

KYMENLAAKSON AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
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International Business / International Marketing

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SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Bachelor's Thesis 2012

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ABSTRACT

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The popularity of social media has grown significantly in the course of the last few years and become a beneficial tool for promoting an organisation. Maintaining online presence on social media websites allows a company to reach its target audiences and raise public awareness on a global basis.

The purpose of this study was to achieve a better understanding of how social media marketing of Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences can be improved and which social media marketing tools are the most suitable for the University to appeal to its prospective applicants for the International Business programme.

Action based research was chosen as a main method of the study. It consisted in a course of actions undertaken and analysed simultaneously, which allowed to increase University's activity in the social media and formulate a plan for its further development.

The research demonstrated that the University benefits the most from being present on Facebook, Vk.com, YouTube and educational forums. In particular, the interest of social media users may be attracted by active participation in discussions and coverage of diverse student events.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The use of social media and especially social networks in marketing is still considered to be a new trend for companies. Social media represents new tools of marketing communication and sales. It is growing and is being integrated into companies' daily operations at a rapid pace, and nowadays provides new opportunities for communicating with customers and, more importantly, reaching companies' target audience. The influence of social media on public opinion has increased dramatically in the course of the past few years. At the moment social networks are at the peak of their popularity, hence they have become an object of attention of many researches (Evans, 2010).

This thesis defines marketing in social media, provides information about the most popular social media platforms as well as an analysis of social media marketing campaign, which was launched by the author for Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences (hereafter KyUAS) in the year 2011. In addition, an analysis of essential results of the campaign and suggestions on further integration of Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences into social media in order to benefit from it was added at the end of this study.

The social media campaign described in this work was carried out as practical training. Its objective was to create awareness about the university and increase the amount of applicants to the International Business degree using social media and other free Internet services. The research was needed to test the social media platforms suitable for KyUAS, attract more applicants to the International Business programme by strengthening the presence of the university on the platforms and conduct a plan of a further development based on the results gained. KyUAS supposed to be the main beneficiary of the research.

Research question of the study is:

Which steps should be taken to improve the social media marketing campaign of Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences in order to attract more applicants to the International Business degree?

1.1 Description of the organization

According to its website, Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences (2012) is a higher level education institution. It is owned by the cities of Kotka and Kouvola and municipality of Iitti. The organization's annual turnover amounts to €31 million. The institution provides its students with the following fields of education: Technology and Transport, Natural Resources and the Environment, Social Sciences, Business and Administration, Natural Sciences, Culture and Social Services, Health and Physical Education. KyUAS has around 4,500 students and 400 employees. The university provides several degrees taught entirely in English: Degree Programme in International Business, Degree Programme in Design, Master Level Programme in International Business Management, Master Level Programme in Health Promotion and Master Level Programme in Design.

According to the interview with Satu Tähkä, Marika Taina and Tuija Heikkiö held on 15 March 2012, KyUAS Communications Services office, which deals with KyUAS marketing, consists of seven persons: Marja Metso (communications manager), Riita Leviäkangas (communications officer), Oona Sahlberg (communications officer), Satu Tähkä (communications officer), Teuvo Haaja (communications officer), Tuija Helkiö (graphic designer) and Marika Taina (web designer). The organization spends around €50,000 on its advertising yearly.

1.2 Structure of the thesis

This study includes both theoretical and empirical parts, which are followed by a conclusion. The theoretical part refers to the social media concept in general and provides the description of main social media platforms. It is closely connected to the second part, which describes the practical element

of the action research. In conclusion the results of the study are stated, analyzed and suggestions for the future are offered (See Figure 1).



Figure 1: Structure of the thesis

The whole research process consisted of several stages. In the first phase concerned with planning, the situation was analyzed, the problem was stated, possible ways of resolving this problem were listed and eventually the plan was formulated. It was followed by data collection and information gathering, which were needed to define certain actions to be made. Next step was to test those actions and, finally, analyze the results.

2 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the thesis is not only to list and comment on the possible social media marketing tools suitable for KyUAS, but actually to find out which ones are the most efficient and which steps have to be undertaken in order to get the desired output. Hence, action research was determined to be the most appropriate way of conducting this research.

According to McNiff and Whitehead (2010, p. 18), *action research is about improving practice (both action and research), creating knowledge and generating living theories of practice*. This definition of action research can be supplemented with the following:

It is not the random, ad hoc activity that characterises everyday life, although it accommodates within its method those random, surprise elements of unpredictability and creation. The method itself of action research is elegant. It involves a self-reflecting spiral of acting, planning, observing, reflecting and re-planning.
(McNiff1988, p.7.)

This research is concerned with different social media marketing tools, so experimenting with those tools and analyzing the results was the best way of conducting it. Gerald Susman (1983) defines five phases within each research cycle. The process starts with problem identification and data collection. Possible ways of resolving the problem are generated and the plan of actions is formulated. Next step is taking action, which is followed by the evaluation and the analysis of results. Learning and interpretation of findings detect whether the action was successful or not. At the end, the problem is re-assessed and the other turn of the process is taken if needed (See Figure 2).

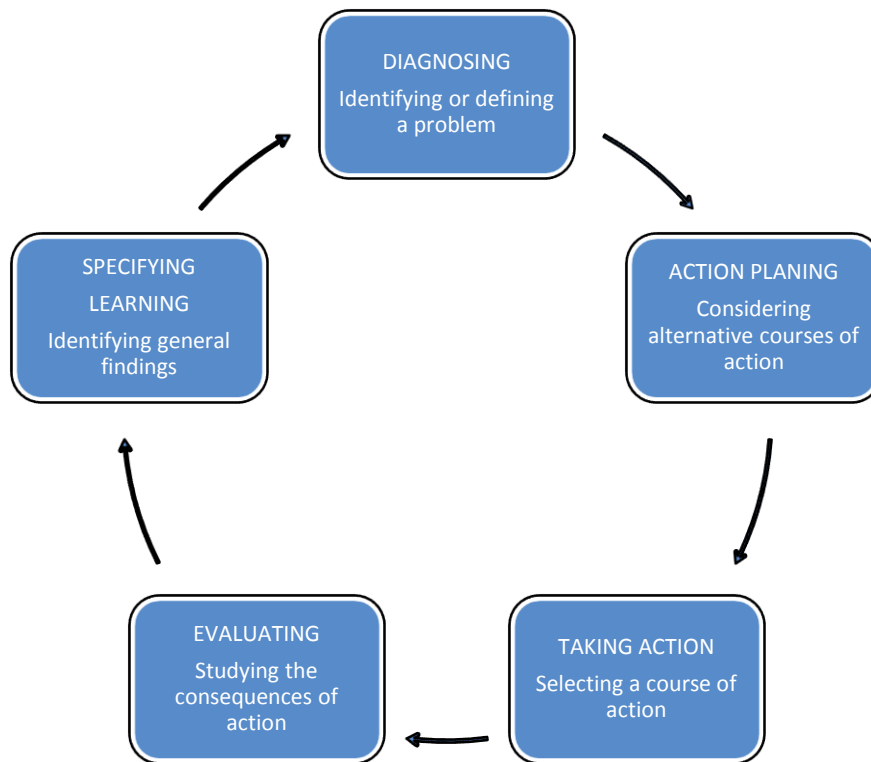


Figure 2: Detailed Action Research Model (Susman 1983, 102)

Action research approach was chosen in order to gain a better understanding of the topic because its primary focus is on solving real problems. The process of the research is dynamic and flexible, which allows studying and exploring the topic more thoroughly as well as drawing more realistic conclusions and, as a result, developing a strategy which will actually work.

Action research took place between May 2011 and February 2012. First three month of the research were dedicated to learning the topic in theory and the collection of data. Activities described in the empirical part of the study were done between end of August 2011 and February 2012.

2 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

2.1 Social media

Social media is a group of Internet-based applications that are built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlei 2010, p.60).

The ultimate goal of social media is to provide stakeholders and other interested parties with online presence of an organization in order to maintain two-way communication and increase public awareness about an organization, its brands and newsworthy announcements. Hence, social media helps to increase overall Internet efficiency as well as control the Web-based channels of an organization (Chaffey, et.al. 2009, p.18).

Moreover, existing and prospective customers learn about the face behind the company at a personal level, which is helpful in building a successful brand. A company employee's or spokesperson's voice is likely to reflect the company brand and image by means of social media. Thus "a company spokesman does not appear as a faceless brand from an anonymous source, but rather as an individual representing the company" (Thomases 2010, p.48).

2.2 Social media marketing

Social media marketing can be considered as a form of viral marketing. By definition, viral marketing is any advertising and/or marketing technique that, once started, spreads as a "virus" without marketers having to do any further work. Viral marketing has evolved from conventional word-of-mouth advertising, which has been in use for thousands of years already, and has now gained popularity among marketers due to the fact that it is less expensive and requires less effort than traditional marketing (Fox 2009, pp.93-94).

Similarly, social media marketing acts as a means of electronic word-of-mouth because users constantly share the content, such as viral videos

launched by different companies and their newsworthy announcements, which can spread like a virus in an online community. Besides, one's subscribers immediately see if he or she has "liked" a particular post, joined an online group or community or shared a link with them, which facilitates the process of learning about companies and brands (Cakim 2010, p.6).

Social media marketing is suitable for businesses with different marketing budgets. Various platforms grant the chance to have an equal voice to each organization due to their free services, and hence eliminate a common marketing barrier to entry for small and home-based businesses (Thomases 2010, p.60).

The fact that the use of social media websites is free is exceptionally beneficial for non-profit organizations and events. Organizers of such events as charities and art exhibitions have been attracting audiences by conducting online contests to distribute free tickets for these events as well as live blogging from conferences and fares (Thomases 2010, p.62).

Educational institutions as well represent a sector that has succeeded in implementing social media tools in a number of ways. Firstly, they increase general awareness of the community about their existence as well as appeal to prospective students by positioning themselves as early adopters and innovators due to the fact that social media is still considered as a relatively new phenomenon. In addition, educational establishments are able to answer the essential questions posed by prospective students, which may act as a decisive factor in their choice of place of future studies (Thomases 2010, p.63).

Secondly, social media in general and social networks in particular encourage students to collaborate more on homework with each other and with teachers, which is likely to lead to more productive discussions in class. Thirdly, live micro blogging during conferences enables non-attendees to track the information released and is useful for distance learners. Finally, educational institutions employ social media platforms to conduct research, polls, surveys and even scientific studies. That is because social networks

have the potential to engage bigger audiences in these studies, and hence provide the researchers with more information for analysis (Thomases 2010, p.64).

Social media websites have also recently become popular among politicians, for instance Barack Obama, particularly as a means of support for their presidential campaigns. They use different platforms to keep the public informed of the candidate's whereabouts, website updates and main campaign points. Government as a whole informs the public via social networks about significant alerts and advisories as well as about recently adopted laws (Thomases 2010, pp.64-65).

Conventional media, such as TV programmes, magazines and newspapers, are also involving social media platforms into their activities. They integrate them into broadcasts, update current news via their accounts and encourage their journalists to become members of social networks and engage into communication with the public (Thomases 2010, p.67).

Social media platforms are also often used by large capitalisation companies as a means of support for their headline marketing campaigns. For the purpose of managing how the brand is portrayed and perceived by the public online, companies hire community managers. They are as well responsible for developing, executing, overseeing and evaluating marketing strategies in social networks. In addition to promotion, social media can be used for company's public relations. In this case, it can give immediate response to crises, recognize and motivate its most active online stakeholders as well as identify prospective partners (Thomases 2010, p.72).

The impact of social media websites in terms of providing business value was measured in the survey conducted by marketing resource site MarketingProfs among small business Twitter users. 41% of all respondents reported that company blogs deliver the most business value, followed by Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. The least impact was reported to be brought by such platforms as YouTube and MySpace (See Figure 3).

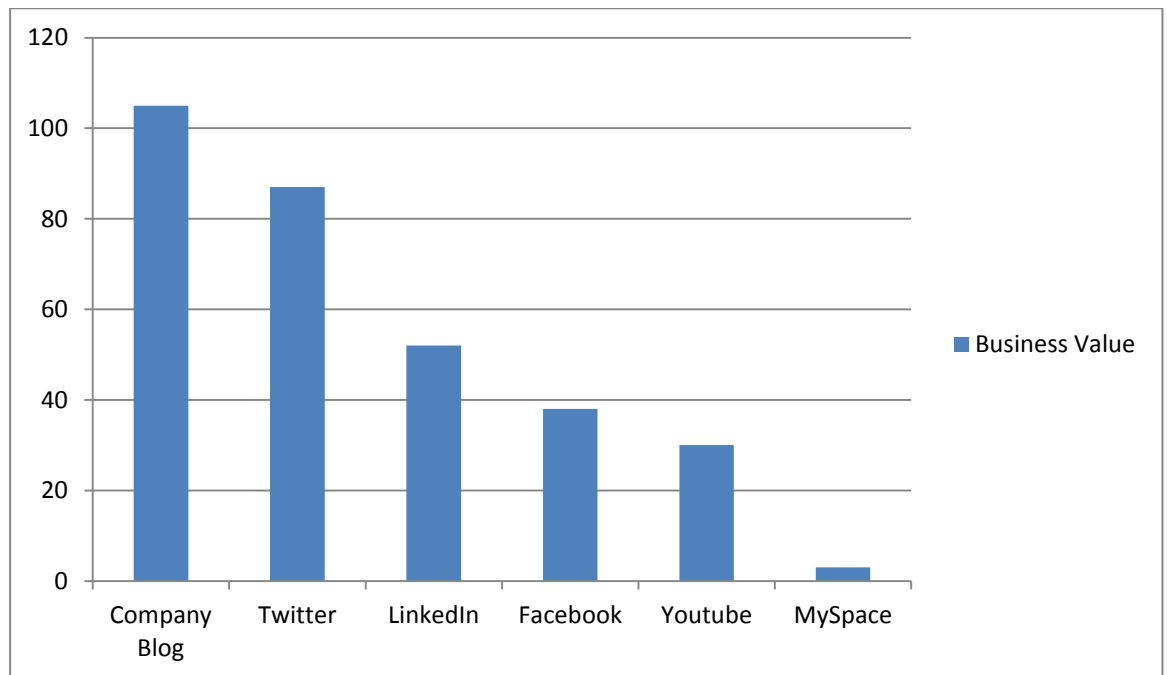


Figure 3: Social Media Sites in Terms of Providing Business Value, based on MarketingProfs (2009), cited in Thomases (2010).

2.3 Social media platforms

2.3.1 Social networks

A social network is a set of people (or organisations or other social entities) connected by a set of social relationships, such as friendship, co-working or information exchange (Garton, Haythornthwaite & Wellman 1997, cited in Wilson 2008, p. 12). In the course of the last few years, social media has become a widespread complementary extension of businesses' marketing efforts. According to the index compiled by Discover Small Business Watch in April 2009 (cited in Thomases 2010, p.60), 38% of small and home-based business proprietors had social network accounts.

The most popular social networks in the world offer the opportunity to create, host and participate in subnetworks, or groups dedicated to your brand and products, as described by Solis (2011, p.47). As well as that, Safko and Brake (2009, p.6) suggest that social media facilitates the four main processes: communication, collaboration, education and entertainment.

Hence, most companies realise the importance of their online presence and use special widgets on company websites that allow customers to access company accounts on such social networks as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

Therefore it increases the probability that clients will subscribe company's news and stay informed about important announcements and releases. In addition to that, it creates the social feedback cycle, which aims to assist company's understanding of customer needs as well as see the defects in previously manufactured products and earlier provided services (Evans & McKee 2010, p.4).

2.3.2 Social network tools

Software tools within social networks can be divided into two distinct groups: communicational and interactive. Communication media refers to the "Web-based applications that make it possible to create and easily transmit content in the form of words, pictures, videos, and audios", as defined by Safko and Brake (2009, p.6).

On the other hand, interactive tools are used to support the interaction between individual users and groups by means of various media formats. In contrast to conversational media tools, the emphasis is placed on allowing the users to maintain synchronized information exchange in real-time conditions by the use of Internet telephony, video chats and instant message services (Marovich & Stanaityte 2010).

2.3.3 Largest social networks

According to Sparks (2011), the list of the largest social networks is topped by Facebook (See Figure 4), which is considered to be the biggest social network of the western world. It is followed by Qzone with nearly 480 million registered users, which was not included in this paper due to the fact that it is primarily used in China.

The third and the fourth in the list are Twitter and Renden. However, the latter was not examined in this research because it is mostly popular in China and is often referred to as "The Facebook of China". The fifth largest social network, Vkontakte, is mostly used by the residents of Russia and the CIS countries, but it is worth considering because of the long-term links between Russia and Finland, especially between the twin cities of Kouvola and Vologda.

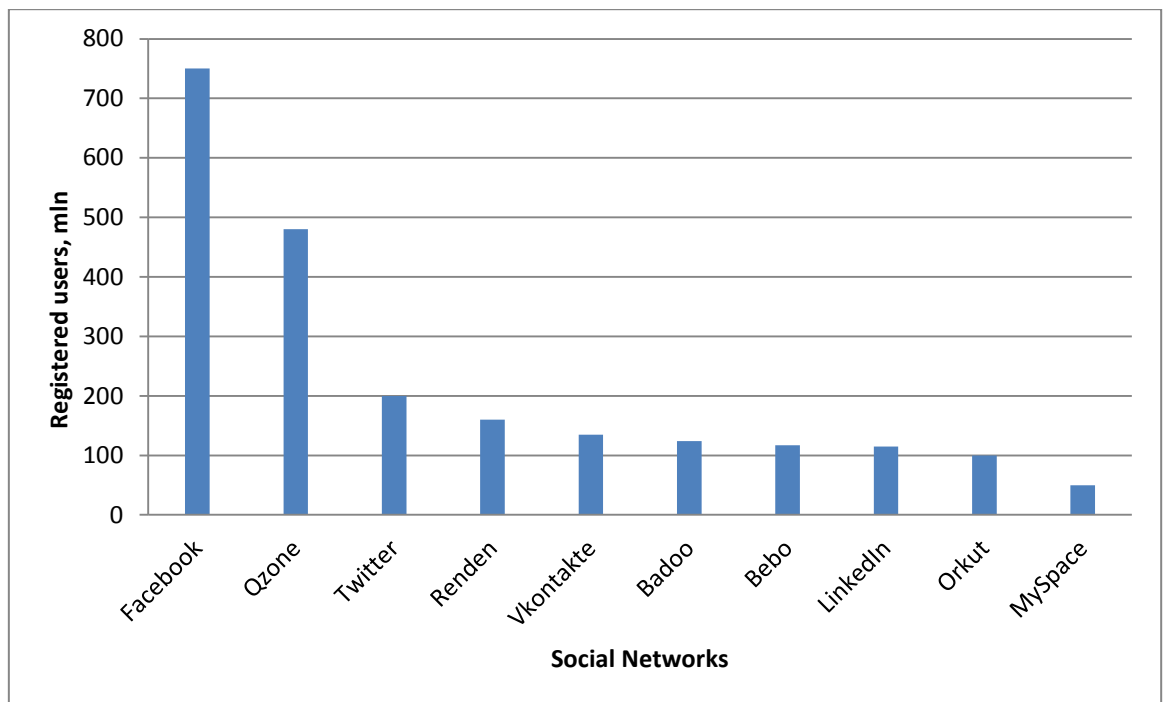


Figure 4: Largest social networks in millions of registered users, based on Sparks (2011).

The sixth and the seventh most popular social networks are Badoo and Bebo, the former of which was not considered here due to its primary use in Latin America, Spain, Italy and France, and the latter because its main services include entertainment and online dating, which do not meet the requirements of KyUAS's marketing campaign. LinkedIn and MySpace will be examined further in order to determine their suitability for this research. And finally, Orkut, the ninth biggest social network, was not used in the marketing campaign due to the fact that most of its users come from India and Brazil.

Facebook

Facebook was founded in 2004 in California, USA. It is now available in 70 languages globally and had 845 million monthly active users at the end of December 2011 (*Facebook* 2012). Facebook has also been the market leader since April 2008 and filed papers for an initial public offering in February 2012 (Treadaway & Smith 2010; *United States Securities and Exchange Commission* 2012).

Facebook tools

Facebook offers its business clients numerous ways of maintaining their online presence. First of all, it concerns communication media tools. One of these services is called “Pages” (introduced in 2007), and it is used by companies to create their public profiles, which contain general information about the business, for further engagement with interested parties on Facebook. Secondly, photo and video services facilitate the visualization of business activities in the form of entertainment (*Facebook* 2012).

Furthermore, Facebook provides interactive tools for its customers. Firstly, Facebook's “News Feed” function acts as a micro blog service and helps stakeholders track companies’ activities and announcements simultaneously with their publication. Then, chat and instant messages platforms together with video calling support instant interaction among users. Hence, they increase the probability of growing brand awareness (*Facebook* 2012).

Facebook also allows brands and companies to create and increase brand awareness with the help of “like” and “share” buttons. It is generally considered that the more “likes” a particular entry has collected, the more users will be encouraged to examine this very entry and proceed with learning more about it, for instance by visiting company’s website or looking at the photos attached. The “share” button is also extremely popular among Facebook users at the moment. It acts as a tool for “word-of-mouth” in this social network and can also be considered as a customer referral. This is

because one's friends are likely to have the same interests and therefore view a shared entry as worthwhile information to be examined (*Facebook 2012*).

Facebook applications are also becoming a "must" for companies having their Fan Pages. Apps are likely to improve company's online performance due to the fact that modern consumers tend to be willing to learn about brands and businesses in the entertaining form (*Facebook 2012*).

One of the recently added functions allows linking one's Facebook account to his or her Twitter and YouTube accounts. This means that a status update on Facebook will automatically appear on one's Twitter account as well, and besides there will be a separate section on one's Facebook account that will contain all the videos from his or her YouTube channel. Hence, companies can maintain their online presence with less effort and time (*Facebook 2012*).

Economic impact

According to an analysis carried out by an international research firm Deloitte (2012) across the EU 27 countries, Facebook has a huge impact on the European economy. Not only does it employ staff around Europe, which implies the creation of new jobs and distribution of additional wages, but it also allows other companies to increase their revenues and build their brands.

It was estimated that Facebook adds €15.3 billion value to the European economy and supports 232,000 jobs across the Union. Moreover, the platform increases business participation through advertising and customer referrals as well as enhances multiple companies' brand value by approximately €7.3 billion.

In addition to this, Facebook offers €100 of free advertising to 50,000 small and medium enterprises in the UK, France, Germany, Spain and Italy. Hence it increases competition and provides SMEs with unique opportunities to develop their business.

Twitter

Twitter was initially designed as a platform for micro-blogging, which allows sharing the content using “tweets” (140-character messages) in the form of text and pictures with one’s subscribers. Besides, users can share someone else's entries with their own subscribers by means of the “re-tweet” button, which launches the “word-of-mouth” process and hence is crucially important for companies and brands. The network was estimated to have attracted over 40 million users since its inception in 2006, of which 47% are male and 53% are female, and was ranked as the third-largest social network (Thomases 2010, p.4).

Brands generally utilise Twitter for increasing customers’ awareness about the news, developments and promotions related to it even prior to the publication of official press releases. As well as that, the network provides opportunities for attracting initial awareness during the launch of a new product or service (Thomases 2010, p.13).

It is also notable that Twitter has a unique Trending Topics algorithm, which allows its users to discover the most newsworthy topics from across the globe. Members are also able to engage in a conversation with others, and the size of the discussion is not limited by the number of one's subscribers. Due to hashtags, anyone can access an entire list of entries containing a specific trending topic by clicking a hashtag-containing topic name as well as immediately respond to other people’s tweets. Besides, a user can localize trending topics to one region that he or she is mostly interested in. Hence companies can generate additional publicity by using Twitter if their news and announcements are remarkable enough (*Twitter Help Centre* 2012).

Age structure

According to the study conducted by Hitwise (cited in Thomases 2010, p.41), the estimated age breakdown of Twitter users is as follows:

- 18-24-year-olds – 39%
- 25-34-year-olds – 20%
- 35-44-year-olds – 16.5%
- 45-54-year-old – 15%
- More than 55-year-olds – 9.5%

Hence, companies targeting the younger generation will be able to reach bigger audiences, and therefore benefit most of all. However, the even distribution among other age groups provides the opportunity for other businesses to increase its market share as well.

Complications

Despite the obvious benefits that Twitter can provide its business clients with, it was also discovered that Twitter users find website-registered marketers and salesmen difficult to differentiate from spammers and bots (Thomas 2010, p.47). As a result, it may have an opposite impact on brand image and generate distrust on the part of its interested parties.

LinkedIn

According to its Web site, LinkedIn is an interconnected network of more than 150 million business professionals from around the world, representing 170 industries and 200 countries. LinkedIn differs from other social networks listed in this work in a way that it was designed for business professionals instead of the general public. It positions itself as a place where one can find, be introduced to, and collaborate with qualified experts with whom one needs to work to accomplish his or her goals (*LinkedIn* 2012).

The website is currently available in 16 languages and was ranked as the 29th most visited website worldwide by comScore (2012) in January 2012, with 36,848 unique visitors for this period. As of February 9, 2012, executives from every 2011 Fortune 500 company were registered on LinkedIn as

members. Besides, more than 2 million companies have their LinkedIn Company Pages (*LinkedIn* 2012).

The functions supported by LinkedIn include standard for other social networks news feed, status updates, “walls” and interest groups. A new service called “Company Status Updates” also allows sharing announcements, product releases, promotions or news articles directly from company's page. These status updates will automatically appear on its followers' homepages where they can comment, like or share company's news with the entire network. Further, the company can monitor engagement metrics in order to learn what types of posts work best for its business goals. Besides, a LinkedIn account can be linked to a Twitter account, which makes companies' online activities less time- and effort-consuming (*LinkedIn* 2012).

A considerable advantage of LinkedIn over other social networks as to business life was gained by offering recruiting solutions for companies and job search solutions for job seekers. The service itself is highly conventional due to the function of advanced search as well as possibilities to save jobs and save search criteria (*LinkedIn* 2012).

Company profiles generally contain their overview, a website link, employees' names and occupations, company's activity on LinkedIn as well as location together with a built-in Google map. Unlike Facebook and Twitter, LinkedIn offers statistics services, which provide users with insightful information regarding job function composition in a company, years of employees' experience, their educational degrees and annual company growth (*LinkedIn* 2012).

Vk.com

Vkontakte (literally translated as “In Contact”) is the largest Russian-made social network. It was founded in 2006 and nowadays numbers over 110 million members, mainly in Russia (70%) and other CIS-countries. According

to a global market information and insight group TNS Gallup (2011, cited in *Vk.com*), Vkontakte is the most visited website of the Russian-language segment of the World Wide Web (*Vk.com 2012*).

Although the vast majority of its users are located in the former USSR countries, Vkontakte is making attempts to access other countries as well. It is available in 70 languages (equally with Facebook) and has recently changed its domain from the Russian-looking *Vkontakte.ru* to a more Western-like *Vk.com* (*Vk.com 2012*).

Similarly to Facebook, *Vk.com* offers a range of tools, which can be implemented in promotional campaigns. Communication media tools include "Groups" and "Fan pages", which are created according to members' interests and can be joined by anyone. Hence companies can form their own communities, which will allow the public to easily access general information about company's activities and field of business as well as tell their friends about announcements and releases published by the company by means of a "Share"-button. Furthermore, it allows downloading digital content, such as photographs, videos and audios, as well as developing applications, all of which can be utilized by companies to their support marketing activities in *Vkontakte* (*Vk.com 2012*).

The list of interactive media tools seems to be extremely similar to that of Facebook. It is comprised of chat and instant message services, news feed, which automatically renews in real time, and a recently-added video call function (*Vk.com 2012*).

MySpace

MySpace is a unique social network that originated as a community for bands and musical artists, who could share their works with the general public. The number of its users is at the moment approximately 200 million users worldwide. Nevertheless, the number of its unique monthly users in the

U.S. has declined from about 75.9 million at its peak of popularity in December 2008 to less than 35 million in 2011 (*MySpace 2012*). Hence, the speed of MySpace losing its share to Facebook can be tracked.

MySpace offers traditional communication tools, such as interest groups and digital content, while interactive tools are represented by instant messages and news feed. Similarly to Twitter, MySpace website contains a trending topics section, where one can view the latest and most popular news. However, companies can hardly utilize this feature because trending topics mostly contain breaking news, not popular discussion topics as on Twitter (*MySpace 2012*).

The users of MySpace can be divided into three main categories. The most common profile on MySpace is the individual user, who has joined the network in order to communicate with other people sharing his or her interests. Bands' and musicians' MySpace profiles containing musical works can be considered as the factor that made this website unique and extremely popular. Further, businesses and organizations maintain their online presence on MySpace. However, the economic impact of MySpace is estimated to be the lowest among large social networks, partially due to the decreasing number of users; hence companies are unlikely to view marketing activities on this platform as a worthwhile investment of their efforts (Hupfer, Maxson & Villiams 2009).

It can thus be concluded that MySpace is to a considerable degree a platform merely for entertainment due to its built-in music and video players as well as games and applications. Companies may have paid attention to the website when it was at its peak, however nowadays they switch to more effective social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

YouTube

YouTube was founded in February 2005 as a platform for discovering, watching and sharing originally created videos. Today one hour of video is uploaded to the website every second, over 4 billion videos are viewed a day

and over 800 million unique users enter YouTube every month. Such a huge popularity can be attributed to the facts that YouTube is available in 39 countries and across 54 languages because 70% of its traffic comes from outside the U.S (*YouTube* 2012).

Marketers use YouTube to create brand channels with a personalized interface as to channel banners, background image and branding box, hence they are highly memorable for users. YouTube channels are also programmed to play a featured video when a user enters the channel for the first time and suggest related or similar videos at the end of viewing, thus encouraging users to engage in further “conversation” with the brand (Jarboe 2011).

YouTube also provides its brand promoters with the opportunity to ensure brand safety in various ways. First, they are able to moderate comments, thus creating conditions for a merely positive image of a brand in the minds of its interested parties. Moreover, channel’s accessibility can be restricted to the audience of certain age or gender. Hence the likelihood of image spoilage on YouTube is very little (Jarboe 2011).

Paid advertisement on YouTube is unique because businesses are charged only if a user actually watched the commercial. Usually these promotional videos appear as a pre-roll or mid-roll against short or long-form content, and after five seconds a user is allowed to choose whether to watch the advertisement to the end or continue to content. Hence creativity is of paramount importance for businesses engaged in paid marketing activities on YouTube (*YouTube* 2012).

Similarly to social networks, YouTube provides tools for online collaboration of its users. Firstly, it has built-in “like” and “dislike” buttons, and the latter represents the only feature that make businesses using YouTube vulnerable. Secondly, the website contains a comments section, where only registered users can discuss the video and rate each other’s comments. There is also a possibility to share a video with friends via email, social networks or blog

directly from the video page. Besides, users can subscribe to certain video channels and stay informed about any changes (*YouTube* 2012).

If businesses succeed to create an original and memorable commercial, they can feature in YouTube charts adjusted to one day, one week, one month and all time, as well as in the “popular” and “trending” sections. Besides, if a particular person has watched videos related to the brand even once, similar videos will appear in his or her “recommended for you” section, which also increases the likelihood that a person will continue to stay engaged with a certain brand channel (*YouTube* 2012).

All things considered, YouTube is a unique platform for brand promotion. Nevertheless, it was reported to bring less business value than most social networks, which can be attributed to the fact that the website allows companies to maintain their online presence merely in the form of videos. Taking into account that the process of creating a reel is time- and effort-consuming, it can be stated that it is more challenging for businesses to stay engaged with the public on YouTube than on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. However, YouTube remains an effective platform for supporting headline promotional campaigns and overall online presence maintenance.

Wiki

As defined by Ebersbach, et.al. (2008), “a wiki is web-based software that allows all viewers of a page to change the content by editing the page online in a browser”. It can thus be a means of effective and efficient online cooperation, which enables information sharing across the globe, hence providing the population of the Earth with a unique tool to increase their overall awareness about various topics.

The first wiki-website named WikiWikiWeb was developed in 1995 by Ward Cunningham, who sought to create a platform that could facilitate collaboration of computer program developers on software codes. Since then, various wikis tailored to the needs of the community have been created, including the most wide-spread free encyclopaedia called Wikipedia

(Lytras, Tennyson & de Pablos 2008, p.30). Today articles on Wikipedia are available in 284 languages, including such rare ones as Hiri Motu, Muscogee and Kanuri. The largest segment of articles is represented by those written in the English language, and amounts to 3,898,491 articles (*Wikipedia* 2012).

Although wiki technology can be a tool for productive collaboration on the Internet, the fact that anyone can edit the content created by others leads to irritation in the modern society. This is mainly because of the assumption that contribution by other people, who share different interests and adhere to other opinion, can destroy one's own work (Lytras, Tennyson & de Pablos 2008, p.31).

In terms of public awareness, Wikipedia can be considered as an essential part of the learning process about a particular organization. Users of the World Wide Web are able to examine the whole range of information about organization's history, main activities, achievements and interesting facts without the need to search for data on the official website or other websites. However, Wikipedia increases the likelihood of further learning due to the "external links" section, which usually contains a link to an organization's official website (Ebersbach, et.al. 2008; *Wikipedia* 2012).

Blogs

Weblog can be defined as a diary of thoughts maintained on the Internet by one or more regular contributors. The first blog appeared on the WWW more than ten years ago, and today the number of blogs exceeds 4,000,000. Blogs' rapid popularity growth can be attributed to the sense of trustworthiness that they create in the mind of the public. Moreover, they are viewed as a source of unique information that differs from that offered by mass media (Forrester & Powell 2007).

In order to maintain a widely read blog, organizations have to follow certain rules. First of all, a blog should not lack activity and content, implying that the posts should be published regularly and should contain sufficient volume of information. Secondly, the topic of the blog should not be altered at will of the

writer. Thirdly, spam comments should be tracked and deleted. And finally, the interface should reflect the issues discussed in posts. Otherwise, the blog is likely to lose its readers (Forrester & Powell 2007).

However, the importance of maintaining a separate blog today can be argued. Nowadays organizations tend to use blogs that are built in their official websites or social network accounts rather than those located on an individual platform. This stems from the fact that complexity can scare off existing and prospective clients. Hence it is more beneficial for organizations to manage their online presence at a place convenient for their interested parties, particularly a place that can be accessed without any additional efforts. For instance, when a user enters Facebook or Twitter, they can immediately see organisation's posts in their news feed, and therefore they are more likely to engage in a learning process (Hoffmann 2011, p. 11-12).

Forums

Discussion forums are usually described as virtual communication environments, where discussion threads are organized by themes or topics. By the use of forums, visitors can initiate new threads, create new postings and reply to other postings, which typically contain text, images and videos (Abraham, Williams, L & Williams, LF 2009, p. 264).

Forums are beneficial for both individuals and organizations because the former receive the necessary information regarding the topic they are interested in while the latter can investigate public opinion and consequently implement particular changes, which will facilitate improvements in public satisfaction with the organization. Moreover, forums are advantageous for institutions because they can act as a platform for spreading a positive word-of-mouth and for increasing public awareness. However, the significance of forums nowadays can be questioned due to the fact that platforms for discussions can be integrated into social media networks, which are more convenient to use (Abraham, Williams, L & Williams, LF 2009, pp. 265-266).

4 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING CAMPAIGN FOR KYUAS INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS PROGRAMME

4.1 Analysis of the situation

It was necessary to evaluate the presence of KyUAS in social media at the beginning of the research in order to conduct a plan of actions. Examination of such social networks as LinkedIn and MySpace demonstrated that the platforms do not meet the requirements of this social media campaign, and cannot therefore be used as tools for meeting the objectives of the research set. This stems from the fact that LinkedIn is aimed at professionals searching for jobs as well as organisations recruiting new employees.

Similarly, an analysis of MySpace showed that the social network is mainly used for entertaining activities, such as listening to music and watching videos. In addition, an outflow of users was indicated there, which shows the decrease of interest towards this social network. Hence, there are almost no opportunities for marketing an organization on these websites.

Since the research relates to the International Business programme and the social media campaign's target group are students from other countries than Finland, the evaluation referred to the Internet pages in the English language. As well as that, Russian-language pages were reviewed due to long-term relationships between Finland and Russia. Marketing International Business programme is very closely related to the marketing of KyUAS itself, hence they were not separated into two different social media marketing campaigns.

The action research started in the beginning of summer 2011 with the analysis of the most popular social media platforms. As a result, the following information was collected:

- There was an account of "Kyamk" on Twitter with only two tweets and no followers. Besides, an attempt to contact the account manager did not bring any results.

- KyUAS' fan page on Vk.com did not have any updates for quite a long time. Furthermore, it was filled with spam entries and posts, which had no relation to the university. Questions of the page subscribers concerning entering the university were left unanswered.
- There were four KyUAS promotional videos in English on YouTube at that time: "Kymenlaakso Universities of Applied Sciences news", "Study International Business in Finland", "International Business in Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences" and "Kymenlaakso Universities of Applied Sciences, Kymenlaaksonammattikorkeakoulu". All of them had one thing in common: they were not actual videos, but PowerPoint slides presented in the video format. This means that they merely show quickly changing slides containing text, pictures or photos.
- There was little information in English about the university presented on Wikipedia.org.
- KyUAS Facebook fan page, which was created in January 2010, had around 150 likes, no updating and an outdated interface.
- No KyUAS presence on educational forums or chatboards was indicated.

Competitor analysis showed that most of the universities providing similar degrees had already integrated the maintenance of their online presence on the platforms mentioned above in their daily activities.

Table 1: Benchmarking of Finnish universities of applied sciences offering degree programmes in international business

University	Facebook	Twitter	Vk.com	Wikipedia	YouTube
Arcada UAS	2,106 "likes"	19 tweets, 7 followers	101 members	Present	37 videos, incl. 4 about IB

					programme
Haaga-Helia UAS	Fan Page in Finnish, 2,805 "likes"	Not present	385 members	Present	25 videos, incl. 2 about IB programme
Häme UAS	4,172 "likes"	Mostly tweets in Finnish, 640 tweets, 483 followers	372 members	Present	111 videos, incl. 2 about IB programme
Jyväskylä UAS	Fan page in Finnish, 2,060 "likes"	Mostly tweets in Finnish, 251 tweets, 215 followers	96 members	Present	69 videos, incl. 1 about IB programme
Kajaani UAS	594 "likes"	Not present	109 members	Present	16 videos, incl. 1 about IB programme
Lahti UAS	Fan page in Finnish, 456 "likes"	Not present	Not present	Present	5 videos, incl. 1 about IB programme
North Karelia UAS	Fan page in Finnish, 1,036 "likes"	119 tweets, 31 followers	Not present	Present	15 videos, incl. 1 about IB programme
Oulu UAS	382 "likes"	Mostly tweets in Finnish, 380 tweets, 227 followers	Not present	Present	16 videos in Finnish
Saimaa UAS	Fan page mostly in Finnish, 1,077 "likes"	58 tweets, 31 followers	686 members	Present	5 videos, incl. 1 about IB programme
Savonia UAS	Fan page mostly in Finnish, 494 "likes"	33 tweets, 2 followers	156 members	Present	15 videos, incl. 1 about IB programme
Seinäjoki UAS	Fan page mostly in Finnish, 2,605 "likes"	Mostly tweets in Finnish, 238 tweets,	Not present	Present	16 videos, incl. 2 about IB programme

		200 followers			
Tampere UAS	2,464 “likes”	Not present	Not present	Present	10 videos, incl. 1 about IB programme
Turku UAS	1,879 “likes”	477 tweets, 269 followers	Not present	Present	8 videos in Finnish
Vaasa UAS	Fan page mostly in Finnish, 801 “likes”	Not present	Not present	Present	6 videos in Finnish

According to the competitor analysis presented in Table 1, the most widely used social media platform among universities similar to KyUAS is Wikipedia, which features every university offering the Degree Programme in International Business. However, Wikipedia articles differ in their contents: most of them contain a succinct description of the university while exclude any detailed information about programmes offered.

Another social media website utilized by all of the competitors of KyUAS is YouTube. Despite YouTube’s popularity, not every university investigated has succeeded to use its official channel for the purpose of attracting foreign candidates. This statement stems from the fact that three universities, namely Oulu UAS, Turku UAS and Vaasa UAS, have only provided its audience with promotional videos in the Finnish language.

Notwithstanding the fact that Facebook is the largest social network globally, some of the Finnish universities seem to ignore this fact, and therefore do not engage into conversation with interested parties by means of Facebook. In particular, Tampere UAS and Vaasa UAS have not registered their fan pages on Facebook by the time of the research conduction. However, this cannot be applied to other universities, which have attracted lots of prospective and existing students, with Häme UAS (4,172 “likes”), Haaga-Helia UAS (2,805 “likes”) and Seinäjoki UAS (2,605 “likes”) leading the sector by this indicator.

Twitter, the third biggest social network in the world, has been integrated into the marketing activities of nine out of fourteen universities presented in the table. However, an organization's presence on Twitter does not necessarily imply a high rate of account activity: three of the universities have not crossed the threshold of 100 "tweets" by the time of the research conduction.

In spite of the long-term collaboration links between Russia and Finland, not all of the universities analysed recognise the importance of maintaining online presence on Vk.com. This stems from the fact that the number of fan page members is substantially lower if compared to Facebook. Thus, the reach of target audience occurs at a narrower scale, and the network itself can be considered to be less effective than Facebook and Twitter. Due to the fact that Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences has one of the most developed social media marketing schemes, information regarding its usage of social media platforms in marketing is provided below.

First of all, Haaga-Helia UAS has a developed Facebook fan page with a large fan base. It is updated often and has a modern outlook. Moreover, it has a professional video in English on YouTube promoting its programmes. At the moment Haaga-Helia UAS is not presented on Twitter. Nevertheless, its general information is offered on Wikipedia.org, and its fan page on Vk.com is systematically maintained. Overall impression of Haaga-Helia UAS social media marketing is positive, and it can be certainly considered as a strong competitive advantage over its rival universities.

4.2 Administration of Facebook fan page

Facebook fan page became the main social media campaign tool used in the research. This is mainly because Facebook has the biggest amount of users compared to other social media platforms. Satu Tähkä (2012) claims that KyUAS communications office regularly uses Facebook for promoting University's programmes.

It was reported that a typical advertising campaign unfolds prior to the application period and lasts until it is closed. Moreover, she mentioned some problems, which arose in KyUAS marketing on Facebook in the course of the last few years. Ms Tähkä says that there are too many fan pages related to the University created on Facebook. Different units, which are mainly represented by students, create fan pages using University's or its programmes' names with no reason behind the idea. As a consequence, KyUAS' online activities become misleading for the outsiders and become difficult to control due to the lack of time and human resources.

International Business fan page was formed in the year 2010 and had around 150 subscribers at the beginning of the research. Overall impression of the page was rather negative due to the lack of discussions, an outdated outlook and invalid information, which stems from the fact that the page is generally maintained periodically by students conducting their practical training.

Due to a wide range of changes applied to the page in the course of the research, they were divided into two parts called "Improving Interface" and "Updating" for the purpose of better understanding.

4.2.1 Improving Interface

Competitor analysis pointed out the weaknesses of KyUAS International Business fan page on Facebook. The most important drawback referred to poor interface. This stems from the fact that the outlook of the page creates the first impression in the minds of the visitors of the fan page. First of all, there was no welcoming page: when a non-subscriber visited KyUAS' page, he or she was immediately transferred to the "wall", a place where entries and comments to them are posted. Secondly, the "wall" was filled with spam and external links, which had no connection to KyUAS or to the International Business Programme.

Thirdly, the profile picture of the page had small resolution. In addition, it was designed in an official style, which did not answer the purpose of having a

fan page on Facebook. Fourthly, pictures featured under the fan page's title were of different styles, which looked highly unprofessional. And finally, no tabs were created, which certainly reduced the interest rate towards the page.

The first improvement to the page included the deletion of unrelated entries and spam posts, which made the "wall" both attractive and functional. Furthermore, the welcome tab was created by the use of basic html programming in a Facebook application named "Static html" with the view of making the fan page look more appealing. As a result, now non-subscribers of the KyUAS International Business fan page see the welcome tab when they visit the page (see Figure 5).

facebook Search

International Business Pro... Welcome

back The International Business public

Bachelor's Degree Programme

- Study business in a truly intercultural atmosphere.
- Choose between specialisation studies in International Marketing and International Trade depending on your needs and interests.
- Gain skills and understanding required for a successful career in business.
- Work on projects, have groupworks and study independently.

Kyamk.fi
KYAMK.FI

Figure 5: Welcome tab on International Business Facebook fan page

The welcome tab demonstrates the photo of the KyUAS business campus in Kouvola combined with persuasive comments about International Business Degree and studying in it in an informal yet representative style. The picture is followed by the link to the main KyUAS website (kyamk.fi), which increases the likelihood of further learning process about the university.

The next step focused on the creation of the main profile picture of the page (see Figure 6), which was based on the picture featured there previously. Logo of KyUAS was left untouched, whereas the size of the picture, its colour as well as the position of the text were improved. A derived profile picture matches well the design of the fan page due to its size and outline.

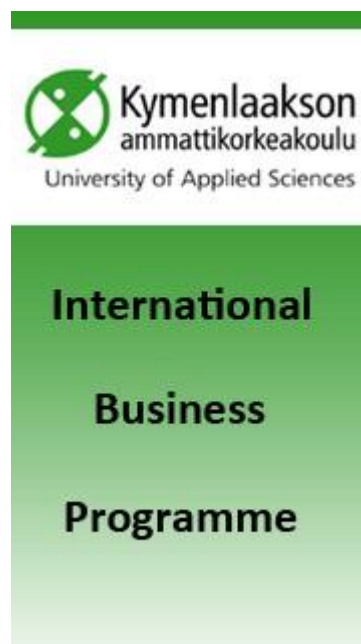


Figure 6: New version of main profile picture on International Business Facebook fan page

A further improvement of the page was obtained through the formation of a photo banner. The photo banner was planned to be composed from either a collage of pictures combined with a similar text or small pictures located under the fan page title. Ultimately, the first alternative was chosen, and a collage of pictures containing a phrase “Study Business in KyUAS!” was

created. The collage fit perfectly the profile picture, although later on it was decided to leave shortcuts of the photo albums instead of it.

In order to test the opportunity of keeping the students informed about important news on the Facebook fan page, a sports tab was formed under the name of “Sport activities” by the use of the Facebook application “static html” mentioned above. The group of tabs is located under the profile picture and forms a list. It is aimed at providing information about sports activities, such as aerobics and indoor games, arranged for KyUAS students.

The only hindrance related to the sports tab is that there is no opportunity to see how many visitors viewed the tab. This implies that it is impossible to figure out whether such “info tabs” would be popular in the future and whether they are suitable for the fan page. Nevertheless, many persons interviewed personally claimed that they noticed the difference. As well as that, they reported it to be an efficient way of providing information.

4.2.2 Updating

Exploration of the “wall” showed that updates and discussions have not taken place for a long time. This was improved by informing subscribers about ongoing events and announcements concerned with the study programme. At some point, the page worked as an extra information channel in addition to the student email and infomonitor.

Subsequently, the page was used for inviting people to the events arranged for the students of KyUAS by tutors and a student union Klaani (see Figure 7). One of the decisive factors in increasing the interest towards the page and university events was the uploading of photos from the events to the fan page photo album.

This can be easily explained by the fact that people, especially the youth, are anxious about their image on the web, particularly in a social network giant Facebook. This is mainly because students nowadays cherish their student life and study life to the same degree. Hence, they check the photos

from different events they attended in order to find themselves, their friends and their fellow students.

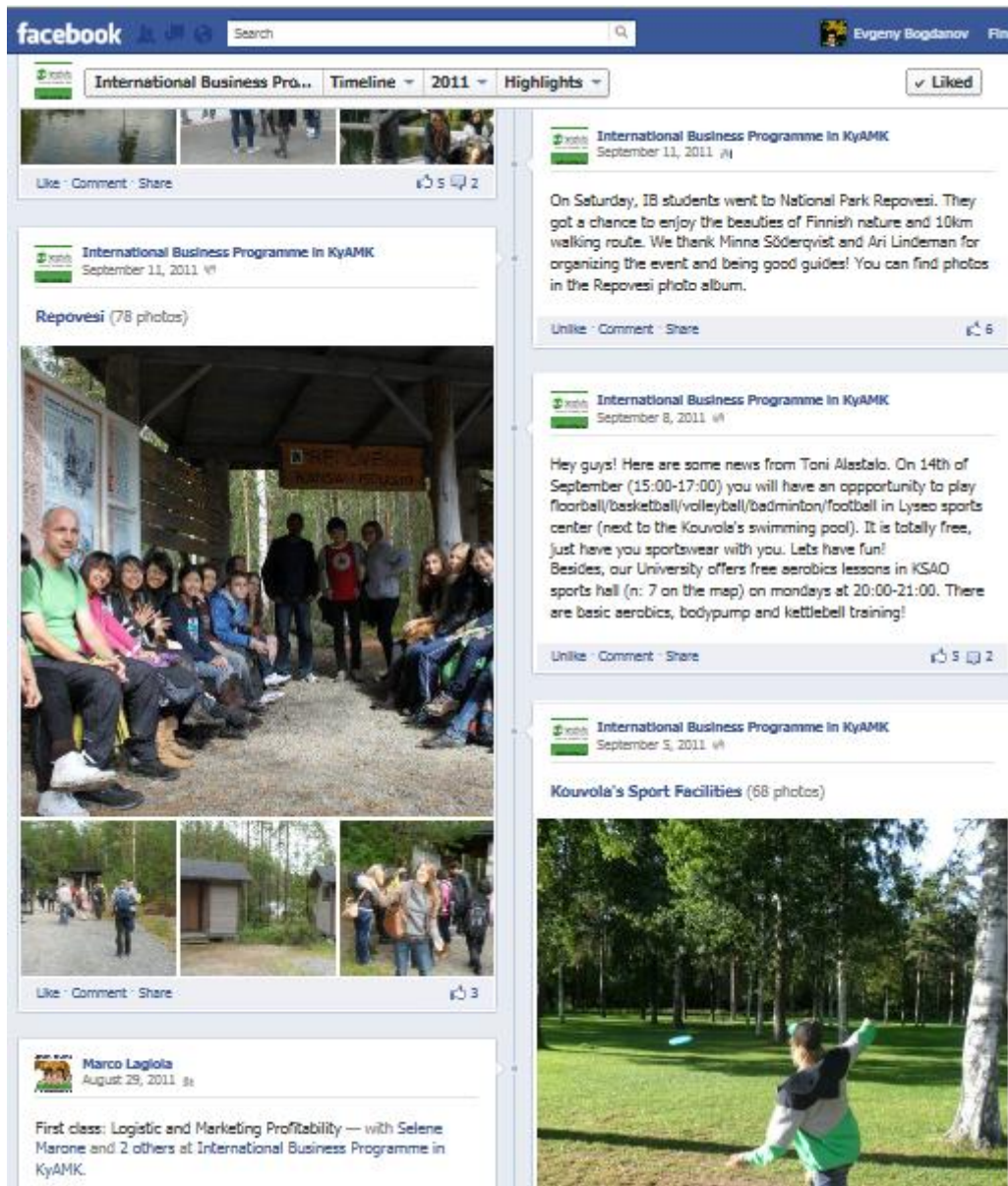


Figure7: Outlook of the “wall” of International Business programme Facebook fan page

Afterwards, the strategy of reporting on student life in Kouvola was maintained in order to retain the interest towards the page. The core of the strategy included informing about and invitation of students to the events, infrequent help with the organization of the events, attendance of the events and taking photographs, which was followed by the uploading of the photos, sharing of general impressions and reporting on event's success or failure. A

good illustration of such events is the International Evening, which took place on 17 November 2011.

4.3 Twitter

Twitter is gaining its popularity very quickly. Around 40 million people have registered on the website in the course of the last few years. Such an outstanding progress should not be ignored, and this leads to the presence of almost every respectful organization on Twitter nowadays (Thomases 2010).

As some of the students of KyUAS have Twitter accounts, it was decided to find out how active those profiles are; whether KyUAS International Business profile on Twitter would attract interest and, as follows, if KyUAS International Business programme can benefit from having the profile on Twitter. The first step included the creation of a Twitter profile under the name of "IBinKyamk". It has a main profile picture which bears a great resemblance to the one of the International Business fan page on Facebook (see Figure 8).

Kymenlaakson ammattikorkeakoulu
University of Applied Sciences

IB programme
@IBinKyamk
International Business Bachelor's Degree Programme in Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences
Kouvola, Finland · <http://kyamk.fi/Frontpage>

Tweets

Following
Followers
Favorites
Lists
Similar to you

twitter
© 2012 Twitter About Help Terms Privacy
Blog Status Apps Resources Jobs
Advertisers Businesses Media Developers

Tweets

IB programme @IBinKys
Re-sits tomorrow 17-20. A everybody. =) Br, Michael

IB programme @IBinKys
One week left to study for week. Study hard and goc

IB programme @IBinKys
Last day to turn in your en April. Good luck and study

IB programme @IBinKys
Last day to turn in your en April. Good luck and study

IB programme @IBinKys
Winter came back - great :

IB programme @IBinKys
One week left to turn in yc Br, Michael

Figure 8: "IBinKyamk" profile on Twitter

In order to make the administration of the profile more convenient, it was decided to connect the Twitter account with the International Business Facebook fan page by means of a special Facebook feature. The feature automatically duplicates the message shared on Facebook on the Twitter account and also allows choosing particular updates which are to be shared on Twitter.

4.4 Youtube

The next step of the marketing campaign consisted in the creation of the YouTube channel under the name of IBKyamk, which was made for the

purpose of collecting the videos related to the KyUAS in general and International Business programme in particular.

At the moment of the research conduction, the channel itself could not be popularized due a small video base. Thus, it was primarily used as a tool for supporting the International Business Facebook fan page through their integration.

The integration of a YouTube channel into the Facebook fan page was implemented by means of a Facebook application "Youtube for pages". The function allows visitors of the fan page to watch and comment on the videos presented in IBKyamk channel without the necessity to switch from Facebook. Besides, a new video uploaded to the IBKyamk channel automatically appears on the YouTube tab, and at the same time, an administrator of the Facebook fan page has an opportunity to post the video to the "wall" of the page to make it publicly visible immediately.

4.5 International Business Degree Promotion Video

As it was mentioned earlier, a proper promotion video is a great competitive advantage, and an International Business department clearly needed one for its social media marketing campaign. Research showed that KyUAS had a range of professionally made promotion videos, but all of them were shot in Finnish and were meant to promote degree programmes among the Finns.

A former student of KyUAS, Jacob Larsen (2009, p.45-46), discusses the importance of the promotion video in his thesis. According to the author, a promotion video is an effective method of reaching University's target groups. In the study, he also suggests that showing the University's campus and area around would help to generate a positive impression in the minds of watchers.

Due to the fact that no funding was accredited to the research, the rent of the professional equipment could not be afforded. Moreover, certain knowledge and experience constraints took place. Therefore, the only

possible solution at that moment was the adaptation of an existing video about International Business Department for foreign students.

In the beginning of the year 2011, a promotion video named "Kyuas liiketalous" was created by a KyUAS media student. The video is four minutes and twelve seconds long, and it is about KyUAS in general and KyUAS Business department and studying there in particular. The text featured in the video was in the Finnish language, but the actual video suited fine for the purpose of marketing International Business Degree.

As a result, new text was created whereas the method of covering old text with the new one was discovered. Moreover, it was decided to exclude one part of the video. Slide by slide, Finnish text was replaced with the English translation. The video was called "Kymenlaakso UAS International Business" and was uploaded to YouTube through the IBKyamk channel (see the web path in Appendix 1).

The promotion video gained 100 views on YouTube in one week, which indicates its success and popularity among the users. Because of this, it was planned to launch viral videos about KyUAS, but due to such hindrances as the lack of skills and command of video editing programmes, this initiative had to be excluded from the research.

4.6 Educational forums

In order to enhance public awareness about the university, educational forums in the English language were searched for. The forums were selected according to the subjects discussed, and the choice primarily fell on such topics as higher level education and possibilities of studying abroad. Registration on those forums was followed by an attempt to engage in a conversation with the visitors, which implied mentioning about the possibilities of studying in Finland and particularly in KyUAS. The key points in the discussions were linked to the fact that Finland has free and efficient education, international degrees and a multicultural atmosphere.

Many persons were attracted by these topics, which resulted into a range of inquiries about the University and the study programmes it provides. The disadvantage of this marketing method includes a risk that the forum posts may be considered as a spam and, moreover, can be deleted. Unfortunately, a lot of KyUAS-related posts were subject to this risk due to the fact that advertising is forbidden on forums and forum supervisors review the topics very strictly. Whenever there is a suspicion of a hidden advertising, the profile is banned immediately.

4.7 V Kontakte (Vk.com)

KyUAS International Business fan page on Vk.com was created in the beginning of the year 2010. According to Dmitry Smirnov (2010, p.40), the purpose of the fan page was to give an opportunity to the Russian-speaking prospective applicants to make inquiries about the University and its programmes. As a consequence, Dmitry was able to answer these questions and collect data for his study.

Figure 9 demonstrates that the Vk.com fan page has many similarities with the Facebook fan page. It consists of the main profile picture, the “wall”, the description of an organization and subforums. It is also possible to upload photo and video materials to make the page more interactive.

Open community

Университет Прикладных Наук Кюменлааксо - КуАМК - Выс...
edit status message

Description: Университет Прикладных Наук Кюменлааксо предлагает обучение по международным программам «Международный Бизнес» и «Дизайн» в городе Кувюла, Финляндия.

Обучение в Финляндии бесплатно для всех!

Добро пожаловать в Университет Прикладных Наук Кюменлааксо!

Программа «Международный Бизнес» на Фейсбуке:
<http://www.facebook.com/IBKyamk>

Website: <http://www.kyamk.fi/Applying>

Location: Kouvola

Новости

Discussion board edit
2 discussions Start a discussion

Вопросы
94 posts. Latest post from Evgeny Bogdanov, 31 Mar at 8:28 pm →

Добро пожаловать в Университет Кюменлааксо!
3 posts. Latest post from Kyamk Kyamk, 7 Jan 2010 →

Photos albums
9 photos in the main album Add a photo

13 posts show community posts

Type your message here...

Alka Belova
Здравствуйте, скажите есть ли дистанционное образование здесь?? Спасибо заранее
3 Apr at 9:59 pm Like

Polinka Manderinka

Kyumenlaakson ammattikorkeakoulu
University of Applied Sciences

Degree programmes in Design and International Business

высшее образование в Финляндии на английском языке

www.kyamk.fi

Manage community
Edit logo ▾
Invite friends to join
Advertise community
Community statistics
Remove from bookmarks

You are a member.
Share with friends
Leave community

Members
154 people

Evgeny Evgenia George

Figure9: Outlook of KyUAS International Business fan page on Vk.com

At the beginning of the research, the permission to work with the page was granted by an administrator. Similarly to the process of improving the Facebook fan page, the unnecessary data and posts were deleted. Updating the fan page was the next step. It was started by replying to prospective candidates' inquiries and comments. Afterwards a small increase of interest towards the page was indicated, which reached its peak when the application period for the International Business programme began.

As it was mentioned in Smirnov's study (2010), prospective students are mainly concerned about the procedure of entering the University. Most of the questions were related to the application process, documents and attachments needed as well as the entrance examination.

One difficulty faced when administrating a Vk.com page consisted in the fact that people prefer to make their inquiries through private messaging rather than group discussions. Hence, this leads to the necessity of creating a range of identical messages.

4.8 Wikipedia

As mentioned earlier, there was no information about the university provided on Wikipedia.org. Wikipedia is a very important contemporary database, which contains the information about almost every organization, therefore presence on Wikipedia could be considered as a requirement for KyAMK. In the course of the research, an article about the University was added to the website. The article described the KyUAS itself, its study programmes and entrance examinations. Besides, references to the official KyUAS website were provided in the article.

4.9 Results and achievements of the KyUAS social media marketing campaign

At the end of the action research, the results and achievements were collected through the observations and discussions with the people involved. Some might argue about validity and reliability of the research, even though the results directly follow the steps taken during the research. Nobody can actually claim that the results gained are absolutely accurate due to the fact that those achievements are influenced by various factors.

The best way of evaluating the research would be interviewing the applicants to the International Business degree who applied on spring 2012 as well as the students who will be admitted to the programme. Due to the timing mentioned in the second chapter, there was no such opportunity, that is why other ways of evaluation were used. As it was mentioned above, the

achievements may be viewed as speculative, nevertheless, some correlation may be indicated.

Table 2: Number of applicants for the International Business Degree Programme in the years 2010-2012 (*KyAMK 2012; Daelemans 2012*)

Year	Number of applicants
2010	162
2011	178
2012	190

It is evident from the Table 2 that the number of applicants has been increasing in the course of the three years, and part of this success may be attributed to the social media marketing campaign conducted during the research.

The majority of social media platforms provide the possibility to see the changes of people's interest depending on the steps taken. Facebook allows tracking the "likes" discussed above, YouTube allows seeing the number of video views while Vk.com and Twitter show the amount of followers of the profiles. Consequently, an analysis of the social media campaign was based on these functions of the websites as well as on the information received through an interview with the communication officer of KyUAS Satu Tähkä (2012).

KyUAS International Business page on Facebook became the core tool of the social media marketing campaign since it was integrated with the Twitter account and the YouTube channel. In addition, visible results were obtained from the Vk.com fan page and educational forums coverage as well as from presence on Wikipedia.org.

International Business fan page on Facebook had 260 "likes" at the end of the research, which shows that the amount of "likes" has increased by more

than 100 during the research. The chart from the International Business fan page's insights on Facebook, which corresponds to the period between 1 January 2011 and 12 March 2012, indicates the growth of interest towards the page (see Figure 10). The changes to the fan page described above were implemented in the end of August 2011. Figure 10 shows that the growth of the users' activity on the fan page began simultaneously with the implementation of the changes. Hence, the correlation between the two developments may be indicated.



Figure 10: Active users chart from the insights of KyUAS International Business Facebook fan page

Satu Tähkä (2012) claims that the Facebook fan page creates a positive impression. In her personal opinion, the direction of the page development is chosen right. International Business fan page on Vk.com has gained around 160 followers by the end of the action research. The amount of inquiries made has also increased radically.

KyUAS representation on educational forums and chatboards is one of the most effective ways to communicate with prospective applicants, since they are reached easily and quickly by engaging in a conversation. Since the promotion video created in the course of the action research gained 100 views on YouTube in one week, comparison with the other KyUAS promotion videos in English mentioned above shows that this result can be viewed as outstanding.

However, the results received after the evaluation of the International Business Twitter profile were not so successful. The profile attracted only seven followers in two months, which shows that students are getting familiar with the website slowly and despite the popularity of Twitter it is not so effective for the purposes of social media marketing of KyUAS at the moment.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

In this chapter, the process of the research conducted is discussed and the results collected in the study are summarised, which is followed by a conclusion of the study and suggestions to future administrators of the social media marketing of KyUAS as well as to future researchers of this topic.

The process of the research described in the empirical part complies with the scheme suggested by Susman (1983), which is illustrated in Figure 11.

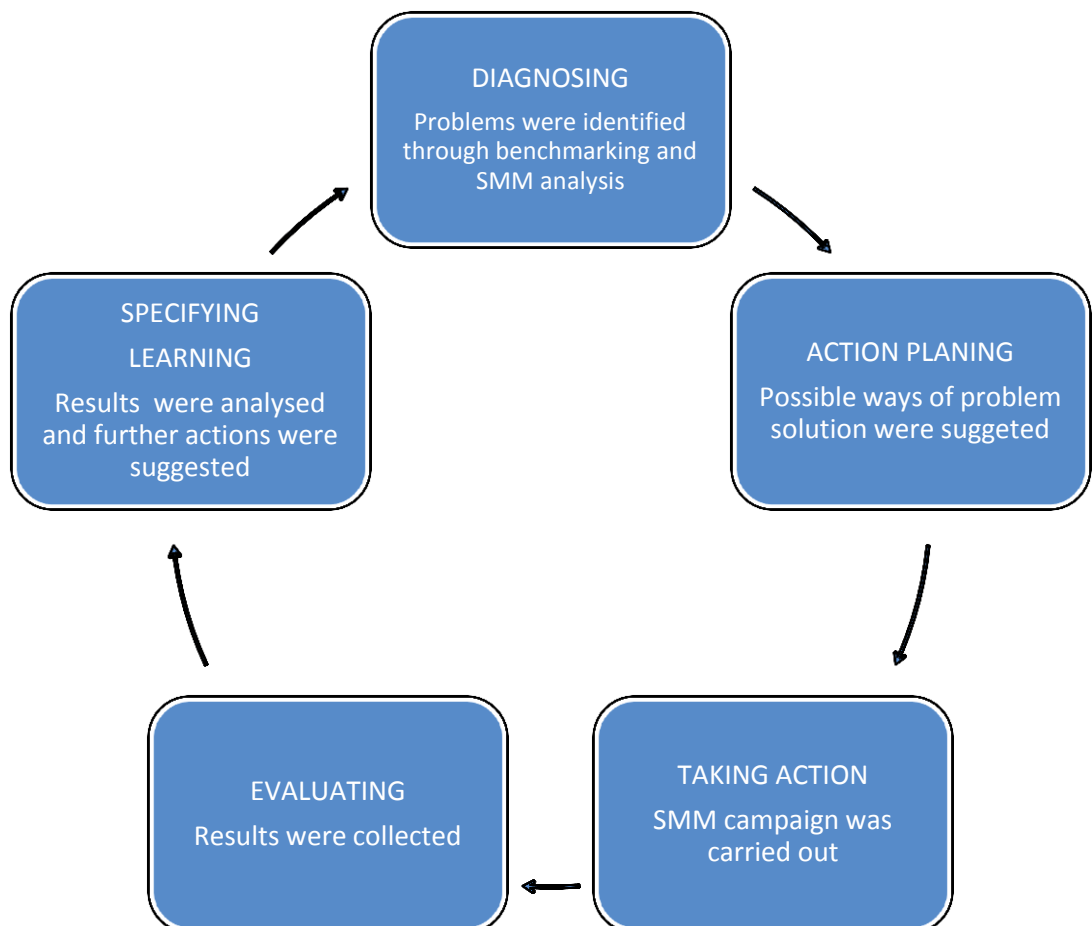


Figure 11: The process of action based research tailored to KyUAS social media marketing campaign, based on Susman (1983)

The process of the research started with the identification of problems related to KyUAS online presence, such as underdeveloped pages filled with spam posts, which was achieved by means of benchmarking combined with the analysis of KyUAS social media accounts. Based on the data collected, the plan of actions regarding each social media platform was formulated. In the next phase, the actions that were possible to undertake with existing skills and knowledge were chosen, and the social media marketing campaign was implemented. Consequently, the data regarding the achievements of the campaign was collected in order to comprehend the significance of the changes made. Finally, the results were analysed, which led to better understanding of value-adding activities as to KyUAS online presence. This in turn allowed identifying possible ways of further penetration of KyUAS into social media platforms by means of developing the existing accounts. These suggestions are listed further in this chapter.

Above all, the social media marketing campaign described in this study was aimed at testing the possible ways of marketing KyUAS International Business Programme in the social media and choosing the most beneficial and effective of them. According to the action research, a rise of awareness about KyUAS in order to attract more applicants to its programmes may be reached by means of using such social media tools as Facebook, YouTube, Vk.com, educational forums and chatboards.

After testing different methods of social media marketing and analysing the outcome, it was indicated that the most effective way of social media marketing is the Facebook fan page. In order to have the page attracting a lot of visitors and gaining popularity, a lot of effort has to be put there. In the course of the research, an easy formula was deduced (see Figure 12):

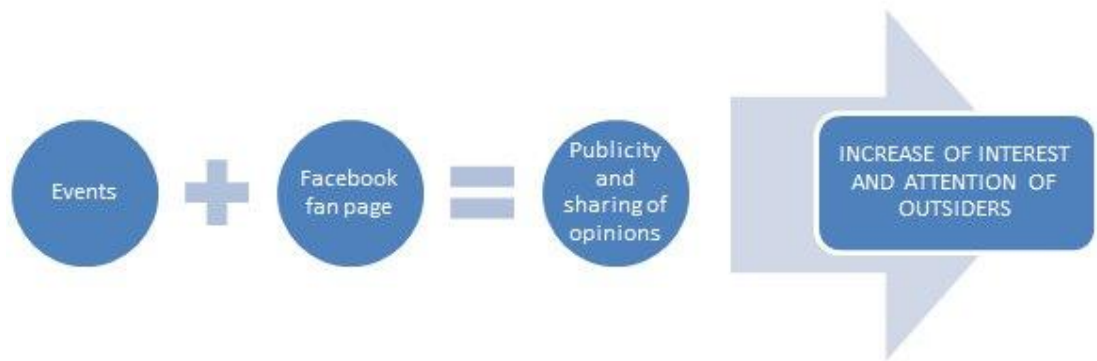


Figure 12: Formula of gaining publicity using Facebook deduced as a result of the research

Figure 12 shows that events combined with notifications and announcements on a Facebook fan page lead to the publicity and active sharing of opinions, which in turn results into the increasing interest and attention of the outsiders.

During the interview, Satu Tähkä (2012) claimed that in her opinion, KyUAS social media campaign is successful. She suggested continuing the strategy of KyUAS marketing in social media and, in particular, on Facebook. Observations gained during the research indicate that more attention should be paid to the tabs on the Facebook fan page. If an administrator of the fan page has the necessary skills, the process will require much effort, whereas the outcome will be beneficial.

Moreover, IBKyamk channel on YouTube should be promoted, particularly by means of viral videos. Hence, a team of media students can be formed in the future for the purpose of creating videos, which could become viral. Such an action would multiply the interest towards the IBKyamk channel and, as follows, towards the Organisation itself. Moreover, the team could make more videos featuring the town of Kouvola because foreigners lack knowledge about it. All things considered, the main suggestion is to focus on creating proper videos, which act as a means of entertainment as well as an informative way of communication.

An additional recommendation would be exploring the Google+ service. It has recently appeared on the Internet and, according to the opinion of many people, it may become a leader among social media platforms.

As a conclusion, it can be claimed that the main objective of the thesis has been met. The concept of social media marketing has been defined and the main social media platforms have been described. The research question has been answered after the analysis of data collected in the course of the action research, which included the conduction of social media marketing campaign for KyUAS. At the end, conclusions have been drawn and suggestions for the future have been set.

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Appendix 1

Web paths for online materials:

- Fan page on Vk.com

<http://vk.com/IBKyUAS>

- Fan page on Facebook.com

<http://www.facebook.com/IBKyamk>

- Promotion video

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TJ4PQGqu9hs>

- Twitter account

<https://twitter.com/#!/IBinKyamk>

- YouTube channel

<http://www.youtube.com/user/IBKyamk>

- Article on Wikipedia.org

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kymenlaakso_University_of_Applied_Sciences