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IMPACT OF ENHANCED CONTENT CREATION IN DIGITAL PR

Case: Compuware Finland Oy

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ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the performance of a digital platform in modern day public relations work (PR). The platform studied in the thesis is the Norwegian-owned MyNewDesk and the performance of the platform is measured and examined through the Nordic profiles of the commissioning company, Compuware Finland Oy.

The aim of the thesis was to find out whether a larger audience could be reached through enhanced content creation. This was tested through a trial period in one of the Nordic profiles and the results are based on the differences in performance between the profiles during the trial period as well as in regards to previous performance.

The theoretical background of the thesis introduces some of the most relevant theories and concepts related to the subject. The theoretical section is divided into two parts; the first part concentrates on PR and its new aspects, whereas the second part discusses digitalization and social media.

The empirical part of the thesis focuses on the trial period and studies the national differences in performance both during the trial period and in regards to previous performance. The trial period ran from September 2014 to February 2015. The study was carried out using quantitative research methods.

Although the results did not reveal as significant differences and great outcome as expected, the most important measurement, the number of unique visits, indicated that the enhanced content creation had had a positive impact on the performance of the platform during the trial period.

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that by increasing the number of posts and the amount of content in a digital platform, it is possible that a larger audience could be reached. Additional research is still needed.

Keywords: Digital marketing, performance, enhanced content creation

Lahden ammattikorkeakoulu
Liiketalouden koulutusohjelma

ESKOLA, SALLA:

Lisätyn sisällöntuotannon vaikutus
digitaalisessa PR:ssä
Case: Compuware Finland Oy

Markkinoinnin opinnäytetyö

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TIIVISTELMÄ

Tämä opinnäytetyö tutkii digitaalisen alustan suorituskykyä nykypäivän PR:n parissa. Alusta, jota tässä opinnäytetyössä tutkitaan, on norjalaisomisteinen MyNewsDesk sekä sen suorituskykyä mitataan toimeksiantajayrityksen, Compuware Finland Oy:n, pohjoismaalaisten profiilien avulla.

Opinnäytetyön tavoitteena on selvittää, pystytäänkö lisätyn sisällöntuotannon avulla tavoittamaan suurempi yleisö. Tätä tutkittiin koejakson avulla, joka toteutettiin yhdessä yrityksen pohjoismaalaisista profiileista. Tulokset perustuvat muutoksiin profiilin suorituskyvyssä niin suhteessa toisiin profiileihin kuin aikaisempiin suorituksiin.

Tämän opinnäytetyön teoreettisessa osuudessa esitellään aiheeseen liittyviä teorioita ja käsitteitä. Teoriaosuus on jaettu kahteen osaan; ensimmäinen osa keskittyy PR:ään sekä sen uusimpiin muotoihin, kun taas toinen osa käsittelee digitalisaatiota ja sosiaalisia medioita.

Työn empiirisessä osuudessa keskitytään toteutettuun koejaksoon ja tutkitaan eroja profiilien suorituskyvyssä niin koejakson aikana, kuin suhteessa aikaisempaan suorituskykyyn. Koejakso toteutettiin aikavälillä syyskuusta 2014 helmikuuhun 2015. Tutkimus toteutettiin käyttäen kvantitatiivisia tutkimusmenetelmiä.

Vaikka tulokset eivät paljastaneetkaan niin selviä eroja ja hyvää lopputulosta kuin oli oletettua, tärkein suorituskyvyn mittari, eli uniikkien käyntien määrä, osoitti tuloksia siitä, että lisätyllä sisällöntuotannolla oli positiivinen vaikutus alustan suorituskykyyn.

Opinnäytetyön osoittamien tulosten avulla voidaan siis päätellä, että lisäämällä sisällöntuotantoa ja julkaisujen määrää, suurempi yleisö on mahdollista saavuttaa. Lisätutkimukset ovat silti tarpeen.

Asiasanat: Digitaalinen markkinointi, suorituskyky, lisätty sisällöntuotanto

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1 INTRODUCTION

The inspiration for this thesis was gained while the author was performing her traineeship for Lahti University of Applied Sciences in the commissioning company, Compuware Finland Oy. During her traineeship, a part of her responsibilities was to maintain and create content to a digital PR platform the company was using, called MyNewsDesk. She was examining the performance of the platform over time and wondered with her supervisor, whether better performance could be achieved by enhancing the volume content creation. It was decided that the author would examine this and display the results in her thesis.

It was then decided that this would be examined through a trial period in one of the Nordic profiles the author was in charge of. The Finnish profile was the profile chosen, as it required the smallest amount of additional input, since the author could do all the translations of the corporate materials herself.

The trial period began soon after the decisions were made and the extent of it was from September 2014 until February 2015, resulting in a total length of six months. The results would then be gathered and examined from this time period, as well as earlier in the year, so that comparisons could be made not only in regards to the other Nordic profiles, but to the previous performance of the same one. The comparison time period from earlier in the year was randomly selected by the author, from January 2014 to June 2014.

As the author began her work, her hypothesis was that surely the more there was to see, the more people would see it, too. The connectivity of digital platforms, social media and search engines makes published content pop up more easily and exposes it to a larger audience than a more traditional channel or a platform that doesn't offer any integration possibilities would.

The results of the thesis were examined and written during the spring term of 2015.

1.1 Aim and research question

The aim of this thesis is to examine, whether better performance could be achieved through enhanced content creation. To define it in the research question; can better performance of a digital platform be achieved by increasing the volume of published content?

The aim of the thesis is to give guidance on the matter to professionals pondering the same kinds of questions with all kinds of digital platforms. Is increasing the amount of published content enough to produce significant advantage when compared to normal circumstances to make it worth the effort, or should other steps be taken instead? If one was to pursue in this line of inquiry, the examination of the impact of enhanced quality could be next.

The more tangible purpose of the thesis was to somewhat measure whether or not the platform was fulfilling its purpose or could easily be brought to do that. The gathered data also helped to define the current all-around status of the platform.

1.2 Definition and demarcation

To define the subject further, the purpose of this thesis is to discover whether more people can be reached by publishing content to a digital platform more often. All other aspects of using the platform were kept the same during the trial period, so that the differences that would occur could easily be regarded as caused by the trial period actions, in other words, due to the enhanced content creation.

The analysis of the research was executed by using only the native analysis tools the platform itself offers, specifically three key performance indicators: the number of unique visits within a month, the average amount of posts read during a visit and the average duration of a visit. As has become evident, this thesis does not try to discover the power of quality, but quantity.

The thesis does not try to compare different digital platforms or examine the entire platform and its features, but tries solely to discover the might of more frequently published content within a single platform by using three key measurements

during a certain time period in regards to other national profiles and previous performance.

1.3 Research methods and thesis structure

As the thesis research is based on numbers and hard data, it is therefore a quantitative research. Typically in a quantitative research, there is a hypothesis, which sets the direction for the research. The hypothesis is deducted from both theory and observation. The research then tests the hypothesis in the real world. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2000, 123, 133.)

As mentioned in the introduction, the hypothesis for this research was that better performance could be achieved through enhanced content creation in a digital platform. The hypothesis was built through observation during the traineeship in the company and with the help of the theoretical overview.

A more particular narrative of the specifics of the research can be found in the beginning of the case-oriented chapters.

Thesis structure

2015 is a year for setting all the old tricks aside and reaching for the unknown, when it comes to marketing. The emphasis is shifting from inbound links to social presence. Making the most of one's digital presence is therefore crucial and ad gurus are telling to take risks. (Azam 2015.)

The theoretical part of the thesis describes these kinds of relevant phenomena and concepts of the digital world. The theory has been divided into two separate, but intertwined parts: the first part discusses PR and the new aspects of it, whereas the second part describes digitalization and social media. The structure of the thesis is described in figure 1.

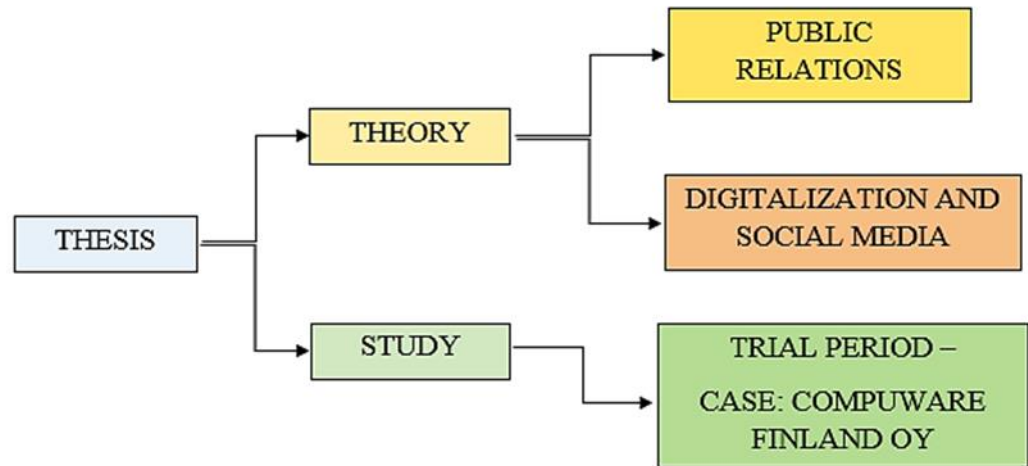


FIGURE 1. The structure of the thesis

Due to the relatively new concepts and phenomena around the topic of the thesis, gathering referenceable material to the theoretical overview was a bit of a challenge.

The research part of the thesis consists of the examination of the data gathered considering the trial period. Also Compuware Finland Oy is presented in the beginning of the empirical section of the thesis, as well as the use of MyNewsDesk in the company and the details of the trial period. After that the reviewing of the data and the gathering of the results begins. The data is largely displayed through various figures and tables to give a comprehensive understanding of the results.

The thesis ends in the presentation of conclusions.

2 PUBLIC RELATIONS (PR)

Traditional public relations (PR) has been about creating influential public profiles for organizations and maintaining public affairs. PR departments have been responsible for media relations, raising awareness, gaining publicity, lobbying and taking care of investor relations. (Armstrong & Kotler 2011, 430.)

PR is often a less expensive alternative than advertising, when trying to raise awareness. The idea of PR is not to buy publicity, but to spread information. When the media catch a whiff of something interesting, they do the work for the organizations. (Armstrong & Kotler 2011, 431.)

2.1 PR or CorpComm?

The term “public relations” is considered to be out of date in the modern world. Instead, the concept of “corporate communication” (CorpComm) has taken its place. CorpComm perceives a much larger share of organizations’ communications functions. As business environments are becoming more complex and global, organizations are forced to take a new perspective into communications strategies. Often the CorpComm function covers almost all of the communications-related dealings and runs through the entire organization. (Argenti 2007, 41-42, 49.)

Below is a figure (figure 2) that describes the different aspects of the CorpComm function, according to Cornelissen (2014, 28).



FIGURE 2. Different aspects of the CorpComm function (Cornelissen 2014, 28)

2.2 21st century PR

Before the internet took charge, PR and advertising were two separate functions carrying out their own visions. The purpose of advertising was to get the attention of the masses, where as PR departments were solely focused on the media, using press releases and other tools to get their messages into written media, radio and television. (Scott 2010, 8-12.)

Nowadays the lines have blurred. David Meerman Scott (2010, 23) in his book “The New Rules of Marketing and PR” hits the nail on the head when declaring: “You are what you publish”. For organizations, online presence is vital and the message that is sent out needs to be genuine and committing. Instead of catching the attention of everyone, the idea is the reach the right people at the right time. (Scott 2010, 23-24.)

Some say that PR in itself has not essentially changed, only the mediums through which it connects with people (Whittle 2015).

In addition to revolutionizing the communications strategies of organizations, the internet has been responsible for the evolution and adoption of new online tools and tactics in order for organizations to reach the global marketplace (Phillips & Young 2009, 3).

The 21st century PR is all about online media and understanding the online behavior of consumers is the key. Phillips & Young (2009, 94-95) divide the essential elements of online PR into three parts, which are connected to each other. These three elements can be seen in figure 3.

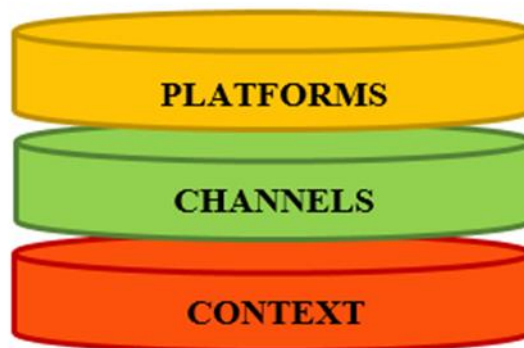


FIGURE 3. Elements of online PR according to Philips & Young (2009, 94-95)

- Platforms - The devices consumers use when receiving the message, such as mobile phones, laptops, television etc.
- Channels - The various channels people get the message through, such as SMS, social media, blogs etc.
- Context - The physical context where the message is received, such as home, at work, on the way to work etc.

Rogers (2010, 16) on the other hand has put together five models of online behavior and the corresponding corporate online strategies:

- Access - When consumers are looking for an easy access to information, it is essential for organizations to provide just that

with a speedy reply. These organizations should be present online as widely as possible, twentyfour hours a day.

- Engage - When dealing with consumers who want to be engaged, organizations should strive to create interesting content and to be a valued source of information.
- Customize - When consumers are looking for specific type of information amongst the abundance of it, these organizations should enable a customized search and view to the preferred content.
- Connect - When dealing with consumers who are looking for a dialog or a feeling of connection, organizations should take part in the conversation both online and in consumers' life.
- Collaborate - When consumers come to organizations with issues and even ways to solve them, these organizations should include the consumers in problem solving and business development.

The challenges of today

In the era of the internet, the traditional methods have been cast aside. Internet has enabled information to travel fast around the globe. Anyone can bring his or her opinion to light and organizations have lost their ability to keep it to themselves. Quite the contrary, the distribution of information and assuring the ease of access to it are factors that are driving strategies and decisions today. (Phillips & Young 2009, 6.)

Among these many challenges companies are facing in the 21st century, two of the largest ones and most relevant to this thesis are digitalization and social media. These are discussed further in the following chapter.

3 DIGITALIZATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Digital environments have been taking over the lives of people for a while now. In marketing it all began with the use of databases. Since then the usage of all kinds of digital channels has been ever growing. From emails and simple google searches we have moved on to social media, search engine optimization and the world of smart devices. (Merisavo, Vesanen, Raulas & Virtanen 2006, 28.)

Traditional organizations especially are facing a big challenge. With digitalization and social media spreading far and wide, organizations are exposed to the public. Business decisions are no longer made behind closed curtains, but openly and responsibly. And making it in a social and digital world requires massive changes in organizations' communications strategies, building a couple of profiles to a random mix of media is not enough. (Forsgård & Frey 2010, 19.)

As Forsgård & Frey (2010, 39) put it: "taking part is a promise to actually be there and listen" (translated by author).

Modern day communications should be about creating a relationship with customers, not just getting their attention (Scott 2010, 4). Networking customers can be extremely useful resources to organizations, both in product development and in marketing. But, they can also be one of the biggest threats in both categories. (Rogers 2010, 10.)

One of the biggest benefits of digitalization is the ability to target desired customers with a more personalized message, making the dialog between customers and organizations more efficient and relevant. Reacting to a critical situation is faster and personal, which will create value to the customer and improve customer satisfaction. (Merisavo, Vesanen, Raulas & Virtanen 2006, 46, 106.)

Many of the media can be tailored to best suit the organization in question, whether they are looking for an innovative platform for discussion, a channel for producing news feed or a simple feedback forum (Forsgård & Frey 2010, 52). Certain kind of content can be directed to matching target groups without any additional costs to communications resources. Some target groups prefer a distant,

single-channeled approach, whereas some respond better to multi-channeled and intensive contact. Others like very informative messages, whereas some like to hear the main idea and search for more themselves. (Merisavo, Vesanen, Raulas & Virtanen 2006, 91.)

It is important to make social and digital decisions with care. Out of countless alternatives offering networking, various services and tools, it is vital to find the right ones. This can often be a time-consuming process. (Forsgård & Frey 2010, 30, 82.) Examples of such social channels are social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter...), blogs, video and photo sharing sites (Instagram, Youtube...), chats, wikis and countless others (Scott 2010, 37).

The rise of digitalization has produced a challenge for market research and measuring. Although many of these channels offer native analytics tools and measurements, the use of multi-channeled communications strategies makes the synchronization of these results rather complicated. In order for all the data to be used to its full potential, it often requires additional processing. Also, these native tools often fall short in measuring customer satisfaction or actual reactions to messages. (Merisavo, Vesanen, Raulas & Virtanen 2006, 117-118.)

Market research is not the only area, where measuring the advantages of social and digital channels is hard; defining objectives as well as calculating investments and ROI is far from simple and getting accurate results is next to impossible (Forsgård & Frey 2010, 140).

Online research might be fast and inexpensive, but even today they still reach only a part of the market (Merisavo, Vesanen, Raulas & Virtanen 2006, 168). Some consumers are hard to reach due to limited usage of digital mass media, whereas some are hard to impact due to negative attitudes towards digital mass media (Donovan & Healey 2010, 326).

Another downside of digitalization and social media is the extreme publicity. Put in black and white; once something is posted online, it will always be there and everyone will have access to it. (Forsgård & Frey 2010, 63.)

According to Google and the company's chairman Eric Schmidt (2015), the next stage of digitalization is the disappearance of the Internet. It will become such an essential part of everything in our lives and our experiences, that it can no longer be considered a separate, distinctive concept. (Marsden 2015.)

3.1 Global environment

Digitalization and social media have enabled networking beyond national borders to everyone. However, the adaptation of such mentality has not spread around evenly. Traditional cultures have had to let go of their old and rigid ways in front of the naked and collective nature of social media. The differences between cultures are narrowing down due to widely spread global communities. (Forsgård & Frey 2010, 27, 32, 36.)

Doing business in a digital and global environment requires diligence and strict planning. Globally used digital channels raise many questions, such as the number of profiles, the languages used in them, national representations etc. (Forsgård & Frey 2010, 75.)

An international playing field is a mix of different cultural communication styles. Many Asian cultures communicate indirectly and via implied meanings, whereas the Germans stick to straightforward and purely business-related communication. Semantic differences become evident during translations and cultural connections. (Chaney & Martin 2011, 102-103.)

The decision to enter into an international market or media needs to be thought through. Does the organization have enough information on the consumer behavior and preferences of the targeted groups and cultures? Can the organization communicate fluently with the authorities and in the business environments of the targeted countries and cultures? Does the organization possess enough international experience and know-how to cope in these environments and to make well-informed decisions? (Armstrong & Kotler 2011, 518.)

3.2 Digital marketing

Ever-present smart devices have made it possible to reach people everywhere at all times: one in five check their phones every ten minutes (Emamian 2014). The potential in digital marketing seems almost limitless.

As seen in figure 4, one take on digital marketing is to divide it into five different categories: online marketing, mobile marketing, radio marketing, TV marketing and eMedia marketing. Across these categories are various modern, digital channels and platforms through which digital marketing can be done. (Ashley-Roberts 2015.)



FIGURE 4. Categories of digital marketing (Ashley-Roberts 2015)

As previously discussed, measuring the performance of digital solutions can be tough. And although there is a clear demand for integrated platforms, there are many questions still in need of an answer, such as: what is required from a digital platform? What is the true value of an integrated solution? (DoubleClick Advertiser 2015.)

3.3 MyNewsDesk

MyNewsDesk is an example of a modern day PR solution and a digital marketing channel. It is a Norwegian-owned digital publicing platform, offering organizations an integrated management solution for communications and content marketing online. Through the newsrooms of MyNewsDesk, organizations can distribute information to various target groups using different digital channels.

The platform allows organizations to publish press releases, blogs, news, photos and videos, for example. Social media profiles can be linked to organizations' newsrooms, allowing these two channels to show each other's recent activities. Newsrooms are also search-engine optimized. (MyNewsDesk 2015.)

Over 6 000 organizations worldwide are using these newsrooms whereas the amount of followers in the organization's network is over 60 000. Currently MyNewsDesk has offices in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, the United Kingdom, Germany and Singapore. In Finland MyNewsDesk is represented by the PR agency Deski. (MyNewsDesk 2015.)

The idea of the platform is to save organizations' time in distributing information. With the help of an integrated platform, content can be distributed to all the desired channels simultaneously. Organizations can find useful contacts from the vast network of PR professionals and all content is easily managed and targeted to the right people. The platform offers some native measurements, such as which posts have been the most popular or what has been the average time spent reading a post. (MyNewsDesk 2015.)

The three key performance indicators and measurements used in this research are the number of unique visits within a month, the average amount of posts read during a visit and the average duration of a visit. These measurements are the most relevant ones in regards to the research question and the topic of the thesis.

4 IMPACT OF ENHANCED CONTENT CREATION IN DIGITAL PR – CASE: COMPUWARE FINLAND OY

4.1 Case: Compuware Finland Oy

Compuware Finland Oy was a part of Compuware Corporation. A private equity investment firm called Thoma Bravo announced the acquisition of Compuware Corporation in September 2014. Through the transformation of becoming a privately-held company, the two business units of Compuware were separated into two companies. The mainframe side of the business continued as Compuware whereas the APM side was renamed as Dynatrace and continued its journey as a company of its own, instead of a mere business unit. (Dynatrace 2015.)

This thesis was commissioned by the APM department of Compuware Finland Oy. Therefore the company is now called Dynatrace, but to avoid confusion, the company will be referred to as Compuware Finland Oy throughout the rest of this thesis.

APM stands for Application Performance Monitoring (Dragich 2012). As a concept, it is in fact quite self-explanatory: the monitoring of application performance from different point of views.

Dynatrace is one of the leaders in the field of user-centric application performance management and monitoring. The company doesn't lack in merit; nine of the top ten retailers, nine of the ten largest banks and 386 of Fortune 500 companies in the U.S. are using Dynatrace solutions. The company has over 5 700 customers worldwide, such as Yahoo!, LinkedIn, Cisco and Monster.com. The company was also recently ranked number one provider of Web Performance Monitoring Solutions for online retailers in the U.S. by Internet Retailer Top 500 Guide 2014. (Dynatrace 2015.)

Dynatrace products vary from tools focusing on application insights (application monitoring) to user insights (synthetic monitoring and user experience management), also covering app-aware network insights (data center real-user monitoring). These solutions help companies in the areas of launch readiness,

performance engineering, user analytics and production monitoring. (Dynatrace 2015.)

4.2 The use of MyNewsDesk in the Nordics

MyNewsDesk profiles have also served the company as types of regional websites in the Nordics, in addition to PR-related publishing forums. The company has localized websites in only major sales areas and languages in Europe, such as in French, Spanish and German.

The Nordic MyNewsDesk profiles have been in Finnish, Swedish, Danish and Norwegian. Below is a figure (figure 5), which describes these profiles.

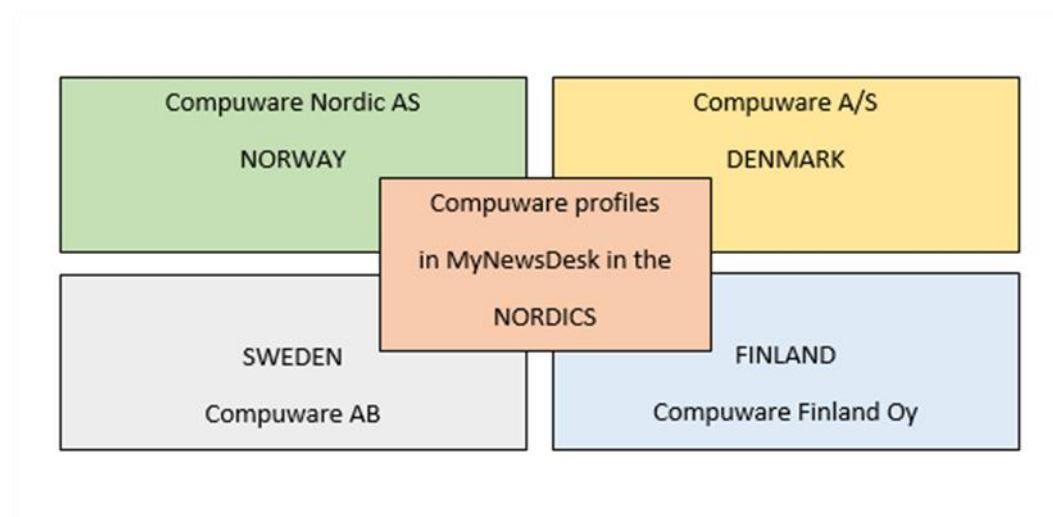


FIGURE 5. The Nordic Compuware profiles in MyNewsDesk

Through these profiles, the company has produced and published content in each country's native language. The published content has mainly originated from corporate materials. These materials have included press releases, news, blogs, event postings, videos and pictures. Translations services have been used when necessary. In Finland the author of the thesis was responsible for the translation of the materials to Finnish during her traineeship.

The corporate website address link and social media feeds from the company's social media profiles have been linked to each Nordic profile. The profiles have also displayed a member of the local marketing team, in case the visitors have

wanted to contact a member of the company. The social media feeds have included Facebook, Twitter and Youtube, as well as the Compuware RSS feed.

4.3 Trial period of enhanced content creation

As previously mentioned, the trial period of enhanced content creation ran from September 2014 to February 2015.

In a normal situation, similar content was simultaneously published to the Nordic profiles about one or two times a month. Some postings were occasionally made to only one of the profiles. For example, if there was an event coming up in one of the countries or an interesting piece of news that only concerned one of the countries, those were only posted in the respective profiles. The focus of the trial period was in blogs and press releases, which were usually published simultaneously in all profiles.

During the trial period, content was published to the Finnish profile once a week, while the other profiles continued in the normal rhythm of one or two publications a month. The only exceptions were the last two weeks of December 2014 and the first week of January 2015; with most of the people on holidays, it seemed pointless to be posting content during that time span.

4.4 The results of enhanced content creation

The results of the trial period of enhanced content creation are presented in the following sub-chapters, according to each key performance metric used in the research.

4.4.1 Unique visits within a month

The amount of unique visits within a month is the most relevant and telling metric considering the research question. By knowing how many people visited the profile, the performance of the platform can easily be measured. The amounts of unique visits within a month since the platform was taken into use have been gathered in table 1.

TABLE 1. Unique visits within a month

Unique visits within a month				
Month	Finland	Denmark	Norway	Sweden
2013 January	-	-	-	-
February	-	-	-	-
March	-	-	-	-
April	-	-	-	-
May	-	-	-	-
June	-	-	108	-
July	3	3	65	2
August	48	16	22	18
September	8	15	375	9
October	78	60	46	94
November	58	64	16	46
December	26	9	12	14
2014 January	88	45	71	109
February	80	27	25	67
March	58	9	25	34
April	80	30	29	42
May	55	47	27	41
June	123	31	127	94
July	37	20	18	20
August	86	42	35	47
September	108	40	48	76
October	120	19	23	42
November	52	18	17	22
December	64	30	32	46
2015 January	17	7	23	19
February	23	13	30	32

As seen in table 1, the amounts of unique visits within a month have varied from month and year to another rather significantly. All the country profiles seem to be showing results from both ends of the spectre and all country profiles have scored top ratings in the category at least once. The green color in the cells marks the top result of the month. When reviewing the table based on the color-coding, the Finnish profile seems to have been scoring the highest ratings in this category most often, both during the trial period and before. However, the longest consecutive period of best performance before the trial period had been four months, but partly during the trial period the Finnish profile stayed a winner for six months. Though this does not offer any certainty in the matter, it does support

the hypothesis that the trial period has had a positive impact on the performance of the profile.

The same data is presented in the following line chart (figure 6).

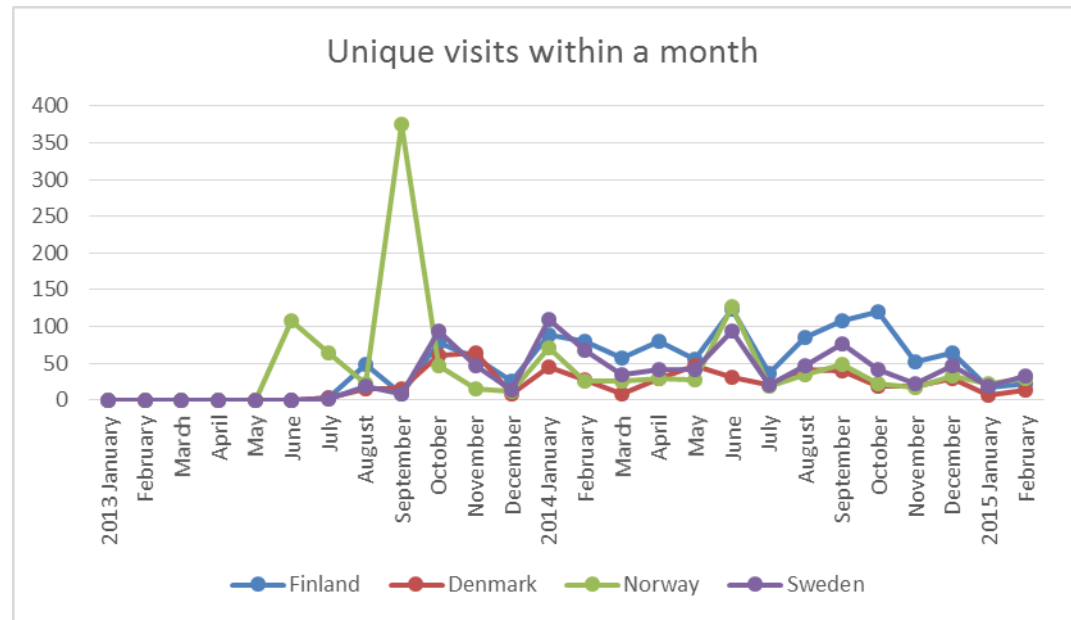


FIGURE 6. Unique visits within a month

Looking at the line chart which is figure 6, it seems that the Norwegian profile seems to be able to gather a very large audience at times, but usually remains more towards the bottom line and worst performance. The Swedish and Danish profiles seem rather stable, Denmark particularly so. The blue line, which stands for the Finnish profile has often been the top performer, as the previous table 1 already showed. Still, the profile doesn't have the same stability that the Swedish and Danish profiles have.

The clearest way to determine the actual change in performance is a comparison to a similar time span in an ordinary situation. The comparative time span was randomly selected by the author, from January 2014 to June 2014. The reason why the same period wasn't chosen from the previous years, was due to the fact that the platform hadn't been in the company use for a long enough period for the use of the platform to have become somewhat regular, and therefore the variations would have been too significant and the results untrustworthy.

This comparison is displayed in table 2 and figure 7.

TABLE 2. Unique visits within a month comparison: averages and totals

Unique visits within a month averages	Finland	Denmark	Norway	Sweden
Avg: Jan-Jun 2014 (6 months)	80.67	31.50	50.67	64.50
Avg: Sep-Feb 2014-15 (6 months)	64.00	21.17	28.83	39.50
Decrease	16.67	10.33	21.83	25.00
Unique visits within a month total	Finland	Denmark	Norway	Sweden
Total: Jan-Jun 2014 (6 months)	484	189	304	387
Total: Sep-Feb 2014-15 (6 months)	384	127	173	237
Decrease	100	62	131	150
Percentual decrease	21%	33%	43%	39%

Looking at table 2, the first calculations have been made of average amounts of unique visits within the time spans in question and the second ones from total amounts of unique visits. The amounts of unique visits have decreased in all of the profiles. The percentual difference is the same, whether the visits are counted by averages or total visits. Though the decreases of unique visits to the Danish profile are the smallest in numbers, the slightest percentual decrease has been in the Finnish profile, 21%. So although due to the decrease of unique visits the trial period was not able to reach a larger audience than before, it can still be seen as to have had a positive impact in the amount of unique visits, since the Finnish profile had the smallest percentual decrease.



FIGURE 7. Unique visits within a month comparison: averages and totals

4.4.2 Average amount of posts read during a visit

The next key performance indicator is the average amount of posts read during a visit. Has the increased amount of content made people also read more? Below, table 3 describes these amounts.

TABLE 3. Average amount of posts read during a visit

Average amount of posts read during a visit				
Month	Finland	Denmark	Norway	Sweden
2013 January	-	-	-	-
February	-	-	-	-
March	-	-	-	-
April	-	-	-	-
May	-	-	-	-
June	-	-	1.03	-
July	1	1.5	1.02	1
August	1.07	1.07	1.05	1.2
September	1	1.5	1.02	1
October	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.02
November	1.87	1.78	1.14	1.64
December	1.44	1.13	1.2	1.17
2014 January	1.42	1.73	1.29	1.56
February	1.51	2.7	1.32	1.22
March	1.87	1.13	1.14	1.31
April	1.82	1.76	1.45	1.91
May	1.67	1.42	1.13	1.41
June	1.71	1.15	1.19	1.32
July	1.42	1.11	1.38	1.18
August	2.15	1.75	1.52	1.47
September	1.96	1.14	1.26	1.31
October	2.22	1.27	1.64	1.56
November	1.49	1.13	1.7	1.1
December	1.73	1.43	1.33	1.31
2015 January	1.42	1.17	1.44	1.19
February	1.21	1.18	1.15	1.28

Again, looking at the general performance in this metric over the years, Finland seems to have had the highest amount of top rankings. The Finnish profile is also the only profile, which has been able to produce more than one month of this metric value being over two. The only other profile, which has been able to produce a value over two in this metric, is Denmark. But that one time was very

impressive; 2.7 posts read during a visit on average in February 2014. Figure 8 below describes this accomplishment wonderfully.

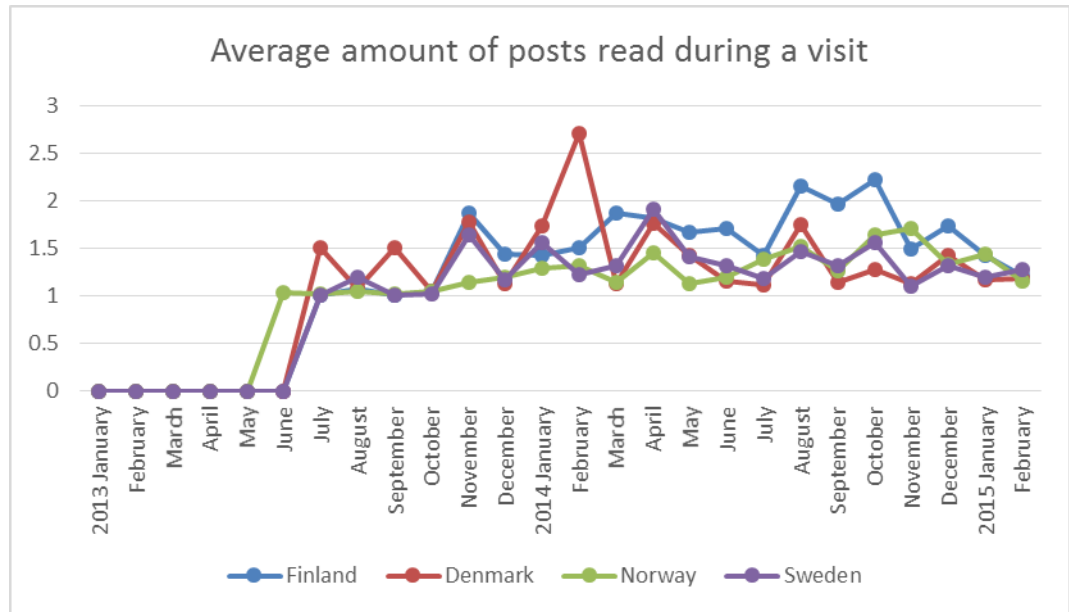


FIGURE 8. Average amount of posts read during a visit

Just like with unique visits, the best way to see the impact of the trial period is to make a time span comparison between the trial period and the randomly selected normal time period, as discussed earlier. The comparison between the two time spans follows below.

TABLE 4. Average amount of posts read during a visit comparison

Average amount of posts read during a visit	Finland	Denmark	Norway	Sweden
Avg. Jan-Jun 2014 (6 months)	1.67	1.65	1.25	1.46
Avg. Sep-Feb 2014-15 (6 months)	1.67	1.22	1.42	1.29
Decrease	-0.01	0.43	-0.17	0.16
Percentual decrease	0%	26%	-13%	11%

The results from comparing the performance of the profiles during these two time spans are rather interesting. Where there was a clear trend in sight with the decreasing amounts of unique visits, the similar results in the averages of posts read during a visit are far from consistent. In the Danish and Swedish profiles the amounts have again decreased, but in Norway the amount of posts read during a

visit has increased by 13%. In Finland there has been virtually no difference. Inconsistent results are hard to read and definite assumptions can not be made. Should Norway be an abnormality in the results, one could presume that the trial period has had a positive impact in the amount of posts read during a visit in the Finnish profile, enabling the profile to maintain the same level of performance as before. But as stated, with these results nothing can be said for certain. The results from the time span comparison can also be seen in figure 9.

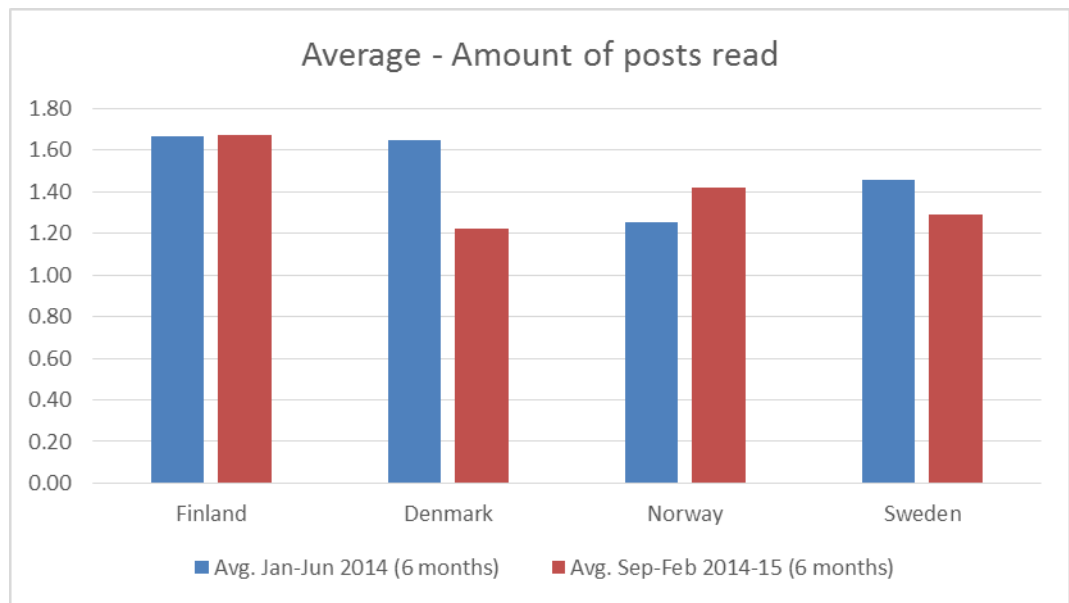


FIGURE 9. Average amount of posts read during a visit comparison

4.4.3 Average duration of a visit

The final key metric used in this thesis research is the average duration of a visit. Has the increased volume of content made people stay longer in the platform?

Below is a table (table 5) describing the average durations of visits in the Nordic profiles.

TABLE 5. Average duration of a visit

Average duration of a visit				
Month	Finland	Denmark	Norway	Sweden
2013 January	-	-	-	-
February	-	-	-	-
March	-	-	-	-
April	-	-	-	-
May	-	-	-	-
June	-	-	1.55	-
July	0.00	0.13	1.03	0.30
August	1.11	0.59	3.15	1.12
September	1.52	1.46	4.36	3.36
October	1.36	0.36	2.05	2.56
November	2.59	0.39	0.46	4.14
December	0.53	0.58	1.55	13.32
2014 January	3.27	2.08	1.14	2.08
February	2.19	2.02	2.22	2.24
March	1.11	1.32	3.16	1.08
April	2.02	1.01	2.35	1.16
May	1.07	2.21	2.09	3.16
June	1.39	4.24	4.18	4.14
July	3.26	1.18	4.14	4.46
August	3.11	2.27	2.36	3.03
September	2.31	5.15	2.05	2.21
October	5.28	5.05	1.08	2.02
November	2.11	2.39	1.49	5.17
December	3.26	4.52	1.18	1.45
2015 January	1	17.14	0.38	1.42
February	0.3	1.11	5.46	2.35

The average duration of a visit metric has the biggest fragmentation in the results. It is hard to make clear distinctions between the profiles, since there is no pattern to be seen. At best it can be said, that opposite to the previous two metrics, the Finnish profile seems to have been basically the poorest performer over the years in the duration of visits. During the trial period, the Finnish profile managed to top this category only once. The Danish profile seems to have performed best in this metric during the trial period with three top rankings.

The same data is shown in the following figure 10.

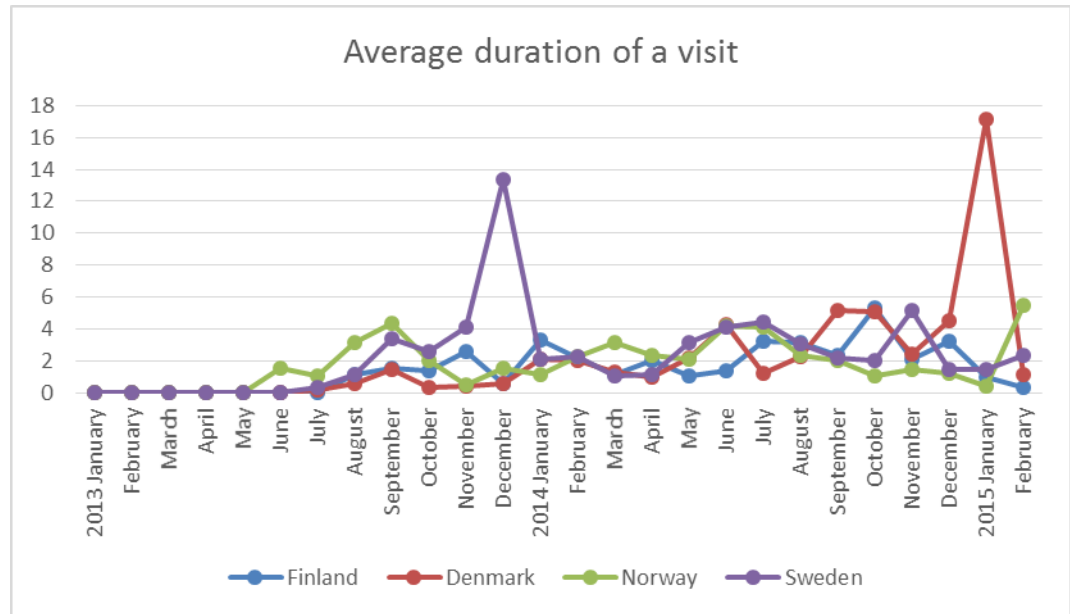


FIGURE 10. Average duration of a visit

One cannot help but notice the two major peaks in the graphic of the line chart in figure 10. Those peaks seem completely random and out of the ordinary. Luckily, only one of them occurred during the examined time spans. Whether those are accurate results is open for debate. It would seem more likely that those extraordinary results are a consequence of a visitor leaving his or her browser open in the background while doing something else.

Apart from those two peaks, the data doesn't seem to be revealing anything new. There is still no trend in sight and the lines do not follow any particular pattern.

The time span comparison of average durations of visits can be seen below in table 6.

TABLE 6. Average duration of a visit comparison

Average duration of a visit	Finland	Denmark	Norway	Sweden
Avg. Jan-Jun 2014 (6 months)	1.58	2.15	2.39	2.24
Avg. Sep-Feb 2014-15 (6 months)	2.31	6.03	2.07	2.37
Decrease	-0.33	-3.48	0.32	-0.13
Percentual decrease	-28%	-169%	20%	-9%

As seen in table 6 above, the length of a visit has increased in three of the profiles. The only profile with a shorter average duration of a visit than in the previous time span is the Norwegian profile. The Swedish profile has remained somewhat the same with a slight increase, whereas the Finnish and the Danish profiles have clearly managed to prolong the durations of visits to their profiles.

As this metric seems to have been rather susceptible to unintentional influence, the data cannot be considered as trustworthy as within the previous two metrics. Most of the information provided here is helpful and accurate, but as a whole, the average duration of a visit measurement seems dubious.

The data from the time span comparison is also presented in figure 11.

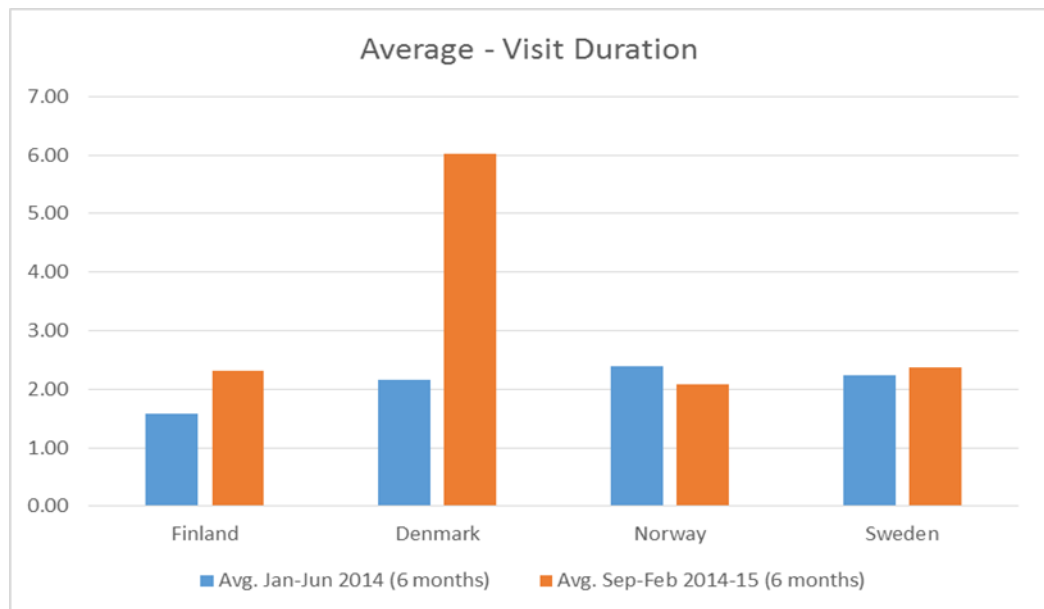


FIGURE 11. Average duration of a visit comparison

Whether the trial period of enhanced content creation in the Finnish profile has had an impact on the average duration of a visit is hard to tell. As previously discussed, the data cannot be considered unfaulty and the other profiles show both similar and opposite results. The average duration of a visit metric cannot therefore be said to either concur or disagree with the hypothesis.

4.5 Performance of country profiles during trial period

Below are short summaries made of the performances of each profile during the trial period of enhanced content creation and in comparison to the comparative time span earlier in the year.

Compuware A/S (Denmark)

The Danish profile showed rather vapid results. With the unique visits metric, there doesn't seem to have been any significant changes to the previous performance during the comparative time span. The Danish profile seems to have been rather consistent in this metric throughout the use of the platform. The decrease of unique visits was the second smallest between the two time spans, with 33%.

In the average amount of posts read during a visit, the Danish profile seems to have started its decline after the beginning of 2014. Before that it had been the best performer in the metric, holding the record of 2.7 posts read on average during a visit. Comparing the two time spans, Denmark has the biggest percentual decrease. However, the trend of the profile in this metric has been just that for a while.

Unfortunately, in the average duration of a visit metric, the Danish profile's results were untrustworthy due to the highly improbable average duration in January 2015, which caused distorted data.

All in all, the performance of the Danish profile cannot be said to have essentially varied from normal during the trial period, at least not to a positive direction. The profile has continued its downward fall over time.

Compuware Nordic AS (Norway)

The Norwegian profile had mixed results. Within the first metric, the amount of unique visits, the profile seems to have been able to occasionally gather impressive amounts of visitors a month. But mostly the profile seems to have been basically one of the worst performers, although it has gained more top results than

Denmark or Sweden. Percentually, Norway had the biggest decrease in results within this metric.

In average amount of posts read during a visit, the Norwegian profile was the only profile, which was able to increase the average amount from the first time span value to the second. Previously Norway had been a rather poor performer in this metric, but during the trial period the results improved significantly.

The final metric, the average duration of a visit, was not that favourable to Norway. In fact, Norway was the only profile to perform worse during the trial period than during the comparative time span. Again, this metric cannot really be taken into account the same way that the others can because of the untrustworthy data, although in Norway's results there doesn't seem to be any issues.

As two metrics showed worse results than before and only one any positive change, the same can be said for Norway as was said for Denmark: the overall performance of the profile has not improved during the trial period.

Compuware AB (Sweden)

The Swedish profile's performance has been stable throughout the use of the platform. It was also stable during both of the examined time spans. In each of the metrics the Swedish profile came in third. In the first two, there were decreases in the results and in the third one a slight increase, though still leaving the profile third.

The Swedish profile is right there alongside Norway and Denmark, with basically no positive changes to performance during the trial period.

Compuware Finland Oy (Finland)

Within the unique visits metric, Finland has been the best performer throughout the use of the platform. Comparing the performance of the two time spans, the Finnish profile had also the smallest decrease in this metric. Partly during the trial period the profile managed to make a new record on consecutive months of top performance.

The same has been the case with the second metric: Finland has been the best performer over the years in average amounts of posts read during a visit. Its performance during the examined time spans did not change, but remained exactly the same. With Denmark and Sweden the performance decreased in this metric and with Norway it increased.

In the third metric, average durations of visits, the Finnish profile has been the poorest performer over the years. However, during the trial period the profile managed to improve its performance and it had the second largest increase in the average length of a visit.

Overall the Finnish profile's performance can be seen to have slightly improved during trial period. It once had the smallest decrease of all profiles, once remained the same when most profiles performed worse and once increased its performance. The trial period had a positive impact on the performance of the platform, though not as significant as expected.

4.6 Reliability and validity of the research

Reliability

The reliability of certain aspects of the research could have been better. There were some discrepancies with the results and especially in the duration of a visit metric, some of the results were seriously questionable. It is possible that some of the data there was faulty and the result of the previously mentioned situation.

The time span comparison would have been more reliable, had it been possible to use an identical time span in both intervals. But as explained in the beginning of the thesis, using the same time frame from the previous year would have certainly given untrustworthy results.

It also wasn't possible to exclude the content that fell outside the focus of the thesis and was posted only into one of the profiles, so there is no way of knowing how much of the traffic in the profiles belonged to those postings. Neither was it possible to seclude the internal traffic that was caused by company employees visiting the profiles.

A lot of the results examination also required observing and interpreting them, which does vary from individual to another. Someone might interpret them otherwise.

As mentioned before in the introduction chapter, gathering already existing referenceable material to support the thesis research was challenging, since the whole subject area is new and literature around it therefore scarce.

Validity

Though the thesis research cannot be said to give accurate and universal results, it is able to hint what kind of results could be achieved by enhancing the volume of content creation in a digital channel. In that regard it does correlate with the research question, although it might not fully realize its initial purpose to the desired extent.

The measurements used in the research were some of the channel's native analysis tools, which the channel itself uses to analyze its performance, so they are rather well suited at describing the impact of the enhanced volume of content creation.

More visible differences and accurate results might have been gained had the research and the trial period been made with one of the other profiles. The Finnish profile was already somewhat the best performer in two of the metrics. With a clearly poorly performing profile the gained advantages would have been more evident.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Though the results of the thesis research were not as unambiguous as was hoped and expected, there were aspects of the research that did support the hypothesis that a larger audience could be reached through enhanced content creation. But as the results did not give conclusive answers to the research question, one might argue that the results of the thesis are merely suggestive. The author agrees with this: the results are suggestive and failed to give precise enough answers, which could be universally applied with crystal clarity.

However, the thesis managed to create an overview of the performances of the profiles and clarify that merely spiking up the volume of content and its creation, not a whole lot more can easily be gained from the platform. In order for the platform to do more, other methods of enabling that would need to be examined. One could pursue in this line of inquiry and find out, what kind of posts gather most audience or can better performance be achieved through enhancing the quality of the posts, instead of quantity. And what would that quality mean? One could also examine, whether or not another similar or a different kind of a digital platform would serve the company better. Whether or not it is a smart move to continue putting effort into this platform, remains for the company to decide. The author herself would suggest mapping out the potential in other channels.

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that by increasing the number of posts and published content in a digital platform, the performance of the platform can increase. For even though in the most relevant metric, unique visits a month, the Finnish profile did not manage to increase the average number of visitors, it did have the slightest decrease in them. That combined with the other results can be seen to support the hypothesis and indicate therefore that though nothing can be said for certain, the results do suggest that the hypothesis could be accurate.

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