. With them, you can have a complete picture of what is happening around you, and communicate without having to interrupt and look down." – says Mark Zuckerberg in his interview.

3 Branding

A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors(Kotler 2009). The main goal of branding concept is the goods or services to be sold. It means that it is necessary for a product to be recognizable; it is needed to be advertised and promoted well enough for the consumers to recognize your brand among other similar brands.

The idea of tourism branding became popular in the second half of the twentieth century because many similar tourism products appeared on the market. The idea of the brand is to simplify somehow the choice of tourism product by the consumer, who is faced with many similar tourism offers. A person does not have time to compare all the annotations, advantages and disadvantages, the range of services and their quality. The brand can be described as the perception in the mind of the consumer. A strong, positive brand image helps places to differentiate themselves from others (Kotler & Gertner, 2004).A strong brand can "enable premium pricing, as well as the market segmentation that makes it possible to communicate a coherent message to a target customer group" (Berthon, Holbrook, Hulbert, & Pitt 2011).

3.1 Destination branding

Destination branding is very similar to place branding, but in theory it remains the most develop specialization of place branding with it's predominant focus on tourism (Szondi 2007). Destination branding is a setof unique, strong and positive associationsthat arise inthe minds of consumers, addingthe value ofa particular area, as well as provided additionalvalue of goodsor services thatare madethere.

According to Anholt (2010) a destination brand is about the characteristics of a place that is attractive to visit. It is really about bringing the place to life and making it relevant to people today (Anholt 2010).

Destination branding is a versatile management tool for the development of the region. It can effectively solve the problem of increasing the competitiveness of the territory. A strong destination brand allows:

1. To stimulate the flow of external public and private investments in priority sectors of the economy;
2. To stimulate the process of cluster development of priority sectors of the economy;
3. To step up exports of local producers;
4. To increase the attractiveness of the site, keeping the local population from migration and attracting new population, which has required skills and qualifications.

To create a successful brand the region must take into account two components. The first one is economic: to determine this component it is necessary to understand how the region can be useful to other areas, to determine the possibility of the regional economy, to analyze how it is developed, to analyze how different brands integrate in the territory. The second component is cultural, ideological: there is a need to find out how can the region be interesting on a cultural level, what culturaland historical places, events and valuescan attract people from other regions.

In general, when creating a regional brand there are three main stages. First stage is searching and selecting the most significant differences, competitive advantages that define the region and can serve as a basis for the formation of the brand. Second stage is forming the meaning and content of the brand through strengthening competitive advantages. Based on data collected during the first stage a model of the brand and the strategy are created. Third stage is creating a brand, its promotion: the formation of promotional tools, a creation of programs promoting the brand, the implementation of these programs, the maintenance of the brand in the region.

If a place, product or service acquires a positive, powerful and solid reputation, this becomes an asset of enormous value – probably more valuable, in fact, than all its tangible assets, because it represents the ability of the place or organization to continue to trade at a health margin for as long as its brand image stays intact (Anholt, 2010, p. 92).

4 Social Media Strategy

Comcowich (2015) says that businesses often charge ahead without a defined objectives or clear strategy. They may pick a social media platform and dive in without forethought. Remaining active on multiple networks their customers do not visit or posting material that does not interest their audience creates no concrete marketing benefits. Social media without a strategy invites social media tragedy. (Comcowich 2015).

A social media strategy is a plan that summarizes everything that is planned to do to reach success in social networks. This plan should include current information about existing accounts, targets for the future and the tools to be used to reach the goals.

The more specific you can get with your plan, the more effective you will be in its implementation (Lepage 2014).

Successful companies in social media function more like entertainment companies, publishers, or party planners than as traditional advertisers (Qualman 2014).

4.1 Six steps to create a social media strategy

According to Evan Lepage (2014) there are six main steps that should be done when creating a social media strategy. All of them are better to do step by step. (Lepage 2014).

4.1.1 Step 1 - Objectives and goals

The first step of making the strategy plan is to determine goal and objectives that are wanted to be achieved. If onehas certain objectives, it will be easier to react when the strategy does not meet the expectations.
The goals should be SMART:
1. Specific;
2. Measurable;
3. Attainable;
4. Relevant;
5. Time-bound. (Lepage 2014).

Jennifer Evans Cario, an industry leader in content driven social media strategies, a founder and President of SugarSpun Marketing, identified three primary goals:

1. Building or strengthening the brand. The steps of this process are shown below:

Figure 4. Six steps how to build a brand. (Evans Cario 2015).

The first stage is to set goals that one wants to be achieved, then the second stage is about analyzing current situation of the brand, what people think about it. The third stage is a content production to boost a brand. The next stage is to seed the content through paid and owned and finally, reach the target market and analyze the result of the campaign.
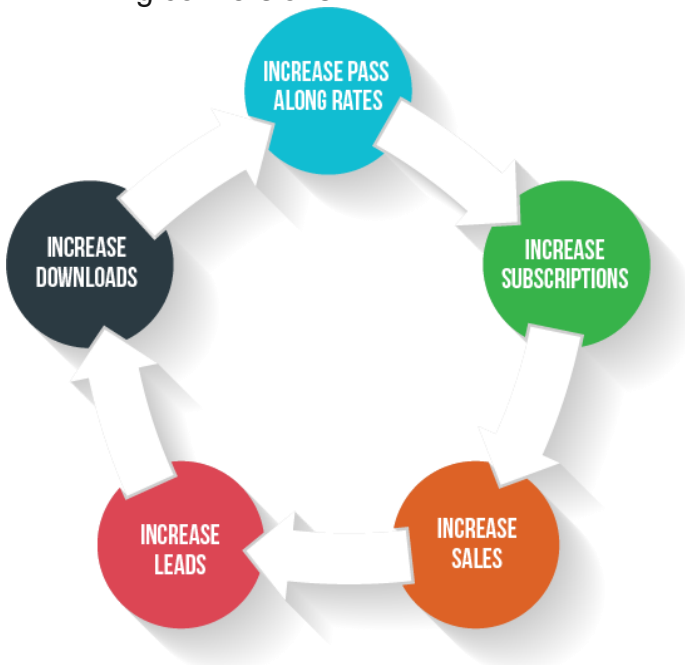
2. Driving conversions:

Figure 5. Driving conversions. (Evans Cario 2015).

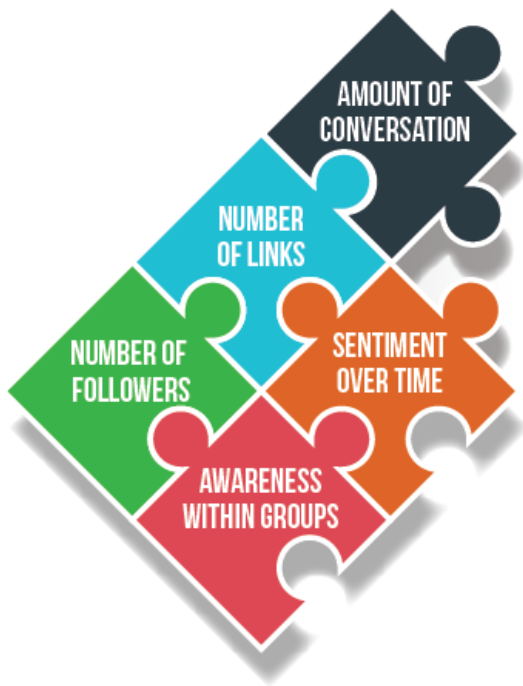3. Increasing or monitoring the presence:

Figure 6. Monitor the presence. (Evans Cario 2015).

4.1.2 Step 2 – Social media audit

Before creating a strategy, it is important to know what the current situation with the social media presence is. Prior to creating a social media marketing plan, one needs to assess their current social media use and how it is working for you. This requires figuring out who is currently connecting to you via social media, which social media sites your target market uses. (Lepage 2014). It is necessary to know:

1. How the existed profiles are working?
2. Who is responsible and for what?
3. What is the target market/audience?
4. Identify right channels to the right audience.
5. Create a mission to each channel.
6. Complete the profiles.
7. Have all the passwords and logins in one list. (Lepage 2014).

This audit should regularly be made to check if some of the platforms are needed to be updated or deleted.

The templates can be used to simplify the process can be found in Appendices 1 –5.

4.1.3 Step 3 - Create an account or improve an existing one

After the audit is done, it is a time to continue working to achieve the goals. The list that shows which channel should be used and for which audience is filled in, so the next step is to create a new account on the platform that is not used yet or improve the account that already exists. Every social network has a different audience and should be treated differently. However, each profile should be completely filled out and images and text should be optimized.

4.1.4 Step 4 - Content planning

If you want to succeed in social media, it is very important to produce a good content, a great content. Every marketing plan should include a well thought content plan.
You should have answers to the following questions:

☐ What type(s) of content you intend to post and promote via social media
☐ How often you will post the content
☐ Target audience for each type of content
☐ Who will create the content
☐ How you will promote the content

Figure 7. Content plan, questions. (Lepage 2014).
The template of the table to fill can find be found in appendices (Appendix 6).
The biggest daily challenge of social media is finding enough content to share. People call this "feeding the Content Monster." There are two ways to do this: content creation and content curation. (Kawasaki 2014).

4.1.5 Step 5 - The schedule and the time to post

The schedule is a list that includes dates and a time when to do the posts and other web activities. Do it in advance so that you can track if the produced content is variable or not. In Appendix 7 there is a calendar to fill in.
Furthermore, it is necessary to think about what content and when to publish; it is a good idea to divide content into several parts according to the topics. For instance: 50% of the

content drives back to the blog;25% of the content curates from other source;20% of the content drives enterprise content;5% of the content is HR and culture. (Lepage 2014).

4.1.6 Step 6 - Implement and monitor

Once you are ready with all previous steps, you can implement the strategy.When it comes to monitoring the results, different tools are used for different channels.
Maria Ogneva (2010), the Director of Social Media at Attensity, a social media engagement and voice-of-customer platform, identifies some steps that help to monitor the strategy.

1. Define an objective – think about the reason to monitor. Having an end goal in mind will help you target your resources correctly, select the right tool for the job and be more effective in the end. (Ogneva 2010).
2. Where to monitor? What tools to use?
3. What to monitor?
4. Prioritize – focus on the most important issues.
5. Create a plan – crisis management plan.
6. Listen fist, and then build relationships.
7. Choose the tools that match the strategy. (Ogneva 2010).

4.2 Budgeting

Developing the budget is an important step to do while creating a social media strategy. Step 1 –is to create a budget sufficient for the needs and goals; the example of the needs is brand development, materials, design.Step 2 is to determine the importance of Internet marketing.Step 3 is to assign the social media portion of the budget (SEO and SMM). Step 4 is to make an adjustment after observation.This is an example how the budget table can look like:

Item	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Marketing/promotion												
Marketing agency												
Online advertising												
In-app advertising												
Branding & artwork												
Giveaways												
More…												
Marketing/ promotion total	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
Other												
Search engine optimisation												
Application development												
Research												
More…												
Other total	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00

Figure 8. Budget. (Australian Government 2015).

5 Introduction to Imatra Base Camp

Imatra Base Camp is a local tourism brand related to sports activities as well as to wellness and events in Imatra region.Imatra is a small town, located in Eastern Finland near the Russian border. It was founded in 1948 near three industrial settlements that then in half a century have grown into a developed industrial town. Imatra Base Camp is a one-year-old brand, which can be recognized as a service catalogue that shows what the Imatra region can offer to people. The idea of the brand is to integrate suppliers and services into one brand name.

Figure 9. A screen of Imatra Base Camp web page. (Imatra Base Camp 2015).

The users of Imatra Base Camp website are tourists who travel alone or with families, teams and sport club members – all people who are interested in having a vacation in Imatra with wellness, sport, and athletic activities. In addition, business companies, whose employees want to spend short holidays with their team members. Imatra is a good place to combine business with pleasure.

The owner and creator of the Imatra Base Camp brand is Kehy, Imatra Region Development Company Ltd. It is owned by regional municipalities and companies and is responsible for business development in the region. Imatra Base Camp cooperates closely with local companies, for instance, hotels, restaurants, football teams and event producers.

5.1 The brand story

Imatra has strong roots in the history of Finnish tourism.Tourism started in Imatra region more than 200 years ago when people even from far away came to Imatra and enjoyed different activities. The Russian royal family came to visit an old castle that nowadays is the hotel "Valtionhotelli".

Nowadays Imatra is a well-developed town, and the development never stops, so each year the town is changing in a positive way. The amount of services that are offed by local companies is extremely great; that is very impressive.

Imatra is located between the East and West. It is an important logistical, geological and geopolitical crossroads. It is a place where different cultures meet.

Each direction is the opportunity - Imatra is always a safe place to return. Imatra is like a home; it is a cozy place with calm atmosphere. Everything is perfect here: people are taken care of; they have time to develop themselves, enjoy their lives, and "charge the battery".The silence, cleanliness and secure are three main characteristics of such a wonderful place.

"Large entity, which functions like a small village.
Movement possibilities, joy, services, and caring.
A place where natural elements and people face.
Travel rational reasons and return again for sentimental reasons."
(Imatra Base Camp 2015).

6 Social Media Strategy. Case study: Imatra Base Camp

Nowadays, every modern company should include social media into its marketing strategy. Why to use Social Media? The traditional ways of marketing are disappearing, and people use their friends' recommendations on social networks.

What is the most important platform? The home website is the critical element in the online strategy. It must be easy to use, clear; everything goes around the home web page.

Branding

It is necessary to have the logo, the color scheme on the website, one philosophy. The brand becomes recognizable because of these components. They also create a social brand identity. Another part of branding is interlinking. To make social media work, all the platforms should be linked with each other. For instance, Facebook should be linked with the website and with Twitter.

Imatra Base Camp logo:

Figure 10.Imatra Base Camp logo. (Imatra Base Camp 2014).

The colors for the logo are chosen correctly. The same colors but in different countries have completely different meaning. Orange means only positive: innovation, creativity, thinking, and new ideas. Having one or two colors on a logo gives more control of what people will see in the logo.Imatra Base Camp logo looks nice also in a black-and-white format, that very important. It has a distinctive shape that is remembered long after people seen it.

Imatra Base Camp uses photos of ordinary people, who are actors. People are not posing on the pictures; they do what they like and how they like. This concept makes a brand image that is about nature, secure, silence, joy.
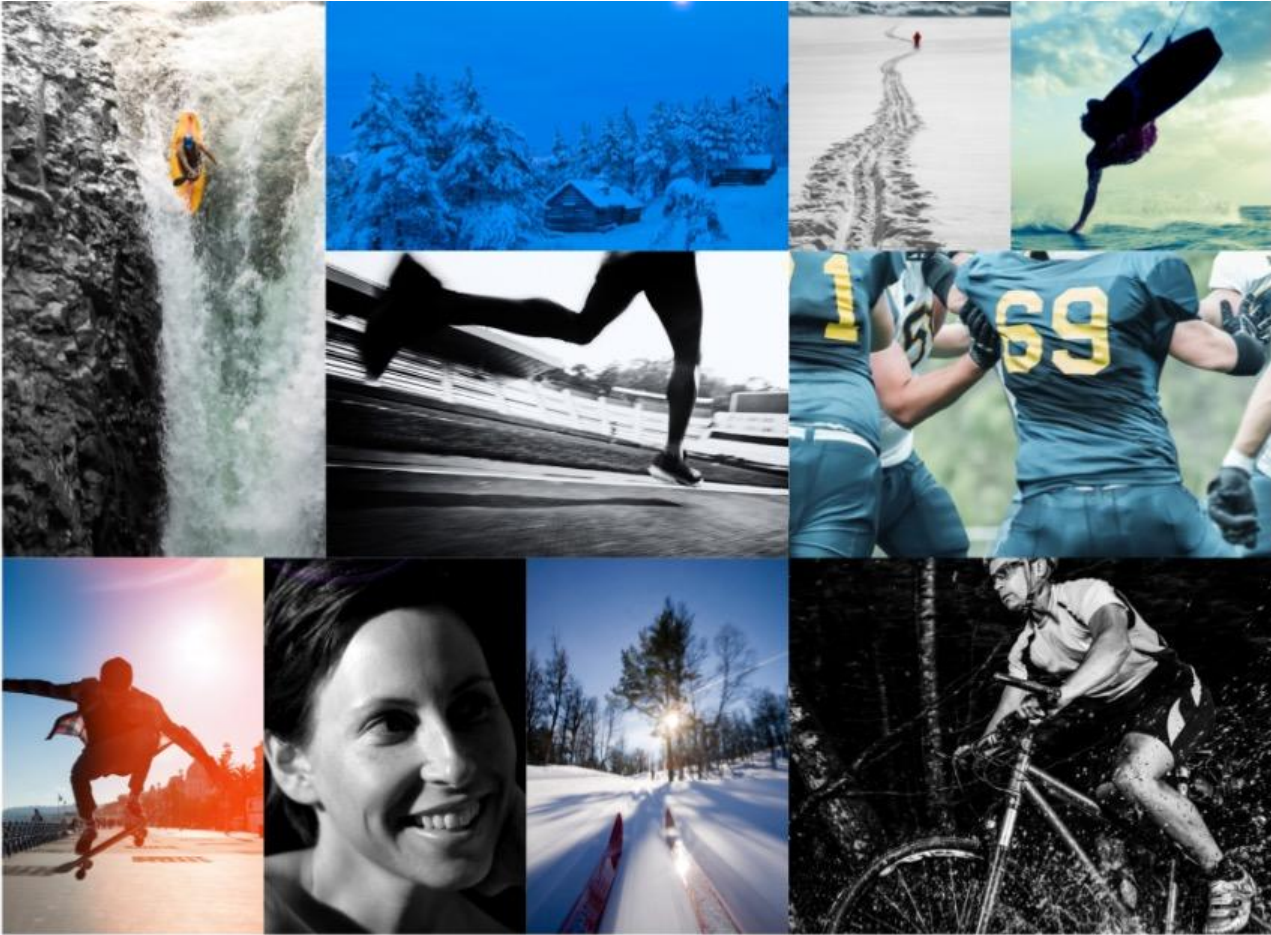
Figure 11. Imatra Base Camp pictures example. (Imatra Base Camp 2014).

Identification of products or services and target group

Primary products and services of Imatra Base Camp are sport events in Imatra region: organization; destination marketing; market the region also as a sport destination; market the region facilities, especially related to sport, wellness and active lifestyle.

"The key to branding, especially for smaller firms, is to focus on a limited number of issue areas and develop superb expertise in those areas"(Kotler 2009).

Imatra Base Camp is a new brand. In the beginning of the business there is no need for creating profiles in as many platforms as possible. To be successful, it is better to select the most important ones that can attract the target audience.

6.1 Step 1 - Business Goals – Vision, Mission, Objectives

The vision is a first level "goal" that are not time bounded. It is a roadmap, indicating both what the company wants to become and guiding transformational initiatives by setting a defined direction for the company's growth (Wikipedia 2015).

Imatra Base Camp's vision is to be recognizable, make a positive brand image, Imatra will be seen as a sport destination. "If you have a clear vision, you will eventually attract the right strategy. If you do not have a clear vision, no strategy will save you" (Hyatt 2014).

The mission defines the present state or purpose of an organization.Imatra Base Camp mission is to make people travel rational reasons and return for sentimental reasons(Imatra Base Camp 2014).

Objectives are the second level goals; they are time bounded.

1. **Quality content.** It creates loyalty among the users, improve SEO and develop social interaction (Likes, Reposts, Comments); Good content is not storytelling. It is telling your story well. (Handley 2015).
2. **Increase brand recognition;** to make people know about the brand;
3. **Create a brand image**; to be known as sport and wellness tourism destination;
4. **Attract tourists** so that they will use the local facilities;
5. **Information provider**, to inform people about what is going on in the region.

6.2 Step 2 - Social media audit

The following steps are according to Evan Lepage, a blog specialist for Hootsuite.

Existing profiles

The channel	The link
Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/basecampimatra
Own website	http://imatrabasecamp.com/
Vkontakte	http://vk.com/imatrabasecamp
Instagram	https://instagram.com/imatrabasecamp/

Figure 18. Existing profiles.

Right channel for the right audience

In order for a business to succeed it has to be aimed at the right people – but many people make the major mistake of assuming they already know their target market and employing a 'one size fits all' approach to their marketing strategy. To have a successful marketing campaign, you must know exactly who you are targeting, and why. Far from being limiting, a clear, refined target market audience gives your content and marketing more clarity and focus – and makes it that much more effective. (Noble 2013).

Imatra Base Camp has several target groups. There is a table below that shows which channel should be used and for which target group.

The audience	The channel
Russian tourists	Vkontakte, Instagram, online magazines, blogs/discussion forums and web sites related to sport, wellness and nature
Finnish and international tourists	Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, blogs/discussion forums and web sites related to sport, wellness and nature
Teams and sport club members	Facebook, professional networks, Vkontakte, web site related to sport
Professional and amateur athletes	Facebook, professional networks, Vkontakte, web sites related to sport
Business companies	Facebook, LinkedIn, Vkontakte, Twitter

Figure 19. Audience and channels.

Missions

The channel	Mission statement
Facebook	to target a specific audience (Finnish and international tourists) to increase a brand recognition
Vkontakte	to target a specific audience (Russian tourists) to increase a brand recognition
Instagram	to share high-quality images, share thenews

Twitter	to share with happenings in the region

Figure 20. Missions.

Branding profiles

The channel	Branding Y/N
Facebook	yes
Vkontakte	yes
Instagram	yes
Twitter	no

Figure 21. Branding profiles.

Logins and passwords

The channel	Login	Password
Facebook	+	+
Vkontakte	+	+
Instagram	+	+
Twitter	not created yet	

6.3 Step 3 – Creating accounts and improving one that exists

Optimizing the home website

The home website is the most important online resource. It is a platform where there is complete information of what is the business of the company.Imatra Base Camp website should be similar in all the languages. Today, they completely differ from each other.

All the social media platforms where the profile of the company or brand is present should be connected to the home website and, in its turn, all the links to social networks on the home website should work.
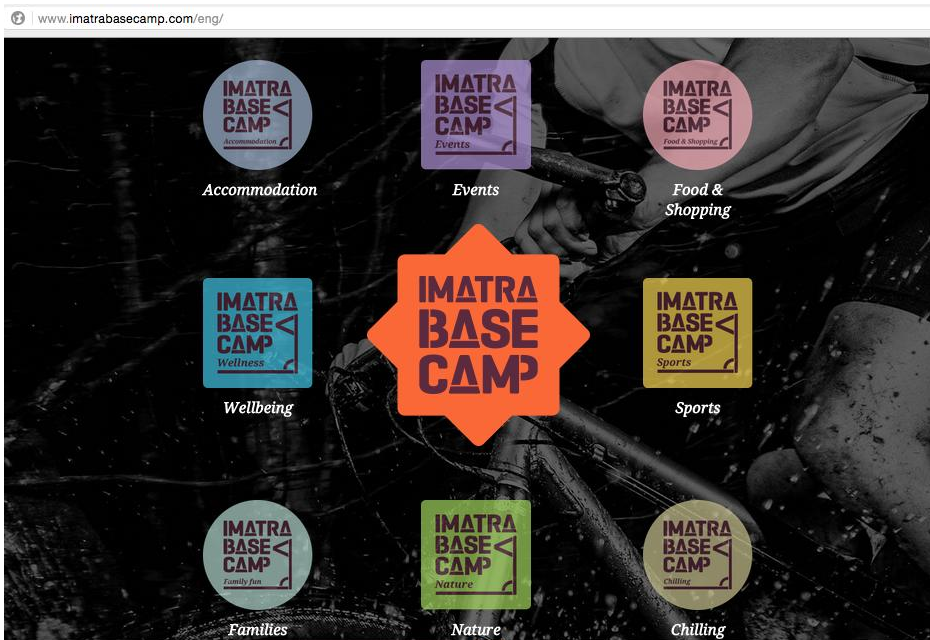
Figure 12. Imatra Base Camp English website. (Imatra Base Camp 2015).
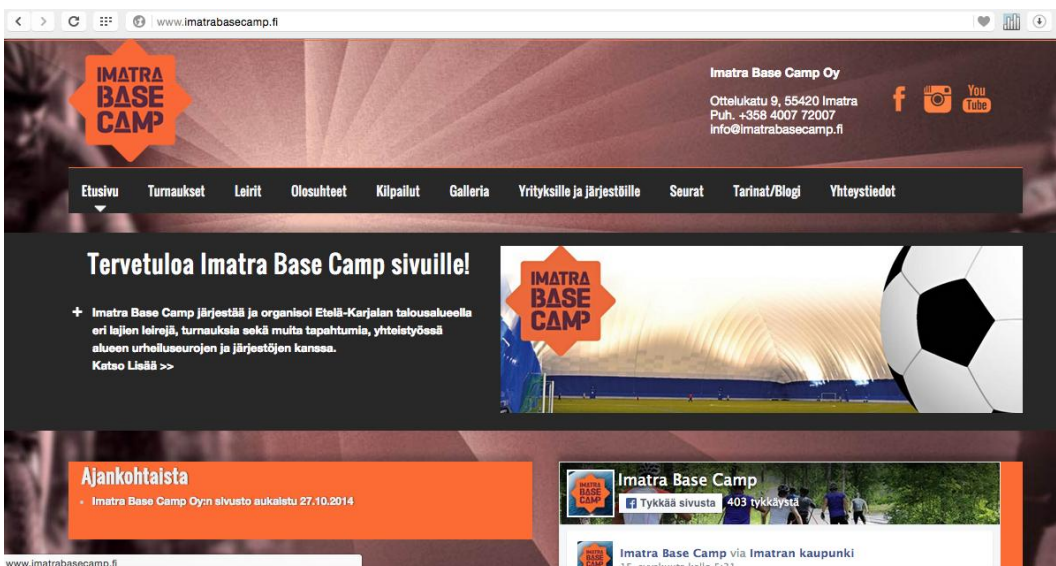

Figure 13. Imatra Base Camp Finnish website. (Imatra Base Camp 2015).

Filling in the profiles completely

The more information is filled out about the band, the more likely people will find the brand on the Internet.The account that should be created is Twitter.

"Every social network has a different audience and should be treated definitely. See how you can optimize your profiles themselves to meet any of your business goals. Optimizing profiles for SEO can help generate more web traffic to your online properties." (Lepage 2014).

6.4 Step 4 – Content planning

"Different social media platforms require different contents. Content is nothing without the right distribution channels. Great content will be essential to succeeding at social media. Your social media marketing plan should include a content marketing plan, comprised of strategies for content creation and content."(Lepage 2014).

Facebook:

The quality of the content on Facebook is more significant than the volume. The short posts usually are better that the long ones but long posts work if they are irresistible.

1. Be fun;
2. Create interactive posts where people can discuss some topics;
3. Use well-edited pictures and high-quality video materials;
4. Create the contests with some prizes;
5. Create a feedback discussion;
6. Use PPT (Page Post Targeting) to deliver message to a small group of people;
7. Each post should be relevant to the brand idea;

The topics that can be posted in Facebook page by Imatra Base Camp (in English and Finnish): local news, useful tourist information, some tips for travelers, event marketing: calendar, pictures, information, share different stories, historical facts, local traditions, interviews.

Vkontakte:

It is the main social media platform for marketing in Russia.The things that should be done there by Imatra Base Camp:

1. Create a community page, because it is more suitable for communication with the audience than a public page
2. Use automated posts
3. Use discussions to interact with the audience
4. Create some contests
5. Use well-edited pictures and high-quality video materials
6. Fresh content
7. Targeted advertising – narrow criteria during customer segmentation is possible to use
8. Share the link to some other interesting forums, groups or posts

The topics to post in Vkontakte are the same as in Facebook but in Russian language:

1. Local news
2. Useful tourist information
3. Some tips for travelers
4. Event marketing: calendar, pictures, information
5. Share different stories
6. Historical facts, local traditions
7. Interviews

Instagram:

Instagram is a fast-growing photo-sharing platform. Instagram is a nice place to market the product. How to make Imatra Base Camp account popular on Instagram?

1. Upload the photos only with great quality
2. Use relevant information
3. Everyday posts
4. Use popular hashtags, create unique ones
5. Do reposts of interesting posts from other users
6. Post videos
7. Link Instagram with other social media platforms
8. Use sponsored posts: find the account that targets the suitable for the brand audience and contact by email in bio to share your posts
9. Collaborate with some bloggers

The topics to post can include:

1. Local news
2. Useful tourist information
3. Some tips for travelers
4. Event marketing: calendar, pictures, information
5. Local traditions
6. Contests

Twitter

Twitter is a kind of a blog that is famous for short posts. The key things to do to reach success on this platform is:

1. Valuable content;
2. Use keywords;
3. Share links;
4. Connect to relevant audience
5. Use hashtags;

The message in Twitter should be very informative, short and easy to read. The posts can include the summarized information about:

1. Events;
2. News;
3. Traditions;
4. Tips for tourists;
5. Links to other social networks.

The priority of the social media channels usage:

1. Facebook and Vk.com;
2. Instagram;
3. Twitter;
4. Forums and blogs;
5. Professional networks and websites related to sport, wellness, nature

6.5 Step 5 – The Calendar

"As new networks emerge you may want to add them to your plan. As you attain goals, you may need to adjust them or find new goals for each network." (Lepage 2014).

Day of the week	Time	The channel	Type of content
Monday	8:00	Facebook	News
	11:30	Facebook	Other network promo
	8:15	Twitter	News
	11:45	Twitter	Other network promo

17:45	Twitter	Tourist tips
19:00	Twitter	Event marketing
8:10	Instagram	News
18:00	Instagram	Event marketing
8:20	Vkontakte	News
18:15	Vkontakte	Event marketing

Figure 22. Schedule.

The same process should be made every day: 1-2 posts per day in Facebook, 2-3 in Twitter, 1-2 in Instagram, 1-2 in Vkontakte.

6.6 Step 6 –Monitoring

"Modern marketing is about taking risks and not being afraid to fail. No matter how much we research and study our audience, we are not always going to hit the mark when we create content. The key is to recognize the failures, learn from them, and move on. And the way to do this is simple … measure everything!" (Dhillon 2014).

The tools to monitor the strategy:

The channel	The tool
Facebook	Hootsuite, Facebook analytics
Twitter	Hootsuite
Vkontakte	Vkontakte analytics
Instagram	Iconosquare

7 The strategy implementation analysis

Number of followers

TheInstagramof Imatra Base Camp was launched duringsummer 2015. The graphs show how a number of followers changed within two months. (June 2015 – July 2015).
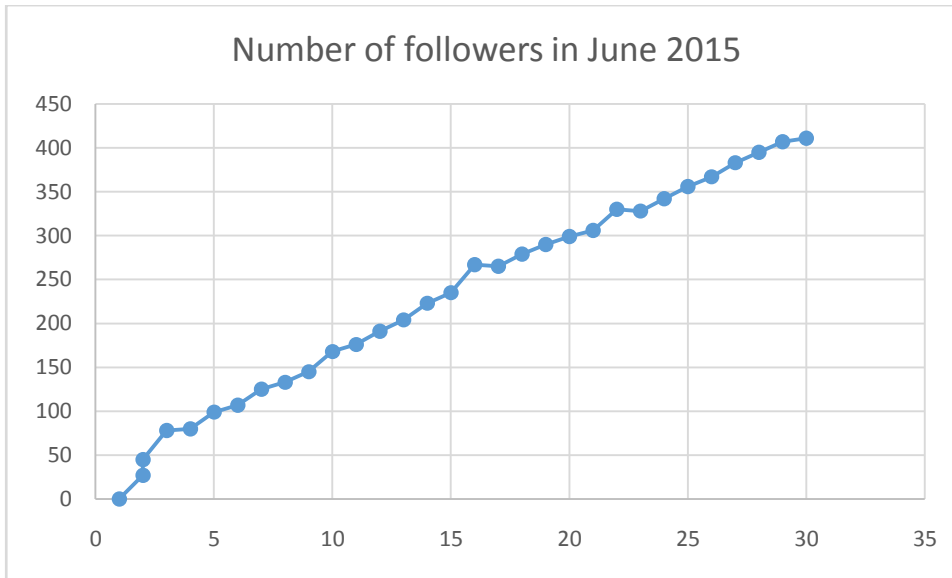

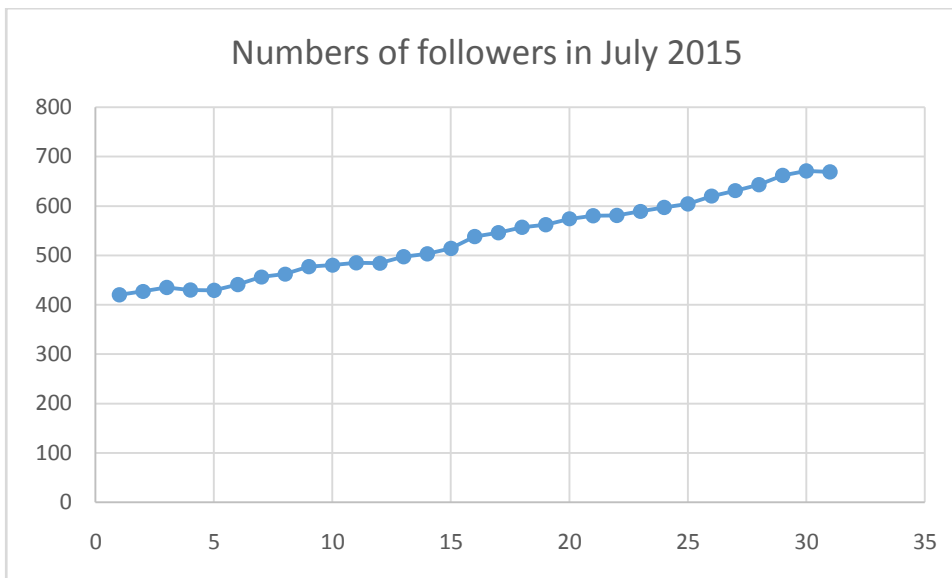Figure 14. The number of followers in June 2015.

Figure 15. The number of followers in July 2015.

Amount of posts and content format

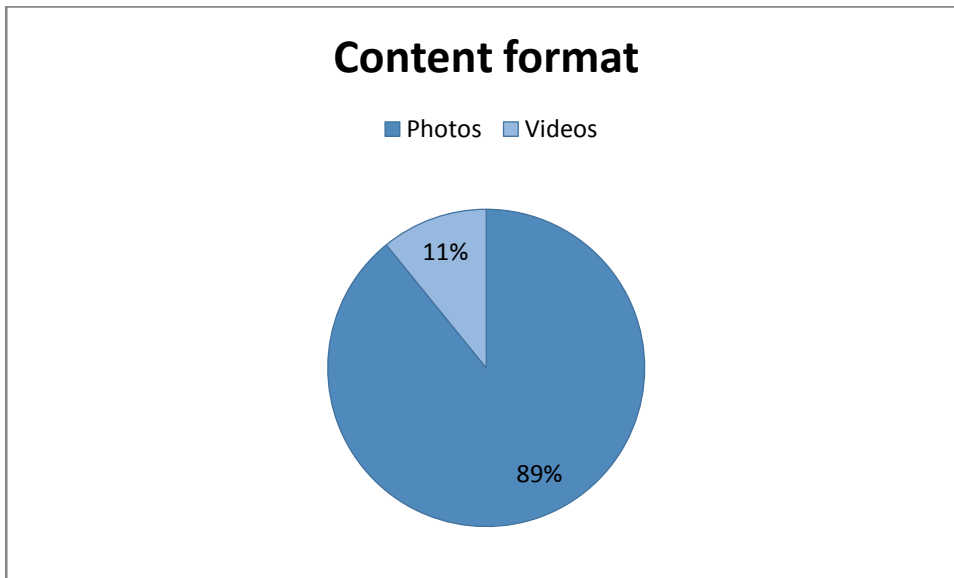The total amount of posts by the end of July 2015 was 129: 115 photos and 14 videos (around 16 posts per week).

Figure 16. Content format. Percentages.

Reposts and Hashtags

All the reposts are done from local companies or people's accounts. They are current, relevant. How to find the most suitable ones to repost, like, comment or follow? Hashtags help a lot. Hashtags are widely used to search for content within social networks and search engines, which means hashtags give one a great opportunity to get their information in front of potential customers without paying a dime! (Constant Contact 2014).
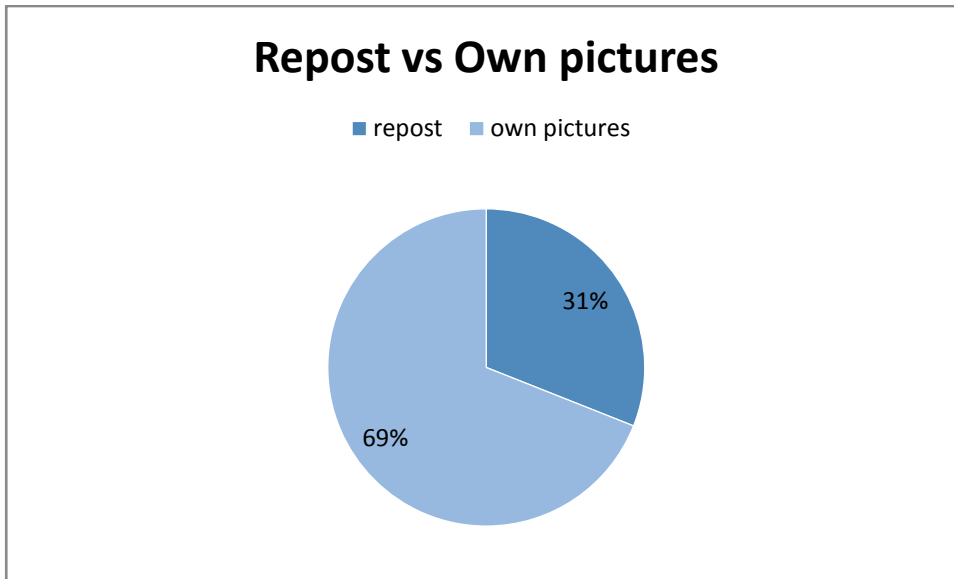
Figure 17. Repost vs Own pictures.

The list of the most popular used hashtags by Imatra Base Camp can be seen bellow:

1. Imatra;
2. Finland;
3. Suomi;
4. Summer;
5. Travel;
6. Иматра (Imatra in Russian language);
7. Финляндия (Finland in Russian language);
8. Лето (summer in Russian language);
9. Event;
10. News;
11. Welcome.

Popular filters

None of the Instagram filters were used during the strategy testing. The author had two very useful apps: VSCO cam and InstaSize. The VSCO cam application includes many options for picture edition and it is very easy to use. Instasize is an app that helps to upload whole pictures without cutting them as Instagram does.

Popular place

Iconosquare shows that 99% of posts aregeolocated, so the location can be seen with a post. The most popular places are Imatra and Imatrankoski.

Likes and timing

The average amount of likes on a photo was 47. The number of likes depended on timing. Evening posts acquired more likes than morning ones. Therefore, normally the posts were done in the evening from 17:00 to 20:00 and sometimes in the morning.Effective Instagramming is, first and foremost, about quality. Good composition, interesting angles, worthy subjects and even a bit of humor come into play. As always on social networks, though, when one post is nearly as important as what they post. (Titlow 2012).

Content

The most typical content was about the event information, reposts from other users and pictures of everyday activities.

TheappFollowers+ wasusedtoanalyzethe Instagramaccount. Moreover, the analysis was done by authorobservations during June and July 2015.

8 Summary

A social network is a powerful tool that allows users to communicate with each other, and allows companies to make a benefit from that. Despite the short history, social networks are widely spread; for many people they are something more than just a website. Nowadays social platforms are dynamically developing, which means that their growth is not going to stop soon, and they will be in demand for a long time.

The thesis includes the creation of the social media strategy for a brand Imatra Base Camp. The process was divided into three steps: background information about social media itself, a theory part about how to build the strategy, and the final one is the empirical part that includes a ready-to-implement strategy. The author's expectations about the results were met: the result of the thesis is a social media marketing plan that includes the most important steps. These steps cover many aspects, from branding to monitoring, or from tool selection to content planning. The author hopes that this thesis will help a brand to develop and that this study can be useful, in the future.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Social media audit. Existing profiles.

The channel	The link	A responsible person

Appendix 2. Social media audit. Right channel for the right audience

The channel	The audience

Appendix 3. Social media audit. Missions

The channel	Mission statement

Appendix 4. Social media audit. Branding profiles

The channel	Branding Y/N

Appendix 5. Social media audit. Logins and passwords

The channel	Login	Password

Appendix 6. Content planning

The channel	Type of content

Appendix 7. Calendar

Day of the week	Time	The channel	Type of content	Topic