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Game company marketing: Social media based approach

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<p>The purpose of this thesis work was to conduct a research and plan a marketing strategy for a start-up game company in order to increase visibility and the number of company's customers. The best suitable approach was found and implemented during the study.</p> <p>The project combined both technical and marketing aspects of media. The research was conducted on marketing, social media, and the current state of the game industry in Finland. Moreover, thirty existing game studios were selected for the benchmarking, so that the right decisions could be made for the client, Komento! Interactive start-up game studio.</p> <p>This thesis work also included creating a branding portal, its content and design, as well as choosing social media channels for the company and its product. In addition, a suitable type of marketing was chosen for the client, and the marketing strategy was planned for the studio.</p> <p>It was concluded that the most effective way to increase the game company's visibility and the number of its customers was applying social media in marketing. Ideas and key points provided by the study are applicable for branding and marketing of any other game firm as well as businesses in other fields.</p>	
Keywords	Game company, start-up, marketing, branding, strategy, social media, visibility, game

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Terms and abbreviations

Safko Wheel – a figure showing main marketing tools of a certain marketing type. Created by Lon Safko, the author of bestselling books on social media and marketing.

SEO – Search Engine Optimization

SEM – Search Engine Marketing

RSS – Really Simply Syndication

Web 2.0 – a “second generation” of the Internet features that describes the current Internet.

Web 3.0 – a “third generation” of the Internet features that describes the Internet as semantic and personal.

TraDigital media – Traditional + Digital media – a media that combines both traditional and digital media.

QR code – Quick Response code – a code translated into a web link by a mobile device and opened in browser.

GE – General Electric

Benchmarking – a comparison of selected features to other businesses in the industry in order to become more competitive.

FB – Facebook (used in Table 2)

TW – Twitter (used in Table 2)

YT – YouTube (used in Table 2)

G+ – Google+ social network (used in Table 2)

Pin – Pinterest (used in Table 2)

Twitch – a video platform and community for gamers.

CMS – Content Management System

IGDA – International Game Developers Association

Scrum – an agile product development method for a team to work together.

1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis work is to conduct a research and plan a marketing strategy for a start-up game company in order to increase visibility and the number of company's customers. The best suitable approach is found and implemented during the study.

It is important to mention that this thesis study is focused on a start-up game studio. There are a lot of companies nowadays, and it is quite difficult to achieve visibility and gain the customer's trust. This is the problem solved in the thesis work applying the latest tools and finding out innovative decisions and strategies that could be implemented.

Marketing of a game firm has its differences from other fields. The target group is specific and the situation in the game industry is constantly changing. Over the past few years the game industry has become one of the most popular and beneficial industries in Finland. This motivates a lot of new game studios to enter the market, but the fact is that not all of them reach visibility. Many firms wonder how to achieve the discernibility and increase the turnover. These are the reasons why this study work could be useful for other companies.

There are different possibilities to market a company and its product; that is why the results are also different. However, the visibility of a firm depends not only on marketing strategy, but also on the tools applied to reach the goals. A special attention is paid to the role of social media in marketing and also its benefits to the brand and overall image of the business.

Creating a new, modern and innovative, way for of reaching the customers in the game industry is what this thesis work is focused on. This way the visibility of the selected start-up company is expected to increase and also support further development of the firm.

2 Types of marketing

One should note here that mentioning marketing could imply different subject matters. The used type of marketing depends on the purpose of the company's marketing strategy and tools, which were selected. [1; 2.]

One is able to decide on the right marketing type for his enterprise when knowing the types and the difference between those. There are four main marketing types according to Lon Safko. Each of it has its own benefits and a lot of tools to force customers into the sales channels. [1; 2.]

2.1 Traditional marketing

Traditional marketing is the most widely known way of marketing. Printed advertisements, business cards, radio, television, direct mail are all tools of the traditional marketing. Companies had been using all those possible ways for marketing their products in the 19th and 20th centuries until the Internet started evolving. Traditional media is mostly about printed materials and audio-visual channels like television. [1; 2; 3; 4.]

Social media consultant Lon Safko has written several books on social media and marketing. He has created the Safko Wheels of marketing tools that help deciding on marketing tools for a company. Safko has presented three different wheels. Figure 1 presents 20 most popular traditional marketing tools from Safko's point of view. [1; 2.]

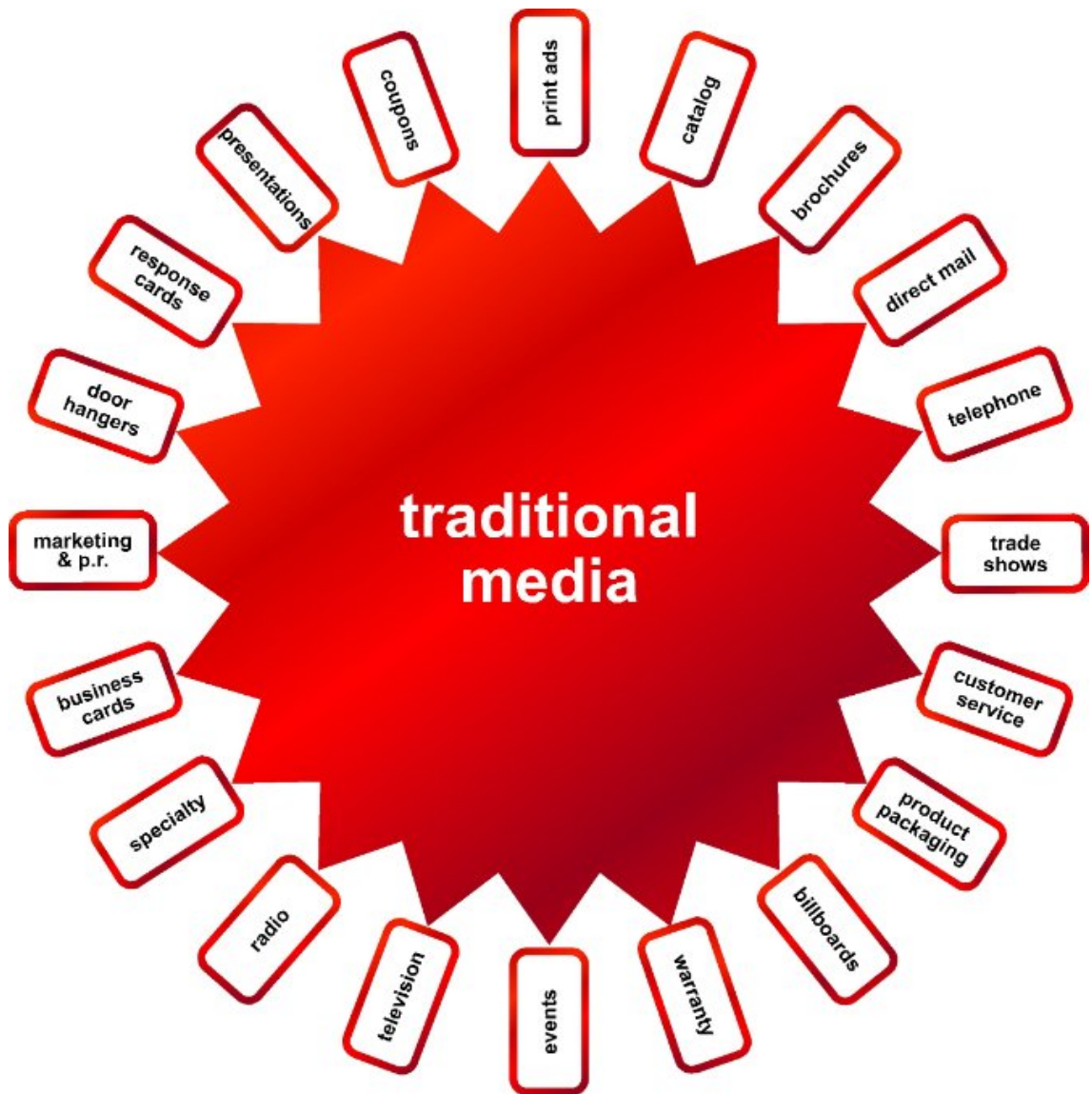


Figure 1. The Safko Wheel for traditional media marketing tools [2].

The Safko Wheel is a good starting point for marketing planning. After having listed the possible tools, one should choose the ones that are going to be used in his business in order to reach certain goals. The selection could also be based on removing the tools that would definitely not be used. In order to make good choices it is good to analyse other companies and see the ways they use for marketing. In the end, one will have selected several tools out of 20 presented in the Safko Wheel. [1; 2.]

In addition, connecting several tools makes the process more efficient and the Safko Wheel is convenient for making these interconnections. For example, one can connect business cards and events. A firm could advertise the upcoming event on a business

card. Thus business cards are modified quite often and produced in small amounts. It is not a common approach and supports both of the marketing tools. [1; 2.]

2.2 Digital and social media marketing

Digital media marketing started developing together with the Internet. Therefore, it is also called Internet marketing. Companies started to have their own websites, and they had to add visibility to those. Digital marketing tools include SEO, SEM, and RSS. [1;2;4.]

By the beginning of the 21st century people and companies learned to benefit for their businesses from the Internet. A term Web 2.0 was used to describe this innovative way of taking the advantage of the Internet features. These features include, for instance, control over the information sources and their enrichment while the source usage increases, and easy and adaptable content development. [1; 2; 4.]

Social media is a part of Internet marketing, but within past years it has developed very fast and, finally, it became a popular and individual part of digital marketing. Social media marketing is about having a dialogue between the customer and the company, which is usually missing in digital marketing. Web 3.0 would possibly be a new era of the Internet that will be semantic and personal. Web 3.0 would include the main features of social media such as real-time open communication and mobility. This can be seen in the absolute popularity of the blogging culture. In fact, some people earn quite a lot of money on writing blogs. Equally important is the fact that there is a large amount of people following different blogs and sharing them around the Internet. [1; 2; 5.]

Almost all companies have a website and several social media channels. Nowadays these online services are quite important to have. Besides, it is not only about the tools that companies use, but also about the customers and their behaviour. This is the reason for considering social media marketing as a totally separate type of marketing. [1; 2; 4.]

Digital and social media are very close and most of the time connected. The main connection between them is that most of the tools are applied via the Internet. Thus, Lon

Safko has combined digital and social media tools into the one Safko Wheel, as shown in Figure 2. [1; 2.]

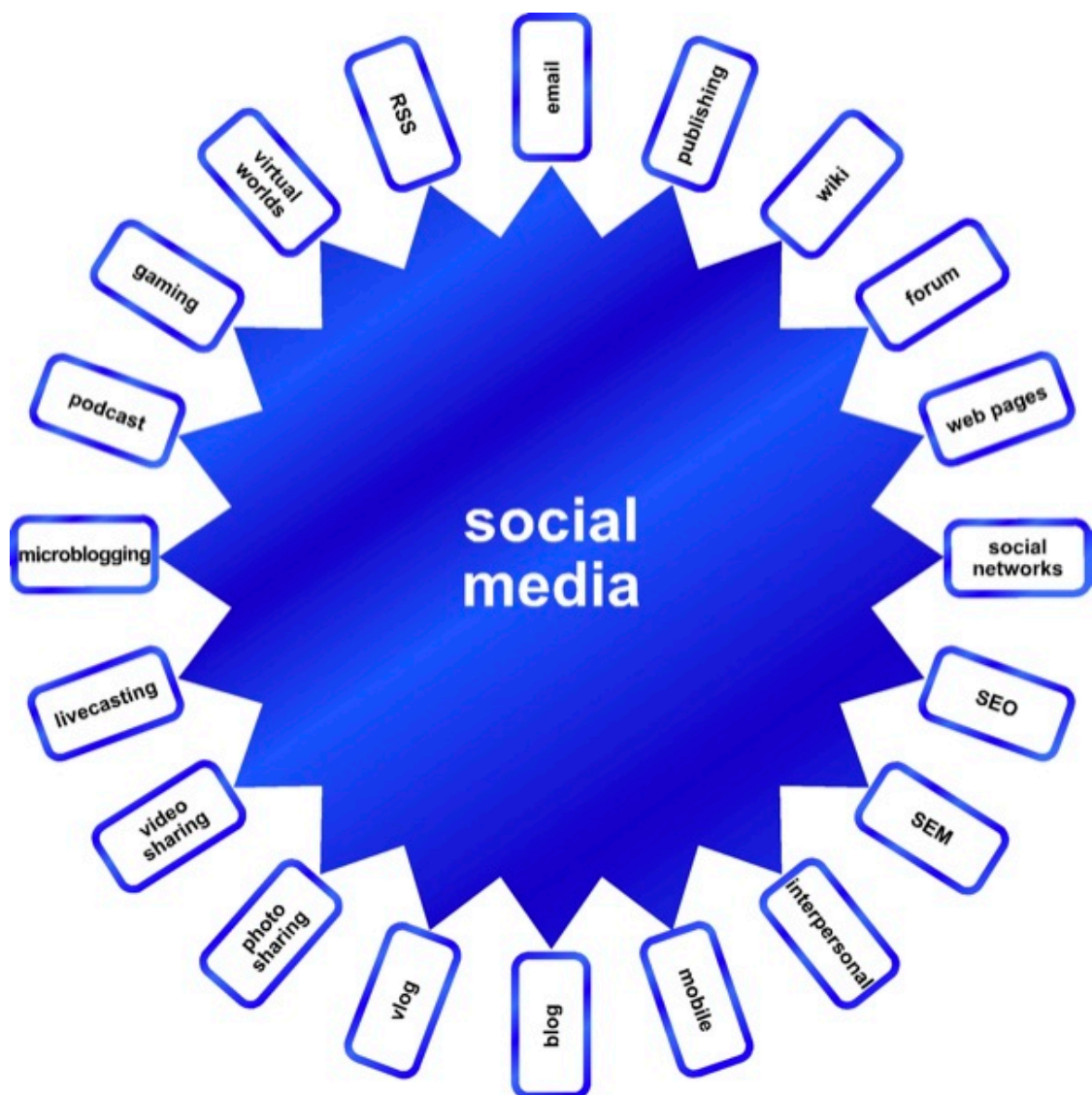


Figure 2. The Safko Wheel for digital/social media marketing tools [2].

Same actions apply to all Safko Wheels: one should choose the tools only for its purpose and strategy and add the connections between different campaigns afterwards. As a result one gets Safko's personal marketing wheel. [1; 2.]

2.3 Fusion media marketing

One of the main differences between traditional, digital and social media is that traditional media is the most expensive advertising choice. One has to create and print leaf-

lets, billboards, business cards etc. The company should pay for the radio or TV content to be streamed. In contrast, the content shared via social media is completely free. [1; 2; 6.]

Obviously no one requires the firm to choose only one way of marketing and apply tools only from the one Safko Wheel. Ideally, the company would use a mix of all media types in marketing: traditional, digital and social. For instance, having a website, a blog, printed business cards and advertisements in the magazines is one of tool package variants. Figure 3 is an example of the Safko Wheel with chosen media tools and interconnections. [1; 2; 6.]

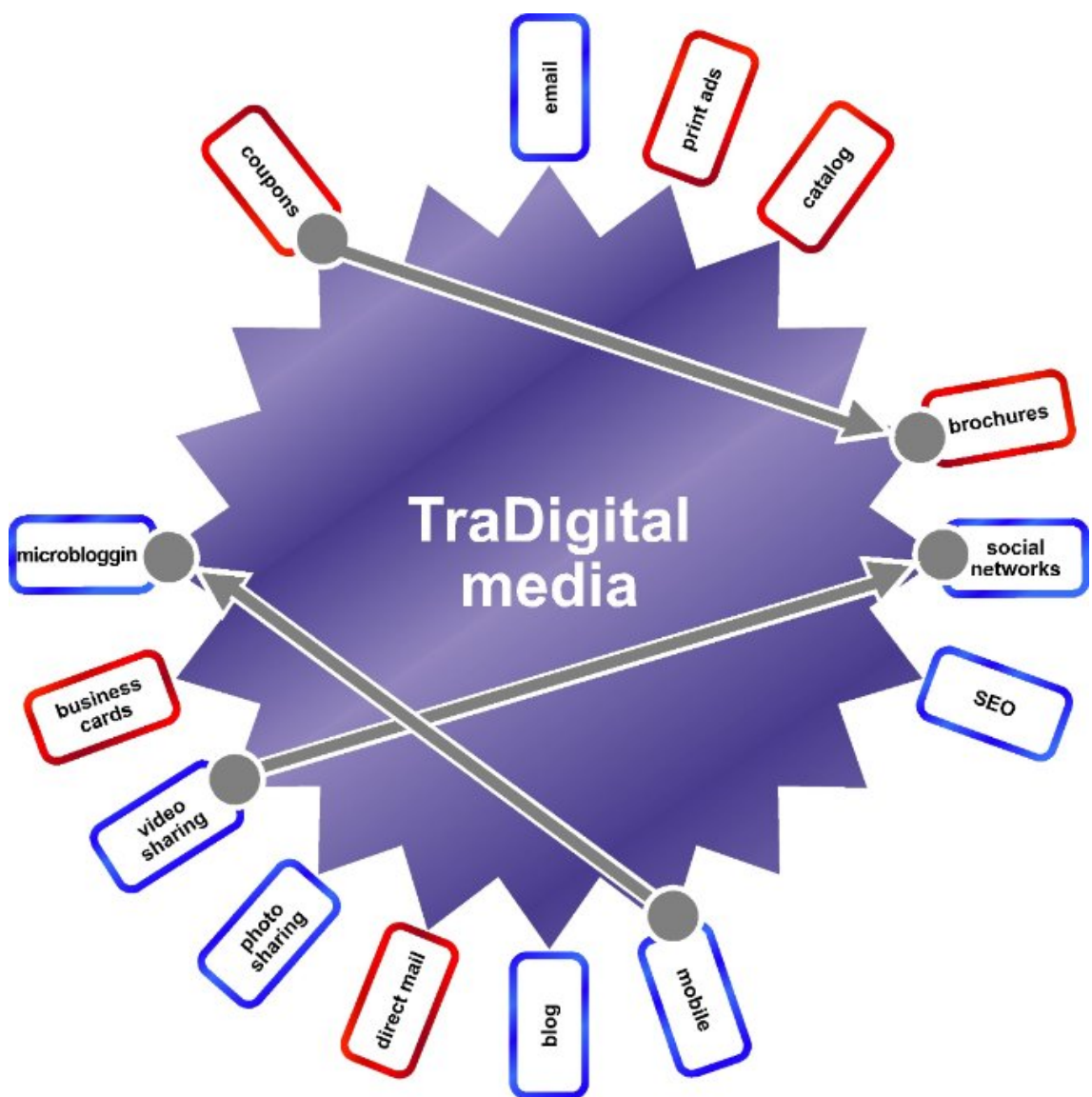


Figure 3. The Safko Wheel for TraMedia marketing tools with connections [2].

The figure 3 presents the final version of the Wheel, where traditional and digital media marketing tools are combined. The Safko Wheel will definitely be different for marketing of different companies and products. Many big enterprises that have been in the market for a long time could easily update their marketing strategy with social media tools. [1; 2.]

To sum up, today a firm would use social media in the marketing strategy along with several traditional and digital media tools. It is the only way to go, as otherwise the company will lose the visibility and income. Planning tools, moves and campaigns will lead to increase of clients and visibility, which is exactly what marketing is meant for. [1; 7.]

3 Importance of social media in branding and marketing

3.1 Social media in our lives

Social media is a big part of a person's life today. More and more people have smartphones with large screens and 24/7 access to the Internet. When taking a bus nowadays one sees almost every person sitting and browsing in his phone.

All the information is believed to be on the web. A person could find a product or service of interest and read the reviews about it. It is extremely fast and easy to reach for the information through a personal device. This requires changes in the society and in the information retrieval.

Social media looks like a detachable part of human's life. These days society accepts informing other people around about one's plans, achievements, disappointments and even personal issues. It does not feel awkward or considered unacceptable to do so. One is not obliged to follow examples of others and do exactly the same. There are always people, who are more active on social networks than others. [8.]

Each person is different and so is his behaviour and actions. Personal things are shared even with the strangers. One is not concerned about privacy as much as before. All this makes each social media experience unique and that is what people like about it. [6.]

3.2 Influence of social media

Before social media became important in marketing, people used search engines to find a subject of their interest. Most of us still remember the times, when one got paid for clicking the link or was redirected to a new link from other website. Websites had and still have keywords, meta tags and title tags to improve the search of a certain webpage. [8; 9.]

Interesting is the fact that at the moment a lot of people still believe that this is the way to market a company online. However, this is not true. The Internet has evolved, so have technology and users. New ways have to be used to make people interested in the product or the service. Few people would like to face direct marketing in a form of receiving magazines and brochures or calls from a calling centre. Traditional media is not appreciated anymore as much as it was before. Free and fast ways of advertising work better and reach for more people. [8; 9.]

These days a person tends to be interested in habits and behaviours of people around, reading about their activities and opinions on certain topics. It influences one's opinion about a certain thing, as well as it might push someone for further actions. It is not always that one chooses to learn something about a certain subject. Most of the time it is the information that finds a person. [8; 9.]

For example, Mary has 300 connections in Facebook. One of her connections posts an article from a newspaper that he has read. This article has some important information, and friends of that person start sharing his post. Mary sees this article several times on her timeline, because their common friends have also shared the important news. Eventually, she reads the article, and thus stays up-to-date with the recent news. [8; 9.]

This way Mary does not need to buy a newspaper herself to read the news and find that important article. Instead, her friend has read it online and spread the word via the social network. The article drew much attention and Mary could not help reading the article. The news found Mary. She did not have to search for it herself. All that Mary did was browsing through her timeline with the latest updates from her Facebook friends. [8; 9.]

Same thing applies to the situation concerning the review of some product or bad experience with a named device from a famous manufacturer. Such news spread fast over the social network, because people get involved by commenting on these posts expressing opinions, suggestions and just following the conversations. In a few moments a lot of people may decide that they would definitely try out this or that service provider, because they saw positive feedback in social media from many people. Social media plays an important role on the company brand and it can help or destroy its marketing. [8; 9.]

Each person would like to feel that he is a part of a social group, because a human being needs to interact with other human beings to satisfy the needs for full life. A human wants to be accepted by the society he belongs to. Social media is a good helper in this as one can share whatever thoughts or questions and get responses to those. It is not only spreading one opinion, but also being open to analyse things and change one's own thoughts based on the news and facts found in the network. [3; 8; 9.]

Moreover, consumers have all the power to decide on the content as well as the ways and target groups to share it with. People are free to choose whether to believe the content or not, and media provides the consumers full control of their decisions. [3; 6; 8; 9.]

This influences not only the people in the society but also businesses that are trying to reach for their customers. Word of mouth spreads surprisingly fast, so any good or bad comment about a product or a service influences the firm's sales drastically. [1.]

3.3 Reasons to implement social media

Main reason for implementing social media in branding and marketing is that creating social media accounts and usage of the channels are free of charge, which means that marketing via those is also without a charge. However, the enterprise will have to pay if it decides to put advertisements on the websites. Additionally, the registration does not require much time and effort. [6.]

Traditional marketing and social media marketing both allow the customer to choose if he would like to take part in the marketing campaign or read the advertisement. For instance, one can refuse taking a leaflet offered at the shop. A customer can also de-

side not to take part in an online marketing campaign. The main difference is that within the time the priorities have changes, and businesses have to follow the changes in order to reach for their customers. [1, 6.]

One of the reasons of social media marketing being preferred to search engines is that the amount of the results that a person receives does not confuse him. Every time when searching for something on Google or any other search engine, the amount of the result pages is enormous, but hardly anyone gets further that the first one or two result pages. Using a social media channel for the same purpose, on the other hand, simplifies the task a lot just by posting a topic or a question on social network and waiting for the comments from the acquaintances and friends. [8.]

When I wanted to find out names of existing game companies, firstly I checked Google search engine for it, and I received so many results. I did not feel like digging the ones that would be suitable for my research out of that amount. So instead I posted a question in Facebook to my friends and got a lot of answers from my connections. Surprisingly, some of my friends knew the game industry extremely well. Using social media to get the names of companies known well enough was a good decision. I got a large amount of results, but it was not creating a sea of confusion. [6; 8.]

Social media is a huge part of every company's marketing. It is seen as the most influential platform for a product and a brand. This is why there is so much attention to it and today's marketing is called social media marketing. Forbes made a list of trends in social media marketing in July 2014. [7; 10.]

It was not much a surprise to a person who follows up with the digital world and noticed that Facebook and Twitter are used by over 90% of companies, at the same time Google+ is doubted to be a good social platform. Some companies do have accounts there, but the visitors' amount is not nearly same as on the other channels. [7; 10; 11.]

Statistics showed that 92% of marketers consider social media important in their marketing and admit that social media increased their visibility. Only 20% stated that social media did not increase traffic. Furthermore, 95% of marketers spend weekly at least 6 hours on social media in order to increase visibility. Almost 3/4 of marketers spent over 40 hours for the same purpose. [7; 11.]

This all means that social media is applied in the marketing on purpose, because it offers better results, not because a company wishes to have some social media channels. It would be strange not to follow changes in the society and have a business without social media visibility. [7; 10; 11.]

4 Best practices of social media marketing

4.1 Obama's presidential campaign

Barack Obama's presidential campaign in 2008 is an excellent example of social media being a powerful tool in branding and marketing. It has to be mentioned even though that the campaign took place 6 years ago, and less than half of the people had social media accounts at that time, compared to the current situation. [8; 12; 13; 14.]

This does not reduce the admirable results of a well-planned campaign strategy with a support of a new medium. The idea was to get close to the people through a dialogue via social media and direct messaging, not through mass media, such as newspapers and television. [8; 12; 13; 14; 15.]

Obama's campaign team realised that they have to understand the social behaviour of potential voters. Belonging to a group is a strong feeling, but people whom one trusts are not just everyone in the group. In most cases these are family members, relatives, friends, people whose opinion is respected. It is a matter of a fact that people tend to believe most of the recommendation or the information from a person that is trusted. [8; 9; 12.]

Thus, the clever way to use social media in marketing is not to share the ideas and information massively, but try to reach person's attention via social account. Through social media a user shares and reposts the content so, that people around this person notice it. This chain of information flow could be endless, bringing more and more visibility in the Web. [8; 9; 12.]

People also feel their individuality in spreading the word as a social media user. Each user has his own account with personal information. In other words, personal information is shared, because most of the time one can see who is the author of the content. [8; 9; 12.]

4.2 Things to keep in mind

Quantity of the social media channels might be a benefit if there is a strong competitor who also participates in social media. If one's competitor is using three channels, and other uses thrice more, it is quite clear that the second one would be reaching different focus groups and have more people knowing about their company or marketed content. [8; 13; 14; 16.]

Above all, all social media channels have to have their purpose that is at least slightly different from other. How would someone feel if there were same news repeated on three different social media channels? The first thought would be to follow only one of the channels, because there is no sense to receive same information on different platforms. This would lead to the loss of customers and possible bad image of the firm. [8; 13; 14.]

Activity plays an extremely significant role while branding via social media. Consider the case when a company has, for example, Facebook and Twitter accounts, but the latest post on Facebook was written last year, and Twitter has only two posts written during three years. Will you trust this company? Do you feel like knowing more? I, personally, would not like to have any business with a firm who is absolutely inactive. I would even start wondering if this enterprise is still doing business. On the other hand, if a company takes care to be active on all platforms where they are visible, there are high chances that a potential customer will have a positive impression of a brand. [1; 7; 8; 13; 14; 15; 16.]

Content value is strongly connected to the activity. If the content is important or offers a benefit to the customer, it is reasonable to send updates often. In contrast, if the content is poor or adds no value, the information should be sent seldom, because it could annoy the customers or the company may lose them. [1; 16.]

Marketing speaker Andrew Davis proposed a model for sharing the content on social media. The idea would be to share four posts that were written by somebody else, but relevant for the audience and field of interest, one post with the content originally created by the one who is sharing it, and one post that would contain advertising or a campaign. [16.]

Also, social media integrating with other media will increase the visibility, and the results would be more promising. One of the easiest ways to provide integration is adding the news feed from Facebook or Twitter to the official website. Using a direct link in the Facebook campaign is an option too. Cross platform integration will be achieved, for example, if a printed brochure will have a QR code of the website or a product video. [1.]

In fact, being familiar with as many social platforms as possible is never a terrible thing. Before deciding on a social network, one should research which channels are used by most of the companies, and which are popular in the named field. Moreover, such details as demographics and customers' thoughts and lifestyles would make the communication with the customers more effective, because there will be much more understanding between the two sides. [1; 8.]

Interestingly, some countries, like Germany and Spain, have their own social media channels that are popular only in that country. One should consider it when planning a social media marketing strategy for the company and its product. It would be silly to reach Spanish customers through Facebook, knowing that another platform equivalent to Facebook is used in Spain. It is vital to do some research beforehand not to lose market or target wrong channel for marketing. [8.]

There are many ways to benefit from social media, when marketing an enterprise or its product, but there are also a lot of possibilities to do it wrong. One should know the industry he is entering, do some research on it, compare competitors and finally, draw some conclusions based on the information collected. Only after that a marketing strategy could be planned stating the chosen platforms and the actions of implementation. [3; 8.]

4.3 Measuring visibility

Social media provides the customers an opportunity to talk about the firm, share its news and visit its webpage and social channels. What is more, one will never know how many people visited the site or mentioned the firm's name in the tweet unless one uses the tools for measuring that. [1.]

There are free applications that allow one to see how many users there are on the page, and gain other statistics concerning social media and keywords used in it. Such applications show the information and measure the visibility of the company or a product in order to draw conclusions about the business' success. It is said that if the traffic is not measured, there is no benefit from the tools. That is true, because the marketer can plan further actions and changes only if he knows how the social media marketing is doing at that moment. [1.]

TweetDeck, Seismic Desktop applications and Social Mention website offer possibility to check how many times a certain keyword was searched for or how often a tag was mentioned and where. TweetDeck is specifically concentrated on Twitter, but Seismic Desktop is a version developed for several social platforms. Both could be organised and show real-time updates. Also, one can have several accounts in Seismic Desktop. Social Mention website includes a lot more social media channels and provides more customised information for the visibility measurements. [1.]

Google Analytics is another extremely popular tool. It is a free service provided by Google that sends its user reports about a registered website and the tracked text. Google Analytics shows the information about the searches of the keywords quite fast, informs about the interconnection within the channels, and tracks the influence of social media on the webpage. One could also use Google's server to keep the reports. [1.]

5 Power of the marketing strategy

5.1 Importance of the strategy

While planning the strategy, one should take into account that the ways of marketing change with the time. There were times when people were just shouting that they would like to sell an animal. There were also the times when radio was a very effective marketing tool. The times have changed, so has the marketing. Nowadays it is not enough to use traditional media or digital media separately. One has to mix both in the way that seems better for the company. Furthermore, social media is a huge part of everybody's life and it plays a big role in marketing as well. [1; 7.]

Creating several social media accounts and planning some action actions around them is the wrong way to do marketing. Surprisingly, many companies still do it. For in-

stance, there are companies which have a Facebook account with over a thousand likes and are very proud of it. In this case one would wonder several things. Some of those questions would supposedly be: Is there a strategy for marketing? Are you making profit out of that? Do you have a dialogue with your customers? Most of the times answers are all negative. It means that the firm has never planned a proper marketing strategy. [1; 2.]

Having a strategy means that one knows its aims and goals and realises the ways and possibilities to achieve those. Ideally, the strategy is developed through a long process of writing down objectives, target groups, tools etc. One could follow six steps to a successful conversation strategy written down by Lon Safko. Furthermore, the Safko Wheels could be used in the process of planning to make choices on the right tools of media. There are definitely other helpful schemes or plans for developing a marketing strategy. One could find a suitable one for the firm or the product. [1; 2.]

Marketing strategy is a powerful tool once the company has one, because then the results that could or should be achieved and seen are exactly known, and if something should be changed for better achievements, it is clearly visible. It is important to remember that social media is not a marketing strategy. It is only a tool to reach the targets. [1; 3; 17.]

The enterprise should clearly define the logical objectives; there could be many of them. Each objective could be achieved a certain way. Whether it is traditional, digital or social media that is chosen, one should decide on certain tools. For example, in case of traditional media these could be TV advertisements, billboards, brochures etc. [1; 3; 17.]

5.2 Apple's marketing strategy

Apple is a very successful company that makes its customers wait in a long queue for nights and days to be the first ones to purchase a new Apple product. It is always a huge happening, when the new devices are sold to the first customers. Everybody keeps talking about it and emotionally, whether positively or negatively, participating in it. Many have wondered why it does happen this way, what Apple is doing so completely different that no other company has such a huge interest and a fanatic attitude to

their products. There is no secret – it is just a good marketing strategy that makes Apple so powerful. [18.]

Apple has a very strong reputation; it makes its customers become crazy every time a new arrival is announced. It sure did not appear out of nowhere. Basically, the PR team of Apple has a very strong influence on the enterprise brand and overall image. It could be said that a lot more has been done than in any other firm. As the results show, it does not make any harm. Moreover, it increases the success of the enterprise. [18.]

An American blogger Mark Gurman stated that Apple's strategy could be expressed in a way that they tell people what to believe in, and I have totally same opinion on this topic. If we analyse what one could see in advertisements from Apple: it is not the product that is sold, but the feeling, the experience and the new attitude that a person would have when having a device from Apple. The company sells the belief, offers the difference from others by owning a certain product. This is what most companies fail to do and thus have to get the customers by persuading them that their product is worth buying. [18.]

What Apple does is nothing else but simplifying the process of decision for a potential buyer. The message should be clear and easy, thus it leads to the point and human's brain could make a decision within a short time. Creating a short message that will tell a customer what benefits one will get from using the product is the best way to make the decision process easier. [1; 19.]

5.3 Uncertainty and company's image

Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric (GE) who increased the value of the enterprise over 20 times from the moment he became the chairman of the GE company. According to Welch, a company should firstly create the conception and manipulate it in a way that eventually the impression becomes the truth. It sounds like a perfect marketing strategy. [17; 20.]

It is normal to doubt you, firm's performance and future, but it does not mean one should not try. It is the customer who should not see the doubts, but should be given a vision to believe in. If there is enough belief in the product or service produced, there is a way to reach the success. [17; 20.]

When one markets the company, there should never be shown uncertainty or a poor image of the firm should never be left. By the way, it is also important when trying to get investors interested in a start-up. Positive and optimistic attitude of the team members is one thing that people pay attention to. Attitude and emotions of the employers are easily projected on the company brand. No doubt a negative, uncertain and poor image of a firm is not what anyone would like to have. [17.]

5.4 Following the planned strategy

Following the strategy is not less important than having one. Only when having the strategy and implementing it according to the plan, better results are achieved. This also means that there has to be enough concentration. If, for example, a start-up chooses to have 10 social media accounts, it will be hard to keep all of the channels updated and representative. Moreover, it is too much work for a start-up, so in the end, it will lead to loss of concentration and a confusion, which channel to prioritise or update earlier. [1; 17.]

Apple is good at following their marketing strategy. It works flawlessly: before the product release, each event is loudly announced. The company “leaks” the information about the upcoming product to reporters and bloggers in order to get attention and increase the interest for the product. Further, Apple sends prototypes to test to chosen fans and reporters, so that they could spread the word and share “the first taste” of the product. [7; 18.]

The big events and shows, including Keynote presentation, make people follow up with the news, and wish to have the product that attracts so much of public attention. In fact, the PR team of the company is following social media all the time in order to make sure that the discussions are going in the right direction. All of this shows how well Apple can tell its story and reach out for the customers. [7; 18.]

It is amazing how Apple’s strategy has been working for so many years already. They have created the brand and are keeping it alive. It is the reputation that keeps people believing in the company. Reputation is not what the firm actually is; it is what people think about the firm. There is always a chance that it might be false or even totally op-

posite. It is a risk that companies always take. All of this supports the fact that marketing strategy is very powerful and important part of the business. [18.]

6 Game industry in Finland

6.1 Finland – game factory country

It is always good to know the background before starting doing something. It also applies to a game company that wants to enter the game industry. One should know what is the current state of the market, if it is profitable to enter the industry, how well the industry is doing, what could be the drawbacks etc. It is better to be prepared rather than learn the hard way. [1.]

According to Gartner, mobile games sector is the most rapidly growing on the market right now. It all happens because of the growth of use of mobile devices as well as game applications that provide distraction and fun pastime. Console games are more expensive than mobile games, thus mobile games are becoming more and more popular. [21; 22; 23.]

According to several articles, Finland is considered a very successful country in game industry. There is a large amount of game start-ups, and it is still increasing. It is not only because of the amount, but also of the great success of Finnish game companies and the quality of games produced. [22; 23; 24; 25; 26; 27; 28; 29.]

Rovio and Supercell were the first game companies to draw extremely much attention to the companies themselves and Finland as the country where companies come from. Start-up companies should be grateful to them, because this gives a good base of trust for a new game company from Finland in same industry. Customers already have some kind of opinion that is definitely good and allows good start for the reputation. [22; 23; 24; 25; 26; 27; 28; 29.]

It is stated that over 10 years ago it was Nokia that supported game development in Finland. Nokia's growth was the reason for outsourcing game development in Finland in a role of game companies. Mobile development was growing and game companies got inspiration, even though later the development was aiming other mobile platforms, which seemed better. [22; 24; 26; 29.]

The hub of the Finnish game industry called Neogames Finland makes an annual report about the current situation and statistics in the industry. The facts are impressive. During the years 2010 – 2011 Finnish game firms started to get big international investments, after which during years 2012 – 2013 the growth in the Finnish game industry was equal to 260%. Furthermore, the report introduces the game studios, financial side of the industry as well as education and funding possibilities. [23.]

6.2 Government support

Finnish government is open-minded and helps game companies in their beginnings. It is believed that almost all start-up companies get assistance. There are several organisations (e.g. Tekes) and competitions (e.g. Summer of start-ups by Start-up Sauna), where companies could pitch. Hence there is freedom to start developing games if only there is a group of people having passion and skills for it. The government is ready to support, as well as the current situation in the game market is allowing producing new products. [22; 23; 24; 25; 29.]

It is an interesting fact that game development is not all pointed in the capital region, but there are companies in game industry even in north of Finland. In addition, Finland is considered to be a land with creative innovators and talented engineers. It is achieved through a worldwide known good Finnish education system. [23; 26; 29.]

By the way, Finnish universities were slow to react on the fast development and growing popularity of game production. It is not surprising, because changes in education systems are hard to make. Nevertheless, Finland has adjusted quite fast comparing to some other countries. There are many higher education institutions that provide specialization in game production. [22; 26.]

6.3 Start-up company from Metropolia

It is worth mentioning that Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences is supporting students to make their interest in games a part of their lives and a future career. There are courses separately for programming, arts and design, as well as a big project that involves students from different programmes to produce a game. Projects of

this kind resemble the real working environment. There are not only technical people in such projects, but also business, production and marketing ones. All of this makes the working process much more enjoyable but demanding as well. [23.]

In fact, a project could be a very successful one, so that the team starts to work independently besides the school project. Some of those teams founded the start-up companies and entered the game industry with their product. One of such good teams is Komento! Interactive.

Komento! Interactive is a start-up game studio that is formed of Metropolia students. The team members were taking a course together. They had a game project, after which the team decided to continue working together in the game industry.

Their game has a good idea and mechanics, thus the start-up has good chances for the success and further development in the industry. One of the main things for a good start of a business is having a good product, which they do have. The second step is to make decisions on suitable marketing for the company and implement those. This is where I enter the game.

7 Benchmarking of the existing companies

7.1 Purpose and selected companies

Before starting working on planning how to increase the visibility of a start-up game studio, it was very important to check what other game studios had done before. It does not mean that it had to be copied from other firms. On the contrary, there are always things that one would decide never to do the same way, and some ideas that would increase interest and would be possibly implemented fully or partly. [1.]

Benchmarking of other game companies' websites and their use of social media has to be done in order to find game firm branding tendencies of nowadays. There is also the theoretical material on marketing that supports the decisions that I made for my client.

Thirty companies, most of them Finnish ones, according to the popularity among my connections in Facebook and in the list of the annual report from Neogames, were chosen for this investigation. No doubt, the more companies are benchmarked the bet-

ter results are achieved, but there should be definitely more than ten businesses to see the tendencies and make conclusions. Twenty firms would have been also good, but in the process I realised that the results of the benchmarking are more trusted if they are supported by larger amount of analysed game companies. [23.]

Eventually, I created a list of thirty game studios that were not ordered by some special preference (check Table 1). I did not want the foundation year or the revenue of the firms to influence my research. The main purpose was to compare the official websites, find best and worst practices and possible tendencies. Furthermore, the aim was to check which social media channels are used in the webpage and how actively some of those are used.

Table 1. Game companies selected for the benchmarking [30].

Company	Founded	Staff	Games	Revenue (€) 2013
Supercell	2010 Helsinki	100	3	519 093 000
Rovio Entertainment	2003 Espoo	547	47	153 516 000
Kiloo	2000 Aarhus, Denmark	70	5	N/A
Alternative Games	2010 Jyväskylä	N/A	6	N/A
Fragment Production	2012 Tampere	19	2	275 000
Frozenbyte	2001 Helsinki	51	10	3 556 000
Sulake Corporation	2000 Helsinki	43	1	10 565 000
Bugbear Entertainment	2000 Helsinki	N/A	9	1 130 000
Remedy Entertainment	1995 Espoo	75	7	10 486 000
Housemarque	1995 Helsinki	47	20	3 391 000
Next Games	2013 Helsinki	6	0	0
PlayRaven	2013 Helsinki	13	1	28 000
Seriously Digital Entertainment	2013 Helsinki	16	1	N/A
Vulpine Games	2014 Espoo	6	3	0
Grand Cru	2011 Helsinki	21	1	10 000
Helsinki GameWorks	2014 Helsinki	11	N/A	N/A
Telltale Games	2004 California, USA	7	14	N/A

Company	Founded	Staff	Games	Revenue (€) 2013
Supercell	2010 Helsinki	100	3	519 093 000
Rovio Entertainment	2003 Espoo	547	47	153 516 000
Kiloo	2000 Aarhus, Denmark	70	5	N/A
Yousician (previously: Ovelin)	2010 Tampere	10	3	194 000
Star Arcade	2010 Jyväskylä	21	3	3 505 000
Kuuasema	2004 Helsinki	20	over 65	1 105 000
Kuju Entertainment	1998 Shalford, UK	N/A	over 100	N/A
Ubisoft Entertainment	1986 Montreuil, France	9200	7	1 007 000 000
Fingersoft	2012 Oulu	11	6	15 520 000
Frogmind (also: Frogmind Games)	2012 Helsinki	2	1	1 135 000
Small Giant Games	2013 Helsinki	5	0	47 000
Kyy Games	2009 Tampere	N/A	7	223 000
Kukouri Mobile Entertainment	2011 Kotka	8	3	334 000
DoDreams	2008 Helsinki	6	3	11 000
Gajatri Studios	2011 Helsinki	6	1	N/A
Mountain Sheep	2006 Helsinki	10	over 10	722 000

The official website of Kauppalehti newspaper has a database of all registered enterprises and provides the information about companies according to the state of the year 2013. The information in the next table (Table 2) was collected from the official websites of the companies and Facebook, Twitter accounts, thus the references are not mentioned separately. [30.]

The list of benchmarked game businesses includes big and small studios. Big enterprises are considered the ones having a lot of employees and making a good profit. Most of the chosen game companies were founded in Finland. Additionally, 26 out of 30 benchmarked firms were founded in the 21st century. By taking most of the companies founded in the same century and same country, I wanted to make the research more valuable for my client Komento! Interactive, a Finnish start-up game company.

7.2 Benchmarking process

The main things I focused on, when comparing the companies in Table 2 were:

- Existence of a game community – a game studio might want to have one, so I wanted to see if other game studios provide their players a game community or a forum.
- Existence of a blog and activity in it – I knew that nowadays it is extremely popular to have a blog. Besides, it is a part of social media. After comparing many firms, I would see if usage of blog is popular in the game industry and how often actually game businesses update it.
- Social media integration – as the theory suggests social media should be connected with an official page in order to bring more traffic. I had to see if game companies take advantage of that and which social channels are popular.
- Facebook and Twitter activity – as these two social media platforms are most popular today and used by the majority of businesses, I checked the last updates on those channels

Table 2. Benchmarking on usage of social media.

Company name	Game community	Blog, last update	Social media	Last update on FB and TW
Supercell	Yes	Yes Dec 2013	FB, TW, RSS	FB Oct 2014, 4,5 stars TW Oct 2014
Rovio Entertainment	–	Yes Nov 2014	FB, TW, YT, RSS	FB Nov 2014 TW Nov 2014
Kiloo	–	–	FB, TW, YT	FB Nov 2014 TW Nov 2014
Alternative Games	–	Yes Nov 2013	–	–
Fragment Production	–	Yes Oct 2014	FB, TW, YT, LinkedIn, RSS, Instagram, Pin	FB Nov 2014, 4,5 stars TW Oct 2014
Frozenbyte	Yes	Yes Nov 2014	FB, TW, YT, Twitch	FB Nov 2014 TW Nov 2014
Sulake Corporation	–	Yes Nov 2013	–	–
Bugbear Entertainment	Yes	Yes Aug 2013	–	–
Remedy Entertainment	Yes	Yes Oct 2014	FB, TW, YT, RSS	FB Nov 2014 TW Nov 2014
Housemarque	Yes	Yes Oct 2014	FB, TW, YT, G+, RSS	FB Nov 2014 TW Oct 2014
Next Games	–	Yes Oct 2014	FB, TW	FB Oct 2014 TW Nov 2014
PlayRaven	–	Yes Sep 2014	FB, TW	FB Nov 2014, 5 stars TW Oct 2014

Company name	Game community	Blog, last update	Social media	Last update on FB and TW
Seriously Digital Entertainment	–	Yes Oct 2014	FB, TW	FB Nov 2014 TW Oct 2014
Vulpine Games	–	–	FB, TW, LinkedIn	FB Sep 2014 TW Aug 2014
Grand Cru	–	Yes Oct 2014	FB, TW, RSS, LinkedIn	FB Jul 2014 TW Oct 2014
Helsinki GameWorks	–	–	–	–
Telltale Games	Yes	Yes Nov 2014	FB, TW, YT, LinkedIn, RSS	FB Nov 2014, TW Nov 2014
Yousician (previously: Ovelin)	–	Yes Oct 2014	FB, TW, YT	FB Nov 2014, 4,5 stars TW Aug 2014
Star Arcade	–	–	FB, TW, G+, Tumblr, LinkedIn,	FB Oct 2014 TW Oct 2014
Kuuasema	–	–	FB, TW	FB Apr 2014 TW May 2014
Kuju Entertainment	–	–	–	–
Ubisoft Entertainment	–	–	FB, TW, YT	FB Nov 2014 TW Nov 2014
Fingersoft	–	Yes Jul 2014	FB, TW, YT	FB Oct 2014 TW Oct 2014
Frogmind (also: Frogmind Games)	–	Yes May 2014	FB, TW	FB Nov 2014 TW Nov 2014
Small Giant Games	–	–	FB, TW	FB Nov 2014 TW Nov 2014
Kyy Games	–	Yes Nov 2014	FB, TW, YT	FB Nov 2014 TW Nov 2014
Kukouri Mobile Entertainment	Yes	Yes No date	FB, TW, YT	FB Nov 2014 TW Nov 2014
DoDreams	–	–	FB, TW, LinkedIn	FB Apr 2014 TW Nov 2014
Gajatri Studios	–	Yes Aug 2014	FB, TW, Pin, Instagram	FB Nov 2014 TW Nov 2014
Mountain Sheep	–	–	FB, TW, RSS	FB Nov 2014, 5 stars TW Nov 2014

Besides the main purpose of the benchmarking I also paid attention to the design and the style of the branding portals, the website language options and the content of the pages. I visited all the sections and also took a screenshot of the website's design to compare those afterwards.

While conducting the analysis, I took a role of the customer that was interested in a game studio and its products. In case the firm had no social media in their webpage, I did not search for it separately for my research. It was crucial to show the meaningful

role of connection between the platforms. A customer would hardly search for additional information and social media accounts of the company as it is expected that an official website of the game studio is the main source of all the important information about the company. In fact, the information about the last updates has been collected and written down on the state of 14 November 2014. It is considered as a half of the month, which supports the fact that an active business should have posted a social update by this time.

7.3 Tendencies in numbers

The results of the benchmarking show that only 27% of companies have a community or forum page for their customers dedicated to a certain game. It makes sense to have a community if a game is difficult enough and offers issues, problems or tasks to solve. Also suitable for the games, where a player could make different decisions and plan his game. Thus, the community becomes a place to share the strategy or the tactics, share advice, and discuss the missions and difficulties met in a game.

67% of enterprises have a blog on their official sites, which is noticeably more than a half of the benchmarked game studios. Half of those enterprises, which do not have a blog, are start-ups. It is possible that start-ups do not have yet that much news to share with their customers. Only one game studio dedicated their blog solely to the topics related to the development. By the way, there are companies that had only several posts that looked less representative and decreased the blog's importance for me as for a customer. One firm had three posts in the blog, two had only two posts and one shared only one piece of news with the customers.

As a matter of a fact, all the companies of the comparison have their official websites in the English language. Rarely any enterprise has other language options to choose from. For instance, Rovio Entertainment has Russian, Chinese and Japanese besides English. Their games are so popular in the east, thus that is very user-friendly to offer the information about the game firm also in several other languages. This might not be a case for other firms, but it is a significant fact that Finnish game companies present them in English and mostly do not have the Finnish language option. Besides, the game industry is very international and English is the language that bounds all the players around the world. As a result, having a website solely in English is taken for granted.

The conducted research suggests that only 5 out of 30 studios do not have any social media integrated in their websites. Moreover, all the businesses that have social media definitely have Facebook and Twitter among the selected channels, which makes 83% of game firms. Some firms have integrated news feed, but the majority has the icons linked to the social media accounts.

At the same time, 2/5 of companies have YouTube channels mentioned in their websites. It was a surprising fact for me, as it was the most popular channel after Facebook and Twitter. Therefore, it could be stated that these are the main three channels used by game studios. Other media used by game firms includes LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, Google+, Twitch and RSS. In fact, one game studio had an icon with a Pinterest link that was not working. I tried to find the firm on the Pinterest website, but there was no luck. I suppose the company does not have this account, but has the icon just for the amount or some other reason.

Not less important is the activity on social media, because it is important to show the customers that they are cared about and informed about all the news related to the enterprise and its products. The benchmarking of the existing game companies revealed that 40% of firms keep their social media profiles updated by posting news monthly. The same amount of game studios had made their last post in November 2014.

It will make a 63% of socially active enterprises if the seven game studios that had updated only Facebook or Twitter in November 2014 are included. It is not a good result as it shows that game companies do not interact with their customers often enough. There could be many reasons for that. First, there is no person in charge of social media in the team. Second, social media is not included as a part of marketing strategy. Third, the business might not be aware of the importance of social media in marketing and branding. There are more possible explanations for that, including also the unawareness of measuring of the visibility and knowing how to affect it using the social media approach. After all, this is the reason for my study and it makes my work valuable for the companies as it helps to understand and explains how to implement social media in the firm's marketing plan.

8 Case Komento! Interactive start-up

8.1 Project definition

At the first meeting with my client it was important to know the requirements. I was introduced to the team, got to know their current state and then I offered them options based on which we decided on the work requirement for me. The team was on the way to register their start-up officially and release their product. Thus there was a need for the branding portal and a way to increase amount of the customers. They were unknown at that moment and that had to be changed. As team members said, “When you search over the Internet for ‘Buglantic Football’, the only result you get is a YouTube video of a game. Nothing else at the moment.”

So, my task in this start-up was to increase the visibility and amount of customers of the start-up company. The more people know about the business and its product the more customers the enterprise will have. This will eventually lead a firm to a success and an impressive income.

It is fairly difficult to gain visibility when there are a lot of businesses trying to do the same, and nobody expects a certain one to be the best. There is no such definition as the best game studio. There are always some things that are better or worse compared to the others, always. There should be a clear message or image of the company that the customers remember – that is the thing I explained the team at the very first meeting we had.

I asked my client, what would they want their game studio or the products they deliver to be associated with, if there was a message they want to deliver their customers or an image they would like their users to have about them. It is impossible to create a company brand if a customer does not know what the brand should look like. Before I could create a brand and think of marketing opportunities, I should get a full image of what the studio would like to be seen for, what are the thing that should stand out.

As it happens most of the time, the client was not able to answer these questions. So I offered some ideas and options like stressing the fact that the company is Finnish or produces Finnish games, Nordic or Scandinavian, adding features and values of people of these nations. There was also an idea to have something special about the game or strong story about the foundation of a start-up. Komento! Interactive had a partner in

Denmark, thus I offered a selling sentence like “Approved in Denmark” as an option for a good marketing. No decisions at this point were made, as it was the first meeting. I asked the team members to think about it deeper and possibly even come up with a motto or the catch phrase for the company.

The reason for the first meeting being extremely useful was that my tasks were clearly defined. Those included a branding portal creation, deciding on social media channels as well as connecting those with a website and planning a marketing strategy for the start-up company.

8.2 Branding portal

One of the objectives of my project was to suggest a branding portal design and create the chosen option for the start-up. A website is the key point of the visibility of an enterprise. It is the first and the last page one visits when having an interest in or the business with the firm.

Product backlog

During the first meeting with the start-up we decided on product backlog. It was highlighted that website would include basic information about the company, their first game and contact information. Thus the possible website sections were expected to be About, People, Games, Contact.

Komento! Interactive official website was decided to be made based on a content management system WordPress. This CMS was a good choice for my client for many reasons. WordPress is a good system for the company members to publish and manage their webpage without actually editing the code files on the server. It is a base of the branding portal that allows making as many changes in looks, functions and performance as one would want. WordPress provides a simple user interface for my client to continue editing branding portal after I hand it to the firm (see Figure 4). [31.]

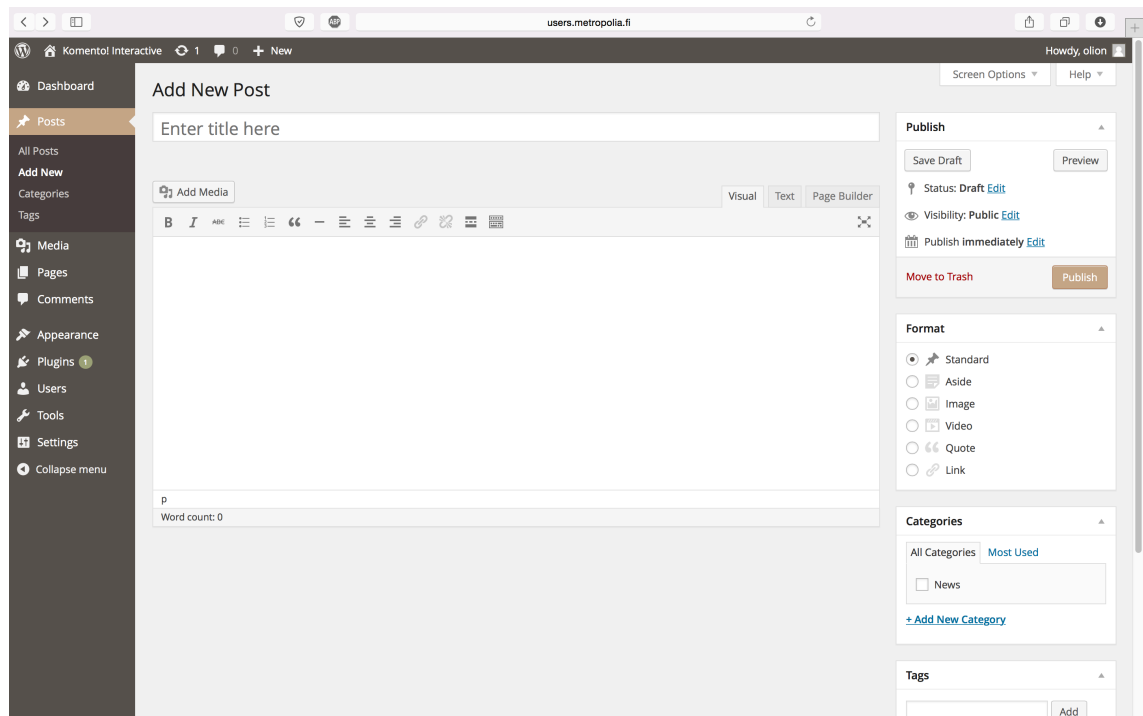


Figure 4. The WordPress website administrator view.

The administrator view looks clear and has such options as adding posts, new pages, making changes in the content and partially in design. WordPress gives the freedom of managing quite many things independently, which saves money, time and effort, and offers a pleasurable work experience. Also, my previous clients were very satisfied with this solution and I received a lot of positive feedback.

Another reason to choose the CMS is that it does not require a lot of back-end programming. The site does not have to be created from the scratch, a predefined structure can be used to design the website. This saves time and money, and it does allow making as many changes in the code as needed to reach the design a customer wants. In addition, WordPress has several plugins, including the Google Analytics plugin, which help tracking the website's traffic.

Of course, there are other content management systems, also Google websites with limited editing possibilities. Drupal, WordPress and Joomla are quite similar systems, so it is just about the taste and personal preference, which one the company wants to use. I had worked with WordPress and Joomla. As well I tried out Drupal a little bit. I concluded that WordPress is best option for Komento! Interactive and this personally like to work with this platform.

Another point included into the product backlog was a definite implementation of social media into the company's website. There were two options, whether having the clickable icons of the social media channels or having news feed from the social media account on the home page of the site.

Development process

First of all, I had to check whether the suitable domain for the business named Komento! Interactive is free. Team members liked to use start-up's name solely as "Komento". Rovio Entertainment uses for their domain only "Rovio" as well. After benchmarking I realised that it is quite common in game industry that a game studio has two words in an official company name, but in practice uses only part of it (first word), e.g. Rovio Entertainment, Fragment Production, Sulake Corporation, Bugbear Entertainment etc. For example, most customers do not know that Ubisoft is not a registered name of the enterprise; it is Ubisoft Entertainment instead. This example links to all the other firms as well.

I understood that was a good idea to have Komento! Interactive as a company name, but a domain only as "Komento", but unfortunately another Finnish firm had already bought this domain. That was the first obstacle of the thesis project. The members of the start-up realised they had to change the name of the start-up. Of course, nobody wanted their clients to find another company's website, when searching online.

It was not only a problem for the guys, but also for me. I could not design the looks of the website without knowing the name, company's style and colours. Moreover, I think one gets more motivation, feeling of doing the work right and sees whether things suit, when knows exactly what is the firm you are developing the project for. I was working on my thesis project with name Komento! Interactive because during all my working time, the start-up still could not decide on a new name. There were several brainstorm sessions, but still no final decision on a name. Even I participated in those sessions, as I was a part of the team.

After the benchmarking I searched for some themes to offer to my client, because I had an overall picture of how the website could look like. I tried to find most matching layouts to the concept that I had in my head.

Afterwards, I offered my client eight types of website layouts to choose from. I, relying on the result of the benchmarking of other companies' sites, was sure that at least one of those options would be chosen. 2 out of 8 layout options were the ones that we considered to be the best choices.

One of them was very colourful due to the amount of images in the design. The template was actually designed for a restaurant as you can see in Figure 5. However, the images could have been the perfect way to present the game and get the customers in the mood of the game.

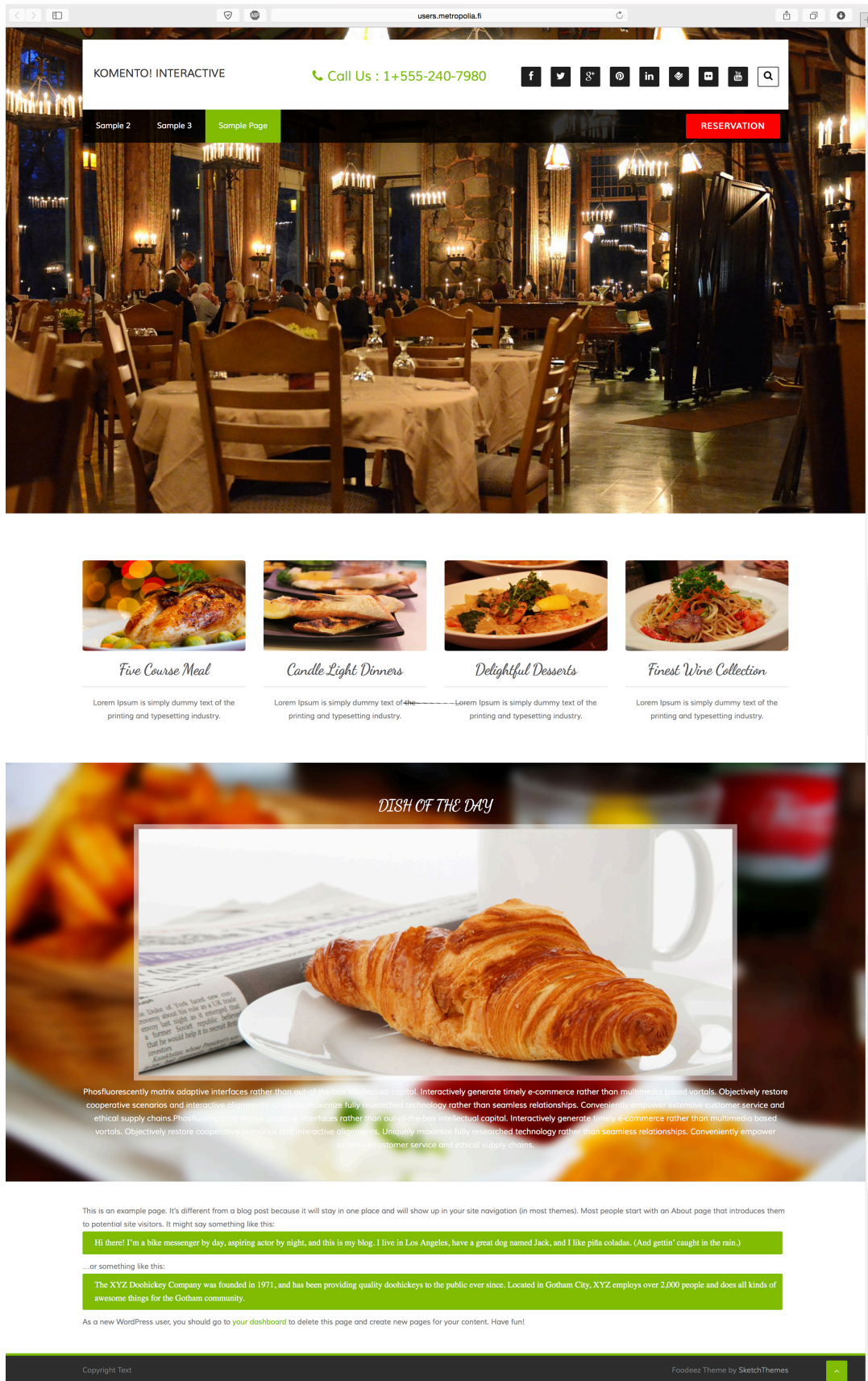


Figure 5. First template option.

Despite the fact that the first template would have been an excellent option, it was not the final choice. There were several things that had to be considered, for example, Komento! Interactive is a start-up, thus the game was not ready yet, and there were not many images of the game or graphics to use in the website. First, it would be difficult to introduce the game with the lack of images, and second, the game would be released almost in a year, which means that there would be more logical to focus on the company marketing first. My client and I agreed that this layout could be used in the further future, when the studio has developed the game and feel like updating their branding portal.

The second template was the one that was chosen, because, in our opinion, it was the most suitable option out of eight templates that I offered. It was clear and simple enough, which provided us a lot of space for imagination. It had a sticky menu that is popular nowadays and a wonderful mobile view. Figure 6 shows the template with already changed colour scheme and the banner size and image.

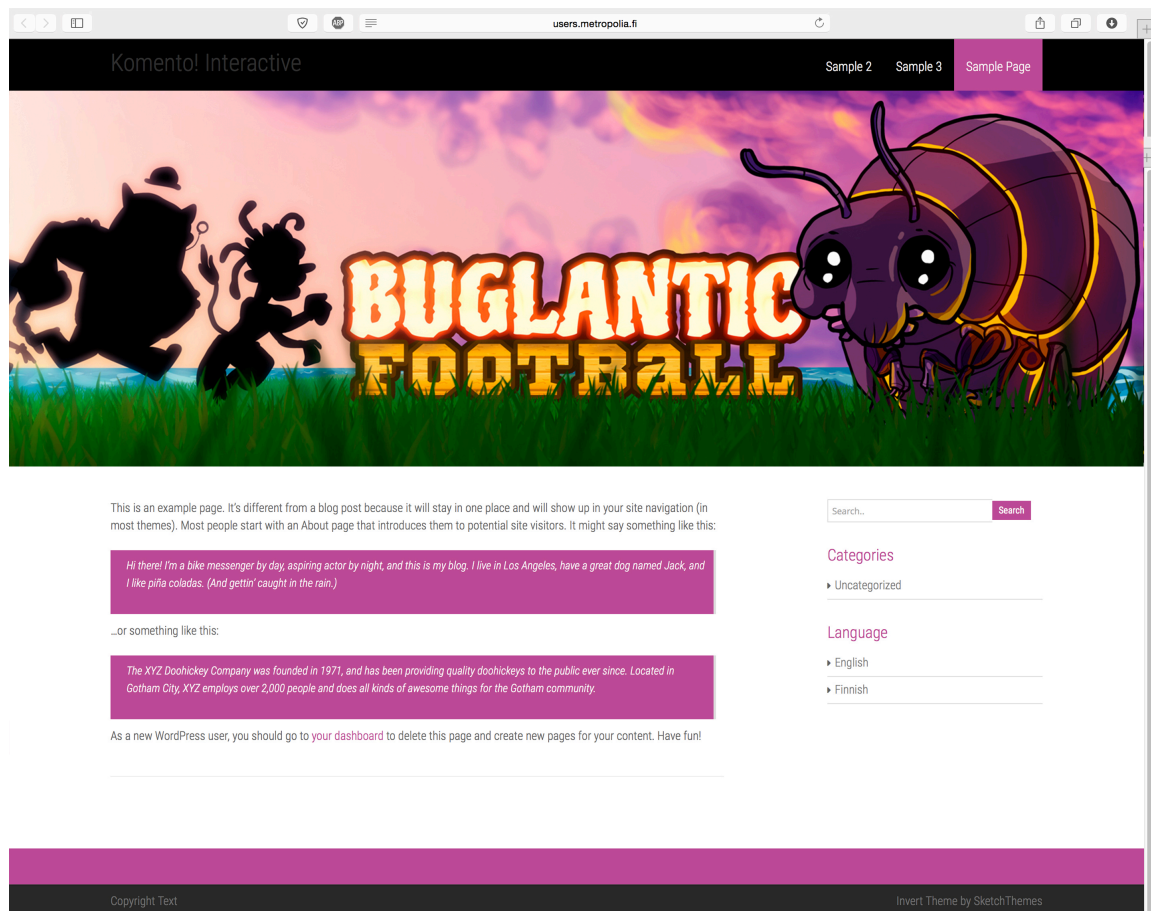


Figure 6. Second template option.

What I realised in a while, was that the banner image was not showing in my Chrome browser. I searched over the Internet to find the solution for this issue. I found several good tips and implemented those, but the image was not showing. I doubted if it was my mistake in code or the theme that I used as a base had already a bug in there.

After I realised that my solutions do not work and I could not fix the issue, I decided to install the theme once again on a new website to check if it was working in Chrome browser. And it turned out there was something wrong in the theme. It was a great disappointment, because I could not solve the issue.

At this point, it has to be stated that choosing a content management system as a platform for the website development is great, because one can switch themes and redesign a site at any time. So feeling disappointed, I thought to take our candidate two for a website theme that was quite close to the first option. However, before I actually did it I wanted to search for other options. I knew there are a lot of themes I still have not seen and there could be a good one somewhere out there in the Internet. It was not a bad feeling, because I found a new theme that was pretty close to the one used beforehand.

It felt that later meetings, when we discussed the branding portal, were a lot more effective than the very first one we had. It was better for me to discuss the possible design and content, when I had done benchmarking of other game company websites. I had a picture of good and bad examples, possible tendencies and presented those to the client.

When planning the content, firstly we decided on a must-have menu of the website. The idea of not having too much on the website was staying in the mind during all the content planning process. If a firm has too many sections in a menu, a customer could simply be lost in the amount of those and not find the information he was searching for. Furthermore, Komento! Interactive is a start-up company, which means there is not much content to offer, some of the sections would be possibly half-full. That does not look representative and leave a negative impression of the firm. All of that I tried to avoid or minimize while developing the game studio's website.

Game community, or forum, was considered to be irrelevant at that point, because the game was not released yet and would take time before it would be. Forum would be just empty for a longer period of time and chances for it to be popular later will reduce. It makes no sense to create parts of website that would not be used at the beginning. To my mind, it is better to add extra features to a portal according to the need. Moreover, a community could be formed in case the game offered some challenges and tasks that would raise questions, support, and helping other players. Such a kind of approach is popular if the game is big, and there different ways to solve some challenges.

Also section for hiring people or showing open positions was decided not to be included in the menu of the website. The start-up is quite small, and it has all core members at the moment, so there is no use of such page at the moment. The company can add this page, when they will need more employees or will hire interns for their projects.

Benchmarked websites had different names for the same sections as well as some had more or less links in menu. One of the good points was to name blog section “News”. 67% of the benchmarked companies had a blog on their websites, but not all of them had name “Blog”, “News” or “Press”.

Another amazing name of a section was “Studio”. One start-up studio from Tampere perfectly named the section that included information about the firm, its workers and premises with one simple word. In my opinion, “Studio” is an ideal word to use in a game industry. It makes company look more professional and also closer to creative development. We just put everything under one, instead of having several sections, which were

- About – presenting the business and its goals
- People – introducing team members
- Company – telling customers the story of the firm, how and why it started.

This was totally suitable solution for my client, because all listed content together would make enough text for one page instead of three separate. On the one hand, that solution creates space for other sections. On the other hand, I realised that because of that all the menu links we had were News, Game, Studio, Contact, which would make a website look quite empty and not worth of attention.

To solve this problem, I had to think what could be the valuable sections for a start-up. Thus, I offered to have an Investor page, where the start-up can show their motivation and goal, adding emotion and belief in what they do. This page would tell a bit more about the studio and hopefully make investors interested to know more or contact the start-up. The idea came from the Slush official page (www.slush.org), where several sections were introduced: for companies, investors, press and visitors. The firm needs people to invest in them so it could grow, as it is an early stage start-up. It was agreed that it could be good to have Investors page. [32.]

By the way, Slush is not a game company. It is a large event for start-ups and technical people to meet and discover each other. A lot of investors and big enterprises attend the event, some popular and important people give speeches. This event is known all over the world and is organised each year in November in Helsinki, Finland. [32.]

Another menu link that was added was a Press section, which only several benchmarked game studios have. Press section usually includes materials that could be used by press, journalists and publishers. The materials are such as company's logo, possible several versions: positive and negative, official name of the firm, small logo or a mascot image. It is easier for a blogger or any publisher to get the official logo of the company from the proved place rather than search over the Internet and copy a bad quality image.

Finally, Home page was a last one that filled the list of menu buttons of the official branding portal. At first it was logical to have a Home page, because most of the businesses usually have it. After the discussion is turned out that we did not know what should be there on the main page. As a result, Home page was removed from the list. Later, when the page layout changed and content of the webpage was more or less clear, we added Home page. The main page is a marketing page as it is the first one seen by a customer. He might not even go further and just close the site. In marketing strategy for my client there will be different periods of marketing. Therefore, according to the marketing stage the content of the main page will be changed.

One of the main things was to create and place on a main page was a good banner that would advertise firm's product – a game. Komento! Interactive team had two artists, who could design the banner. I requested the banner of the game with certain sizes and used it as an inspiration for the company colours.

As the start-up did not yet have a new name and a logo, I had freedom to decide which are the colours that work best and look most representative. I got my inspiration from the websites of Supercell, Fragment Production, DoDreams, Fingersoft, Small Giant Games and Frozenbyte (see Figure 7). I used black and white as primary colours and one contrast colour that would possibly come from logo. The contrast colour I took was purple-pink, which I took from the banner image that was done by the company's artist.

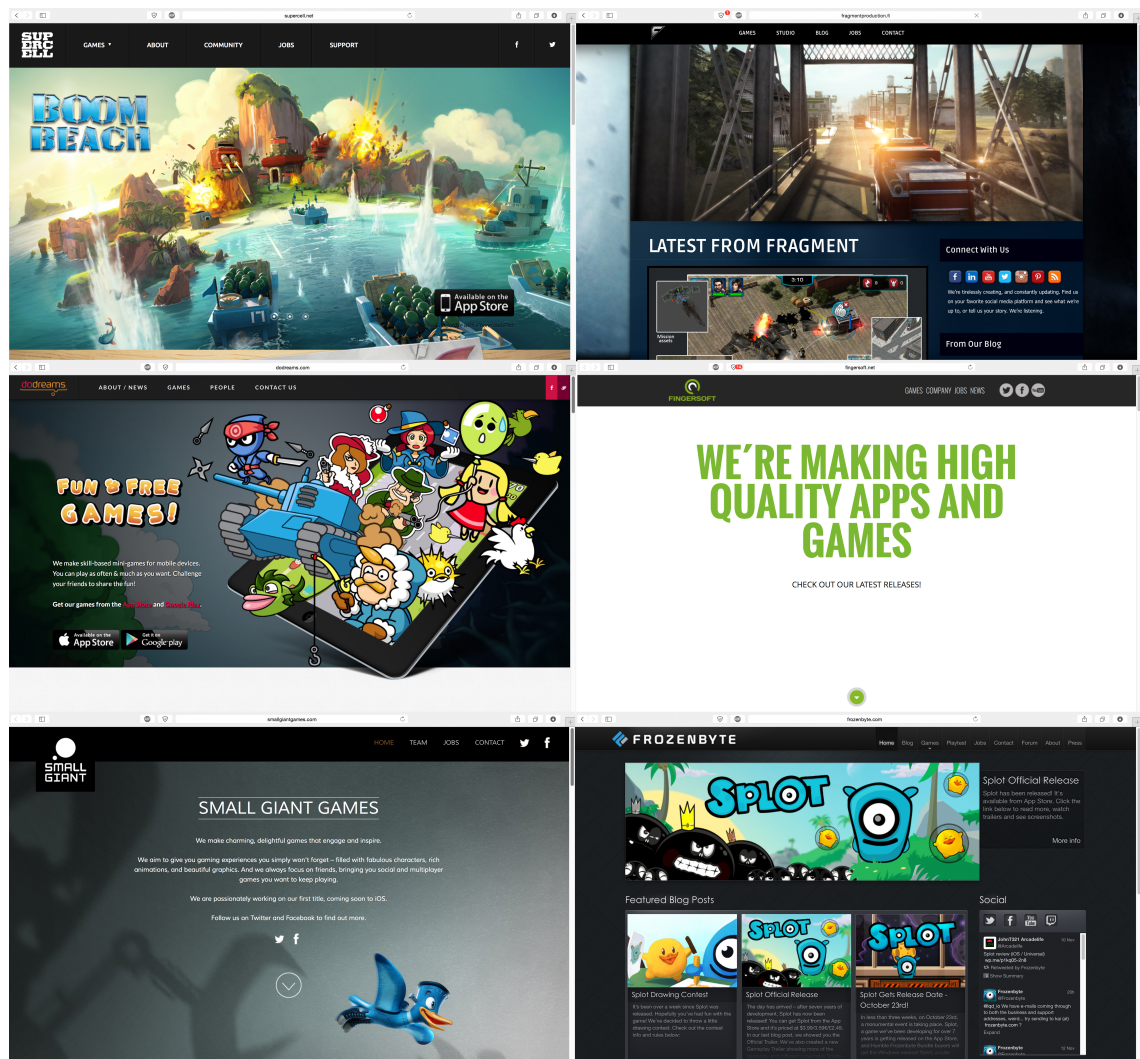


Figure 7. Supercell, Fragment Production, DoDreams, Fingersoft, Small Giant Games and Frozenbyte website designs.

The figure above shows how the black was used at the websites of those and importance of a catchy banner image of the game. It made the game studios look more professional and comparing with other benchmarked websites; they looked more assuring and stylish. In addition, if firm members would like to have company T-shirts,

other colours look cheap comparing to black, and any logo would look perfect on a black background. Therefore, black seemed to be as a good colour.

My client liked the white colour, as gives the site clarity, and it works well with black. I wanted their branding portal to be as good-looking as possible, so I thought that an old-fashioned way of two colour and possible shadow of those was not the colour set I would expect to be “a winning set”. Consequently, a third colour that would be contrasting with black and white was the solution.

The content of the branding portal is as important as design of the website. It was extremely difficult to get any kind of content from my client. The game studio members did not know how to express the thoughts in the written way. I had been waiting quite a long time to get any content. I explained the topics they have to write about, but still there was no result.

Despite that I gave my client the questions to answer (see Appendix 1). Those questions had to help to clarify the general things about the game studio, its plans and intentions, describe the product and suggest some text for the branding portal. I provided some tips in the questionnaire in order to help the team in their answering process.

After several team members answered the questions, we could create a solid content for the website. Moreover, it helped the guys to get the common ground on their thoughts about their business and the game. It was important that information presented was not boring and offered a user some experience while reading it. I showed Komento! Interactive other websites, where information is always presented same way and one loses interest to read till the end.

I made it a goal to create the content people would be interested to read, even though the content is expected to be presented same way. For example, a company usually presents itself this way: “We are an independent mobile game company based in Helsinki, Finland. Our team consists of 20 people. We create games that... “. It is such a typical way of presentation that I will just run through the text without concentration.

I wanted Komento! Interactive to be catchy, creative and inspirational young game studio that would be different from benchmarked enterprises. Therefore, the content was edited in a more creative way. The difference is what could change a lot in a future of a

small start-up. There are low chances to reach high if the firm is similar to other hundred companies.

Final version

The layout of Komento! Interactive branding portal was based on a new template that had most of the features of the previous chosen theme. Eventually, the main sections of the branding portal were decided to be Home, News, Game, Studio, Investors, Press and Contact pages as seen in the figure below.

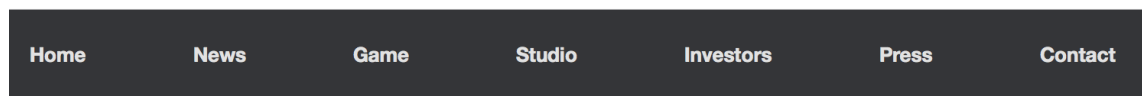


Figure 8. Menu of the branding portal.

The company colours almost stayed same: dark grey, white and purple-pink. Previous set (black-white-purple) looked too much like Supercell's Jobs section of the website. Another reason was the change of the website template for Komento! Interactive. The game banner (Figure 9) was a source for the colour choice, as the start-up name and the logo were not developed yet. No doubt the colours of the website could be changed later according to the game studio's final name.



Figure 9. Website banner.

The final design of the branding portal was in a way resembling the first one, but in certain ways it was a lot better. One fact about this template was that all of its features were not completely free, so to get full features of it one should pay 10\$. It is not much

for a company, but the fact is that this start-up does not need full features at the very beginning. Possibly when the firm has many customers and makes some profit, full features could be implemented. In fact, full features include having retina version of the logo, better mobile view and additional social media icons already integrated into a page and some extra stuff. Those features are perfectly good and the price is not high. Moreover, the website has suitable layout and a free version works also fine for the company as seen in Figure 10.

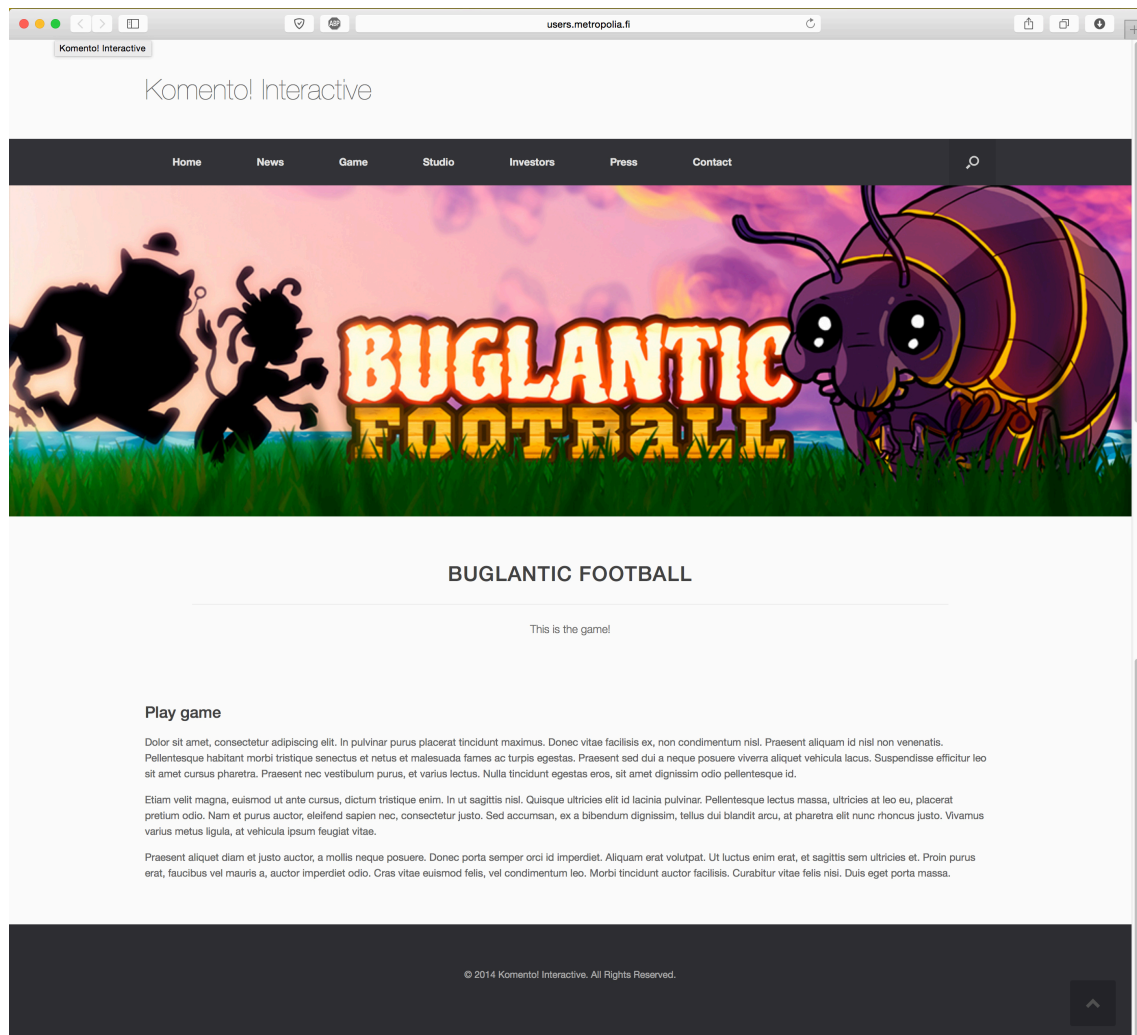


Figure 10. The main page of the website.

8.3 Social media

Benchmarking showed that 83% of the analysed game studios had Facebook and Twitter on their webpages, which was every benchmarked firm that had social media in its site. According to Forbes, most of the companies use Facebook and Twitter channels for their marketing purposes. Of course, there are a lot of other channels like YouTube, Vimeo, Instagram, Vine, Pinterest, Snapchat, Google+, Flickr, LinkedIn etc. Some game businesses had other channels, and even a RSS feed, additionally to Facebook and Twitter. [7; 10.]

Blogging is also a part of social media, but if it is a part of the branding portal, a new account does not have to be opened. Company's blog is an important feature of a game studio website as it was on the website of 67% of the game studios that I benchmarked. The conclusion was that blog was a must to have for Komento! Interactive.

It was obvious after the research that Komento! Interactive should definitely have Facebook and Twitter accounts. At the moment they are represented as the icons on the right side of the website as it is demonstrated in Figure 11. When the studio is registered officially, and the social media accounts are created, then the news feeds from both channels will be in this place and the icons will be in the footer of the webpage.

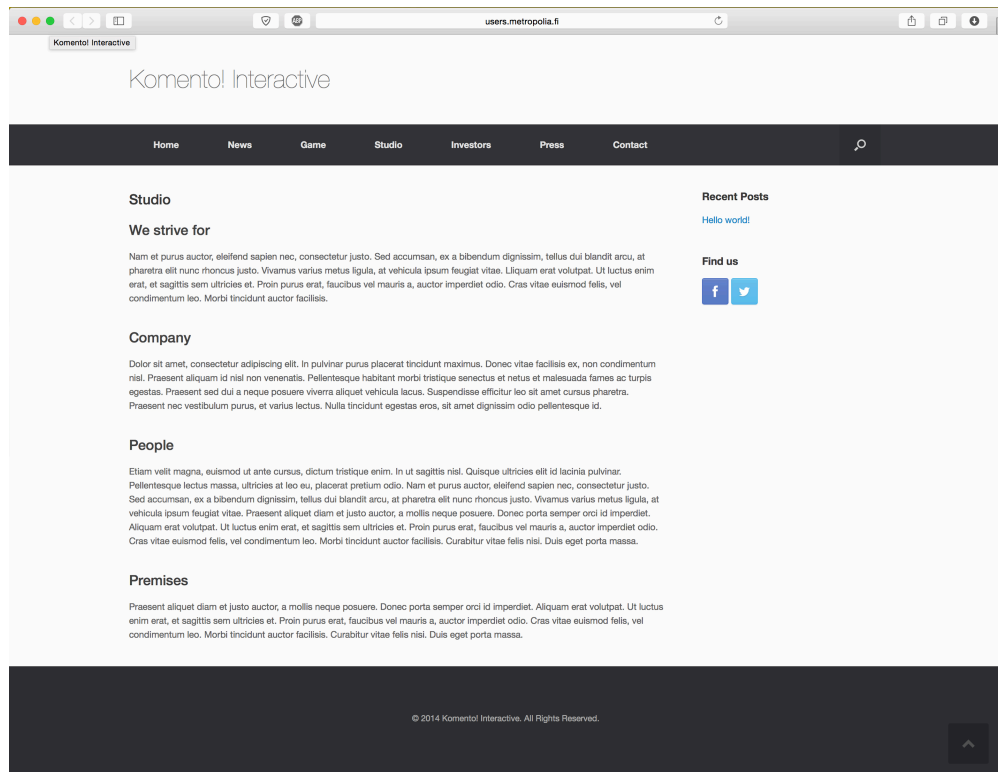


Figure 11. Studio page of the site.

We started with a list of social media options, but narrowed it down to two. The other channels could be taken into use later, when the start-up grows and has sources to provide content to each social platform. Pinterest, for example, would be a nice platform to share artist's sketches and graphical content. At the same time only 2 out of 30 firms had mentioned Pinterest on their official sites.

At this point the game start-up does not need extra “baggage” to worry about. It would be too much work for a young business to handle and team might not cope with the load. The start-up does not have enough content to post, but repeating same information on different channels would be silly. It would also disappoint the users that follow all social media channels of a game studio. It could even lead to loss of clients. [1; 17.]

Komento! Interactive is a start-up, which means there is a large amount of work for a few people to do. The team does not have time to post content continuously, even though it is important to keep social media accounts alive by frequently updating them. To solve this problem I suggested that each social media channel should have its own

purpose, which is targeting the specific audience (see Figure 12), and keeps it updated about the company and its product.

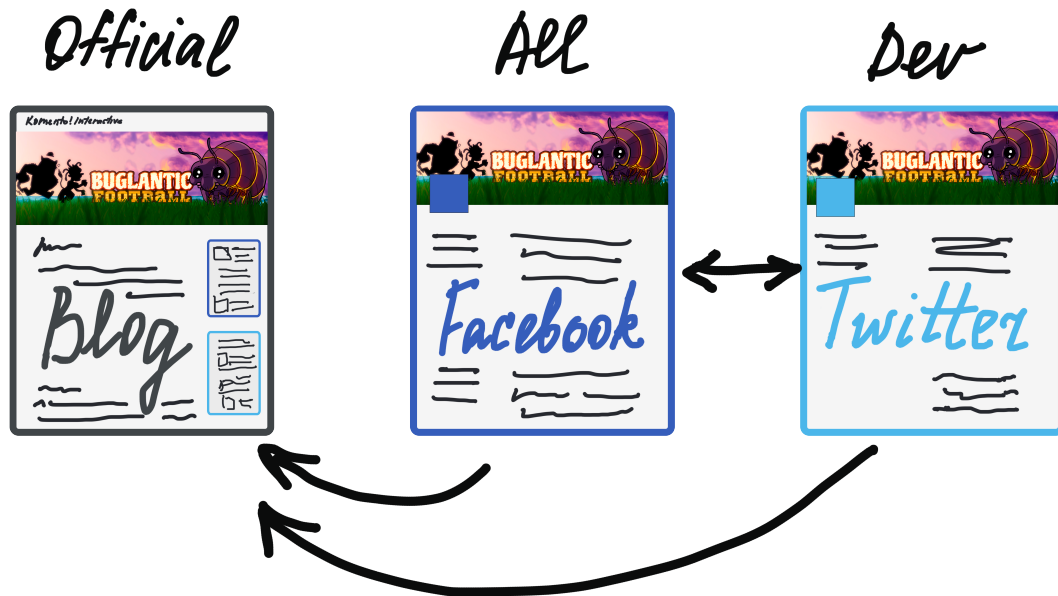


Figure 12. Social media marketing tools of Komento! Interactive.

Twitter would be an account, where more technical and development related things are shared, for example, what game mechanics was implemented or a new sketch of a game character. Studio's programmers and artists could upload content to Twitter.

Facebook would be sharing everything that is close to an ordinary user, e.g. what is going on in the office, events that the firm has visited, also game release news and advertising.

Blog on the official page of the company would inform the users only about formal information that would contain e.g. game release date or company interviews, public visibility. Facebook, in this case, is the place where official and unofficial information would be shared. This channel could be taken less seriously and this way it would feel more human and attract customers.

This decision felt absolutely right from both ways. That way it is sure the same information is not be repeated on each of the social channels, making a user feel silly and a firm look stupid. Furthermore, deciding on few platforms keeps the concentration of the start-up company high. The social media platforms are classified based on information

relevance, so each channel has its purpose and fulfills it. This way each channel looks representative and the concentration is at its tops. [1; 17.]

8.4 Marketing strategy

In my work I am taking into consideration the fact that my client is a start-up, which means a young company with inexperienced team who at the moment do not have time and money to create a good marketing campaign to promote their product. Start-ups need to find a way to get most of the marketing with fewer expenses, most importantly the increase of the visibility and the customer amount. This is exactly what I am aiming to in my thesis research and project. [7.]

As a solution for this goal I decided on social media based approach. One can name it social media marketing as there is social media involved in marketing. At this state of the start-up there is no need for other tools of marketing as they are neither officially registered game studio nor have released their product yet. Social media is free of charge and requires a lot of involvement, but the effort pays back with the visibility and the customer audience. As soon as the company is registered, and the game has been launched, the type of marketing will depend on Komento! Interactive. It could stay solely as social media marketing or be transformed to fusion media marketing, which means adding tools of traditional media.

This firm is at its first steps of entering the whole new world: a big game industry. I am sure that everything has to be thought several times before the team actually does any actions. The worst case would be creating everything, a website and social channels, without a certain schedule and then times after the time get back to the created contents. That would leave an extremely bad expression on the clients and possible loss of ones. [17.]

The team expected the game to be launched year 2015 after summer, which means there was approximately a year to schedule the strategy and implement it. I created a schedule for the marketing for the client that would include the company official registration as well as the product release. This way I would avoid unexpected actions and failures in the company branding. Figure 13 illustrates the marketing strategy of Komento! Interactive.

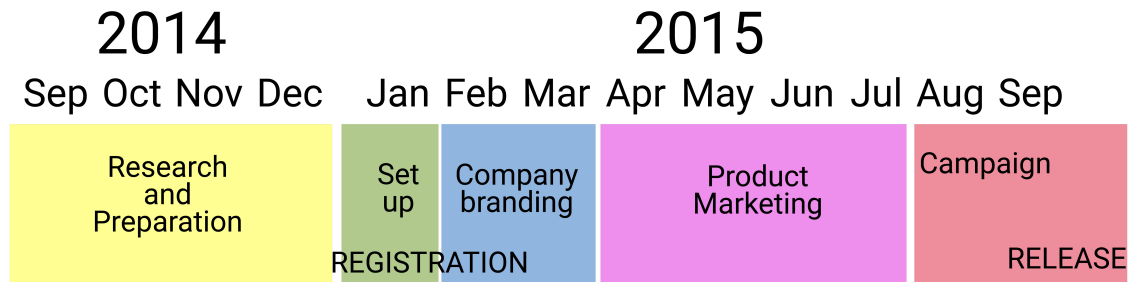


Figure 13. Marketing strategy of Komento! Interactive.

Research and preparation period

Year 2014 had been scheduled for planning and preparing the marketing strategy for the start-up. This would be three months of full-time work for me from September till November, as well as the individual preparation of a start-up in December. I personally think it was enough time for me to make a research and prepare a strategy for the studio to use next year.

Research and preparation period is referred as the time I have been working on Komento! Interactive case and writing my thesis based on it. It concerns the part of my thesis about marketing strategy for the game studio. That included benchmarking other companies, getting to know the game industry sector better and its analysis as well as a research on branding and marketing, including deeper look into digital and social media marketing. Additionally, this period included work on branding portal and social media channels.

Official registration and set up

At the beginning of year 2015 the team was expected to have their company officially registered. According to my estimation it would happen in January. This means that right after that the website I have designed for the firm would have to be registered, including buying a server provider and a domain.

After launching the branding portal, the social media channels have to be created, as these are the main marketing tools for Komento! Interactive. It is extremely important not to be in a rush with creating the social media channels. If one is impatient and cre-

ates a company site without having a plan how to make it seen, there will hardly be a possibility to get high popularity in the network. Thus part of the strategy is to plan such things before launching and implement the things right away after the launch. [17; 33.]

Setting the branding portal will not take much time, because the website would be already ready and registration of social media channels is quite an easy process. I would suggest the team to launch the branding portal on Thursday, as it is a day before weekend. People are working, and there are not as much new content appearing online as during weekends. Obviously, there will be few people, who will find the website or will search for it, but it leaves the whole weekend for the firm to test the branding portal before it would be in the view of hundreds of people. [1.]

The time for the launch of social media channels is Monday morning as it is the time, when less amount of content is published over the Internet. This allows the company to get maximum visibility during the start of the week and possibly by the end of the week without getting lost among other unnecessary content published over the network e.g. during weekend or after work evenings. Friends and acquaintances could be informed about the new channels separately on Tuesday morning, because it is the day when most of the workers have got through all the necessary tasks and could concentrate on other information. [1.]

Company branding period

After the digital marketing providers are set up, it leaves the next two months to concentrate on company branding. Why branding of the start-up first? Why not to advertise the game? The decision was based on several facts.

Firstly, the fact that a game would be released at the second half of the year 2015. Secondly, Komento! Interactive is a start-up, so it has to gain some visibility before the game launch in order to have some amount of customers already waiting for the game release. Ideally, the marketing strategy I planned for this case expects the start-up to have customers waiting for the product release. It could be compared with Apple's product release days: people talk about the product weeks before the release and stand in queues to get the product. The same customer reaction is expected but in a smaller scale. If the start-up would have approximately twenty customers ready to install the game on the date of launch, the marketing strategy would be rated as a suc-

cessful. It is difficult to make predictions at this point; it could be also a larger amount. [18.]

Moreover, it might be a lot easier to brand a fresh firm rather than a huge enterprise with “a baggage”, a history that customers remember and a company has to put a lot of effort on changing the opinion of people. This is also a reason for several huge companies to have subsidiaries. It is easier to create and modify an image separately for each daughter firm rather than trying to manage “the baggage” of a large enterprise. It is a well-known fact that people do remember bad things longer than all the good things. Same thing applies to a company image. [17; 33; 34.]

A good example is Coca-Cola Enterprises that does not only have a Coca-Cola brand but also Bonaqua, Burn, Dr Pepper, Fanta, Monster, Nestea, Schweppes, Sprite and more brands under one big enterprise management. Each brand exists separately and does not show their consumers the direct connection to one company. This means, if for instance, one of the brands will for some reason have a bad reputation and the sales will decrease, there would be no affect on the other products of the whole corporation of Coca-Cola Enterprises. Komento! Interactive in this case is totally a new brand, and its creation will fully depend on how well the team members will follow and implement the strategy and, of course, the effort they will put into it. [17; 33; 34.]

On the other hand, it is very common that people, who had been working in the industry 10 years or more, are founding new firms in the game industry. This adds value to the company immediately, as there are experts with knowledge and experience involved in the production. What is more, team members have a lot of connections from their previous work places that is going to be helpful in the future of the new business. Therefore, marketing a game start-up might not as easy as it seems.

One of the first groups that should be “attacked” through social media is the people the team members know. The first audience of a start-up is formed from friends, relatives and acquaintances and later on through those contacts reaches new people. It was agreed that during the launch week all of the team members would spread the word about their company over the Internet in order to increase the visibility on the social network.

These two months scheduled for creating a company image includes a lot of preparation work during the research and preparation period. One of those was the message that Komento! Interactive wanted to send its customers. A brand is created only if a customer has an image of the firm, of its beliefs and aims. Company's visibility increases if the business has something to offer a client. It should not be definitely a product that meets all the expectations. It could also be a feeling or a thought that makes a customer believe in what the firm is doing and striving for. Apple's marketing campaign is an inspiring example of that. [18.]

Social media plays a very important role in the whole marketing process of the company. There is a possibility in Facebook to give starts (1 to 5) for the enterprise. If the firm gets the score of 4 starts or over, customer's trust for the company will increase. Along with the rating a user can write a review of the firm, which is the direct way to connect with the customers through social opinion.

Product marketing period

These approximate four months are dedicated to a strategic marketing of a product. Referring to Apple's marketing strategy, the company has to "leak" the information about the new game to publishers to increase the interest for the game by the time of its release. [18.]

There are bloggers in Finland and those people are not celebrities or someone that one cannot reach. Luckily, in Finland bloggers are just regular people, who have influence on certain sector or circle of interest. It is possible to reach for them and have a friendly talk asking them to write about you. Most of the blogs are about fashion and interior design, but there are people interested in games there too. [5; 7.]

While searching for game related blogs in Finland, it turned out that bloggers have their own community and websites, where one could find blog of interest. It does not change the fact that there are not a lot of game related blogs. On the one hand, it means that the audience is reached relatively easily and quite fast; on the other hand, it does not necessarily mean that enough people will get reached due to lack of popularity of game blogs. It does not hard to spread a word in blogs anyway, because no one could ever know the result. [7; 35; 36.]

Nowadays bloggers are influencing a lot of people as content is spread quite fast over the Internet. In case of my client it is not just some blogger that should spread a word about the product, but someone who is well known in the community of gamers or respected person in a technology field. It does not necessarily have to be a professional blogger. There are popular people in the field of technology, game industry, innovation and other, whose word will play a significant role Komento! Interactive's future. The culture of developers in Finland is very open, and people are happy to help each other. This means that there are possibilities to ask known people to spread a word and their opinion about the game.

During this period team members would have to ask several people known in game industry to spread a word about the product and/or the company. Several of the start-up members know many people from the industry, which is very good for the whole start-up. Other team members also know some people through the Finnish chapter of the International Game Developers Association. IGDA meetings take place every month and it is and extremely beneficial in order to reach visibility or advice related to games. All in all, Komento! Interactive needs at least two good reviews from respected people in the field, to have a success at this period of marketing. [37.]

In fact, connections on social media cannot be forgotten at this period of marketing plan. People trust opinions of people close to them, thus it would be beneficial to share the news about the upcoming game over the network. Some campaigns during this time could be implemented too. [3; 8; 9.]

Facebook is a very convenient platform for a campaign or a competition. The aim for those is to increase the visibility of the business and get new customers. Eventually, after several reposts the users that never knew about Komento! Interactive will hear about the company and/or its product. This is the way to reach the potential customers via social media marketing. [7.]

A very common campaign flow in Facebook is sharing a company's campaign image with content, liking the Facebook page of the business and writing some comment under the image. This kind of campaigns works surprisingly well, because it is kind of a lottery that you might win but participation is free of charge. It does not cost anything for the user to share the content, but it is totally a big thing for a firm to be marketed in social media. Another good example is a Facebook photo competition, where users

should take a photo and company decides on the best one that wins the prize. In case of Komento! Interactive it could be a photo of a person playing a game, the playing station, favourite game, drawing of a game character etc.

Campaigns do not have to be about posting photos; the main point is mentioning the company name and/or game name in the social network. The competitions could be also, for instance, guessing the right answer for a question about the game. There are a lot of ways to interact with the users online. Firm's team members should remember that Facebook behaviour with the customers should be as easy and opened as if the users are friends. Of course, it does not mean to tell everything that should and should not be told, but the attitude should be friendly. Those people who support the company are really company's friends. Another way to think about it is that a business is acting as a human in social media, which makes it easier for the customers to interact with. There is always a person behind the posts and answers in the network, even though there is a company name under it. People like to interact with human rather with machine, thus friendly attitude towards users makes the interaction more pleasurable for the customers. We want to keep our customers happy, do not we? [7.]

Such campaigns are easy to create and the prizes should not be extremely expensive. Of course, the more valuable the prize is the more users will share the content, expecting to be a lucky one to win the lottery. Prizes could include stickers with company logo or game characters, toys of game characters, meeting team members, visit to the premises etc. Twitter could be used for a campaign related to tagging the studio in their posts and pictures (e.g. #komento, @komento).

Users in social media should participate in the company's social life as often as possible. This created an engagement that will last long. The firm can post polls and questions regarding the new character for a game, asking customers to name their favourite game or theme. By the way, it is also a free way of getting new ideas. Sometimes customers inspire a new idea or help a team to brainstorm.

Final straight before product release

One month before the game launch I would suggest my client to start a Facebook campaign with the main prize of sending the game to the several winners e.g. two days before the official release date. Some friends and bloggers could have the beta version

of a game to test it and write reviews to increase the interest for the game as well as get some feedback.

After release

Neither the website blog nor the social media channels could be forgotten during all the time of the marketing before or after the product release. It is important to be active in social networks, answer the comment on time and keep posts updated. One post per month is quite good, 3-4 is better to keep users engaged and potential customers interested.

Blog does not need to be updated every now and then as it has only official and very important information, so once a month is enough for a start-up, possibly more after the game release. It definitely depends on the activeness of the start-up. If, for example, there are articles published about the company or the team attends many events, no doubt it should be mentioned on the website.

On the other side, Twitter and Facebook have to be updated more frequently than once a month. Otherwise users will have nothing to follow or moreover, forget about the company at all. The more active on social media the more customers remember the business and are more loyal to it. [7.]

Digital marketing is about understanding people. You have to engage a connection with the potential customers and technology offers the ways to do it. Social media could be considered as a part of digital marketing, because most of the social interaction happens digitally. Social media allows customers to participate in content creation and its flow, and the company should remember it. One more tip for marketing via social media is showing the enthusiasm about main things, which are the enterprise, its product and the customers, including their opinion and activity with the product. Enthusiasm is catching, once people feel it, they also catch the same feeling and become enthusiastic. It is a positive emotion that is easy to share if you enjoy what you do. [1; 3; 17; 18.]

9 Discussion

9.1 Involvement

During my work with Komento! Interactive I got to know the game industry a lot better. It was essential to get to know as much as possible to perform the best. I did not only read books and articles on the topics, but I also attended several events and got to know the associations.

Through the start-up I got to know the Finnish chapter of IGDA. I attended their event for the first time in October and made many connections. It is a very beneficial way to get to know individual developers, start-up companies and members of the big game studios. What is important for a start-up is that investors also visit such events and if lucky, one may get a funding. [37.]

In IGDA there are a lot of people that are related to the game industry this or other way. There is a chance to get a good piece of advice from the professionals, or even be a help to someone else. The first time I went there it turned out I was much of help for one man that had a game idea, but was missing a team to create the product. I shared my thoughts and suggestions with him. Some things that seem to us basic might be a whole new world for others. It was nice to give helpful advice.

I actually got some good thoughts from other people too. Most of them were from the members of another start-up. It was good to listen and compare performance of my client with another start-up.

Visiting events and being a part of the industry played a very big role during my thesis work. I did not only think about the project at the times I was working on it, I did think about the company, my tasks and development all the time. Subconsciously I was living with a thought of the things I do and it was extremely enjoyable. Some great ideas reached me in the bus on the way home, during night or lecture, even while eating, the brain was working and thinking about how the theoretical information could be used in practice.

9.2 Working with Komento! Interactive

I am very satisfied with the way that I worked with Komento! Interactive. The team was very open-minded and always let me express my opinions on a certain topic as well as asked me for extra information if they felt not knowing enough about the matter. I always tried to provide enough background information and material for my customers before asking them to make choices and decisions. It is important that I do not make the decisions alone for the whole start-up, instead we do it all together and that my client knows the reasons for those choices.

We had weekly meetings, which was a highly efficient way to keep track on what everybody is doing as well as set weekly tasks and decide on meeting agenda. It kept the team alive and up-to-date throughout all the process. Big companies have meetings, so-called scrums, daily, but to my mind, for a start-up studio it is more than enough to meet once, sometimes twice, a week.

Each meeting that we had was following scrum structure, but in a reversed way. The main difference from the typical scrum meeting was that the structure was followed in a backward direction. So instead of discussing what had to be done, explaining the tasks in progress and stating the assignments that were completed, in the case with my client, firstly, it was stating what has been done before the meeting, then during the discussion the decisions were made, after which the tasks for completion were divided (as explained below in Figure 14).

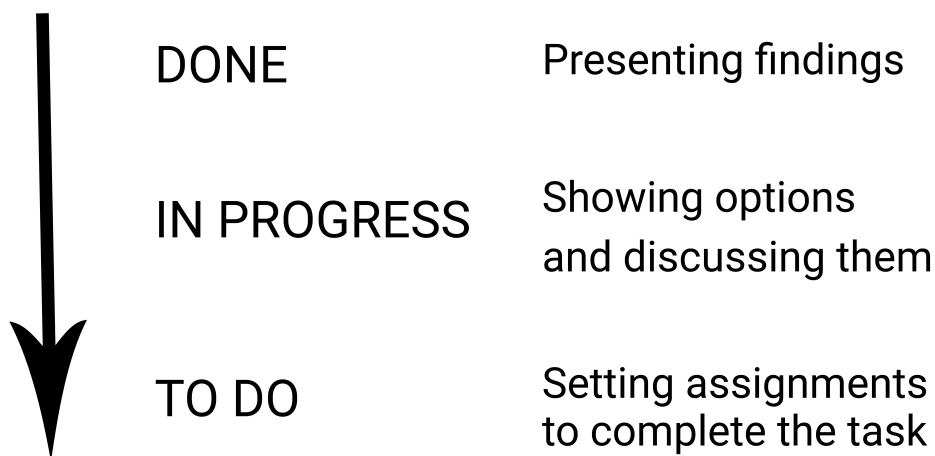


Figure 14. Weekly scrum meeting structure with Komento! Interactive.

It became a very usual thing for us to have a meeting following certain steps. It usually went step-by-step:

- Presenting the result of other companies: what has been done before and analysing it.
- Showing the various options for my customer to implement taking into consideration my previous research and benchmarking.
- Deciding on the choices for the client.
- Setting assignments in order to achieve the set task.

For the meeting to go in this way I had to do quite much preparation work. Practically, I made a research and reached some decisions before the meeting. Afterwards I presented what I have found and analysed the information with the client during the meeting.

The result of the meeting was reaching common ground with the wishes of the client and the thing that are considered to be beneficial after the research. Learning from others' mistakes was also an important point throughout all the working process.

9.3 Problems and issues

The biggest issue during the thesis study was the fact that the game studio had to change the name. Komento! Interactive could not use domain name of "komento" as another company had already bought it. Moreover, it would be totally bad for the start-up if the customers opened the wrong website, the site of another firm that has nothing to do with the game studio. Of course, there is a possibility to have a domain name of the full start-up name, but in this case the risk of the customer loss is pretty high if the customers are searching for the firm by the keyword "komento". Therefore, the team members agreed all together that the change of their start-up has to be changed.

The team members were looking for a new name during all my work time with them and still have not found the replacement. There are some options to choose from, but still none of the names felt the right one. It is a very difficult and demanding process. One can also change his company's name afterwards, but it will cost extra and it is less problematic to have same name from the very beginning.

The name of the business has a significant meaning in the overall activity and image of the firm. The name is the base on which the brand is created. When designing visuals, content and strategy, the company name plays a certain role. It is a start for the flow of ideas and connections, without having the name it is difficult to create anything for the business. Therefore, during the thesis study I used the initial name of the start-up, which was and yet is Komento! Interactive. When the start-up finds a suitable name, some changes to the project might be applied. It could have been a lot better to know the final version of the studio name, but there was actually nothing much I could do about it. I participated in the sessions of the name brainstorming and helped company as much as I could, but the final decision has to be made by the start-up team.

During this thesis project I learned a lot of things. One of them is remembering to check whether a website works in all of the browsers at the very beginning of the project, before starting to do any changes in a code or developing it further. I learned this because it was one of the problems that came on the way. The website's main image was not showing in Chrome browser, even though it was working flawlessly in other browsers. I checked if in Safari and Mozilla at the very beginning, but I started to do testing in all the possible browsers after I had already worked on the chosen template and that is where the problem came out.

I searched over the Internet the solutions for this issue, and I found suggestions to change the code in several places. I tried it, but the problem stayed. I also asked for the help from the game programmer from the start-up team to take a look and he could not suggest me anything to solve the issue. I started wondering if had been my mistake somewhere in code that I made when I was making changes in the code of the website.

The only way to check it was to create an absolutely new webpage and apply the same theme to that, this way it would be clear was it is my mistake and I could start working again from the scratch. Surprisingly, there was a bug in the code of the template from the very beginning. At this moment I was unhappy that I did not check it earlier and having a positive attitude at the same time, because it was not too late to decide on a new layout or make any drastic changes in the project.

If I had had more time to work on the project, I could have tried to find the source of the problem and fixed it. On the other hand, it is safer for my client to be sure that the template their website is based on is working without problems, thus it was a good decision to switch the theme. What is more, the template that was used for the website of my client has also a paid version that allows the company have all the best features of it, including the integrated social media. The start-up team also agreed on this decision and were happy with that.

It was a challenge to get some text for the website from my client. Artistic and technical people seemed not to be good in putting thought on the paper. It took couple for me of weeks to understand that I will not get anything and I have to decide on other ways to create the content. So eventually, I gave the team a questionnaire (Appendix 1) that they had to answer for me about the start-up, their game and possible text for the website. This way got their ideas and thoughts written so that I could create the content for the site myself.

Even though there were several issues during the process, my client and I are satisfied with the results of the thesis project. In the beginning, I expected that after the research and creation of the channels, I could also implement the branding portal and have the first steps of the social media success tracked. Unfortunately, because of the delay of the firm registration, I did more research and created the content that Komento! Interactive should use as soon as they become an official company. Nevertheless, I am totally happy I could do more research as this only made my findings more significant and deeply analysed.

9.4 Recommendations

This thesis study was conducted for the start-up game company, but it does not mean that it is meant for use solely for the game start-ups. My work discusses the solution for the increase of the visibility of the company using social media, which is an important topic for any business nowadays.

Social media is rapidly growing part of digital media that allows people to control anything, including the content of the information. Social media is already considered an independent part of media, as it is the only media that gives a lot of freedom for the people. Social media content is created by people, and for people and it reaches per-

sonal things, interests, activities and lifestyle of all the people. There is a huge influence of social media on our lives and as well on businesses.

Enterprises have to learn the ways to benefit from social media, because otherwise they will lose the clients and will have a poor reputation. Visibility, brand image, customer amount and satisfaction are the key factors that can influence the company's success and profit. Hence, this study is introducing the social media based approach as the innovative way to influence these key factors positively.

The thesis work was done for the game studio, exploring the game industry and benchmarking the competitors in this industry. This means that this study is a great help for the new game firms entering the game industry. One can rely on the theoretical and the practical information introduced in the work and is able to use the gained knowledge for his company development and marketing.

10 Conclusion

Based on this study it was concluded that the most effective way to increase the game company's visibility and the customer amount is applying social media in marketing. There are several types of marketing, but the results do not depend only on a type of marketing, but also on a good implementation of social media and on a well-developed marketing strategy. What is more, the proper background research has to be done, which is the research of the industry and the benchmarking of the existing firms in the same industry.

It is a well-known fact that mobile games could be downloaded from online markets. It is a sure way to sell a game if one uploads it to Apple Store, Google Play or Windows Store, but there is not enough visibility for the firm. Some studios have the games that have been downloaded only several hundred times and they never reach the top charts. It is a matter of fact that only most popular games come first and the customers rarely go through the list of all the offered games. Thus, the game companies have to find other ways to increase the visibility.

The modern approach is to reach for customers through social media. It is not only using a Facebook or a Twitter account and post some things there, it is about a planned strategy where the social media is connected with the branding portal and the benefit of it is measured. There are a lot of games in an online game store, but not all of them are mentioned in the social media channels, talked about in posts and providing entertainment outside the game itself.

I was happy to do this project for Komento! Interactive as it included my technical and marketing knowledge of media in this work. Moreover, I got a chance to explore the game industry and get involved into several other tasks of the start-up. Each study and each project adds the experience and the value to one's knowledge and develops the new skills.

After completion of this thesis work, I can state that the most efficient way to achieve visibility on the market is nowadays implementing marketing based on social media approach. This is why I worked on the analysis and benchmarking of other companies

to create the branding portal for the client as well as thought precisely which channels to use and what strategy to implement to achieve the best results.

Ideas and key points provided by the study are applicable for branding and marketing of any other game studio also. Furthermore, this thesis work is expected to provide guidance for marketing also for companies from the other fields, not only the game industry.

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Questions for the company

COMPANY

1. Company's idea/belief/aim/purpose. What do you strive for? Why you?
2. Why do you make games?
3. What is your branding image? What should customers think of your firm?
4. What would you want your company or the products to be associated with?
5. Adjectives associated with your start-up:
6. Is there a message you want to deliver your customers? An image you would like your users to have about your studio?
7. The most important thing to know about Komento! Interactive is ...
8. Start-up story? Is there one? (Better to have one and interesting!)
9. What do you (=company) want to achieve in 3 years? 5 years? 10 years?

GAME

1. What is the game idea? Possible selling text? What does it offer?
2. What is the target audience? Age? Gender? Activity? Interests?
3. What this product offers a customer/user?
4. Game category?
5. What attracts you in the game?
6. Why is this game good / best (in category / among all mobile games)?
7. What makes this game different from others?
8. The most important thing to know about Buglantic Football game is ...
9. What are pros and cons of the game?

WEBSITE

- Home (About the game in a marketing way. Basically any ad is acceptable. E.g. company's belief or aim in the industry...)
- Game (About game)
- Studio (About the firm; its goal, game and what this start-up is striving for; present workers and their roles (possibly funny and attractive nicknames for company members); about premises?)

- Investors (Selling sentence or paragraph to make investors interested in you + image?)