



How To Use Facebook And Instagram For Business Marketing Case : Gaia Travels

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Abstract:	
<p>This thesis is about giving recommendations for Gaia Travels about how to exploit Facebook and Instagram on their social media marketing. The idea was to come up with different kind of actions they could use in order to reach more followers on both channels. The channels and their usage was limited only to Finland since the customers of Gaia Travels consists of Finnish people.</p> <p>The theories used in this thesis are the overall theory of a marketing plan, the theory of a SWOT analysis and the theory of implementing a benchmarking process. To back up the given recommendations I used some earlier researches that showed the popularity and usage of different social media channels in Finland.</p> <p>The recommendations that I came up with included what kind of content could Gaia Travels post on their Facebook and Instagram profiles, how they could connect these two profiles and most of all, in what way can they reach more followers on both channels.</p>	
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<p>Sammandrag:</p> <p>Detta examensarbete handlar om att ge rekommendationer för Gaia Travels om hur de kan utnyttja Facebook och Instagram i deras marknadsföring i sociala median. Idén med arbetet var att komma på olika åtgärder som de kunde använda för att nå mer anhängare på båda tjänster. Kanalerna och deras användning har begränsat endast till Finland eftersom kunderna för Gaia Travels består av Finländska konsumenter.</p> <p>Teorierna som har använts i detta arbete är teorin om marknadsföringsplan, teorin om SWOT analys och teorin om benchmarking. För att få stöd för rekommendationerna har jag använt gamla undersökningar som berättar om popularitet och användning av olika sociala medias tjänster i Finland.</p> <p>Mina rekommendationer handlade om hurdant innehåll kunde Gaia Travels använda i deras inlägg på Facebook och Instagram, hur de kan koppla ihop båda profilerna och mest av allt, hur de kan nå mer anhängare.</p>	
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<p>Tiivistelmä:</p> <p>Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena on antaa Gaia Travelsille suosituksia miten he voivat hyödyntää Facebookia ja Instagramia sosiaalisen median markkinoinnissaan. Työn ideana oli kehittää erilaisia toimenpiteitä joita he voivat käyttää saavuttaakseen enemmän seuraajia molemmissa palveluissa. Kanavat ja niiden käyttö on tässä tapauksessa rajattu koskemaan ainoastaan Suomea, sillä Gaia Travelsin asiakkaat koostuvat suomalaisista kuluttajista.</p> <p>Tässä työssä käytetyt teoriat liittyvät markkinointisuunnitelmaan, SWOT-analyysiin sekä vertailukehittämiseen. Antamieni suositusten tueksi olen käyttänyt vanhempia tutkimuksia liittyen sosiaalisen median suosioon ja käyttöön Suomessa.</p> <p>Tekemäni suositukset kertovat millaista sisältöä Gaia Travelsin julkaisujen tulisi sisältää sekä Facebookissa että Instagramissa, miten he voivat yhdistää molemmat profiilit toisiinsa sekä ennen kaikkea, miten he voivat saavuttaa enemmän seuraajia.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

Social media is the word on everyone's lips these days. For some people it is a swear word whereas for some it represents new potential and possibilities. Social media has become an important part for companies in different industries and the decision-makers are willing to invest the company's resources in order to gain as much use of it as they can.

According to Statista (2015a) there was approximately 1.79 billion people using the social networks in 2014 and the amount of users is expected to rise up to 2.44 billion by the year 2018. Recent statistics show that Facebook is the most common social media platform with 1.55 billion monthly active users in September 2015, most of (approximately 84%) which comes from outside the North America. (Newsroom 2015; Statista 2015b)

Marketing in newspapers, TV, radio and other so called traditional channels has decreased when social media has increased its popularity. However, the road to success in social media is not an easy one. Figuring out how to utilize it best, being there on the right time for the right people and not being there too much, is challenging. Finding the right channels to use and the right way to use them is hard even for companies that has built their whole concept around social media. (Divia 2014)

The aim of this thesis is to give recommendations for a company called Gaia Travels of how to best exploit Facebook and Instagram in their marketing. The recommendations are going to be made with the help of benchmarking and some earlier researches done of the usage and popularity of these two channels. In order to provide realistic recommendations, it is important to examine Gaia Travels past and present situation in social media, but also to figure out what it exactly is that they want to achieve. Analysing the results found from the examinations together with adapting the overall marketing theory into marketing in Facebook and Instagram, will hopefully help to find the best solutions for Gaia Travels.

1.1 Gaia Travels

Gaia Travels is a Finnish company located in Lucca, Italy. The company is privately owned and operated by a Finnish couple who started the business in 2004. The main idea of the company is to provide carefully chosen rental villas and apartments for Finnish tourists travelling to Italy. The 2-26 person villas and apartments are mostly located in Tuscany, Sicily, Umbria, Marche and Lazio, but there are few of them also in Emilia-Romagna, Piemonte, Liguria, Campania and Veneto. (Gaia Travels 2013a; Gaia Travels 2013b)

In addition to the rental services, they also arrange different holiday activities for their customers. Food and wine tasting, visiting vineyards, cooking- and language courses, picking up olives and different guided tours where the customers can learn about Italy's rich culture and history, are all things that can be seen as parts of the more traditional trips to the country known for its art, food and beautiful landscapes. In addition, Gaia Travels also offers to help the customers with the flight bookings, car rentals and even with the smallest details with wedding arrangements or other important events. (Gaia Travels 2013c; Gaia Travels 2013d)

1.2 Problem

Gaia Travels is currently visible on Facebook, Flickr, Instagram and Pinterest. However, their current activity is not as high as it could be in order to better reach their current and the potential customers. According to Leevi Leväsalmi (2015), the other owner of Gaia Travels, the company used to advertise on newspapers approximately 5-6 years ago but after that they have mainly focused only on Internet marketing. At the moment, the time they can use for marketing activities on social media is limited, maximum two hours per week and the money used for these activities should only be small amounts, mainly measured in time. This means using channels that can bring the most use for them in as little time as possible.

The thesis aims to find answers for the following questions: How could Gaia Travels best utilize Facebook and Instagram in their social media marketing? What kind of activities would be the most lucrative ones when they only have a limited time to use? And what kind of activities should they perform in order to get the potential customers interested as well as to make new and lasting contacts?

1.3 Purpose and Limitation

The purpose of this thesis is to give Gaia Travels recommendations for how to utilize Facebook and Instagram, where most of their current and potential customers are being active and to give suggestions for how they could reach more people through these channels. The challenge will be finding activities that are both effective and interesting but does not require more time than what Gaia Travels is able to spend with their limited resources.

Since Gaia Travels offers their services only for Finnish customers, the recommendations offered are limited for Facebook and Instagram which are both located in the top four most popular social media channels in Finland. The recommendations and the researches behind them will only focus on those two channels. There is no time limit when to carry out the recommended actions since most of them can be effective and gain followers even years from now. (Mättö 2015)

2 MARKETING

In the old days marketing used to be mainly just one-way advertising from a company to its customers and for the big masses. The campaigns were made to last a lifetime and the meaning was only to sell the products. The success was mostly measured with the amount of prices the campaign or the advertisement won, not by how many new customers the company behind it gained. At some point, the Internet came and the marketing got a whole new meaning. (Meerman 2011 p. 8)

Since day one, marketing has been about figuring out which products to sell, how to make them compelling and finding out the target customers. It is also about studying the customers and their needs and wants, coming up the right ways to make the satisfying products available for them and the ways to share the information of those products. The big change, however, is that when before people saw the TV commercials or the advertisements on the newspapers, today they go online to find the information they need for making the buying process. That is something that makes it even more crucial for the companies to make the information available for the consumers at any time. Sharing the information and communicating with the customers has never been as easy as it is today when the consumers can use social media to do it. Even so, it has also brought new challenges for both sides. (Agndal & Axelsson 2012 p. 21-22; Meerman 2011 p. 4, 7, 23-24)

In order to better understand the benefits and challenges that marketing in social media will bring to the companies, and in order to give some useful recommendations for Gaia Travels, there are some basic facts that needs to be explained of the overall marketing. This chapter will explain what a marketing plan is and what should be included, the basics of benchmarking, as well as what should be taken into account when marketing in social media.

2.1 Marketing Plan

Creating and updating a marketing plan is one of the most important things for a new or already existing company. In order for a company to grow, it needs more customers. In order to gain more customers the company needs to reach them through different channels. And in order to reach the customers the company needs to have an effective marketing plan. (Lavinsky 2013)

A good marketing plan requires time and creativeness. After all, if it is done properly it will be a guide for success. On the other hand, even a good marketing plan does not always guarantee success, but it is a good starting point that can be developed further when a company has gained more experience of what works and what does not. Later on the marketing plan can be an effective way for a company to explain and understand what happened before. More importantly, it will identify the target customers and give the

company an illustration of how to reach them and most of all, how to make them return. (Agndal & Axelsson 2012 p. 65, 76; Lavinsky 2013)

The people involved in the creation of a marketing plan should keep in mind that a company's marketing activities does not only concern the customers, but also other actors that are relevant for the company. Such actors can be suppliers and other stakeholders. Without an understanding, it might be difficult, if not impossible, to create an effective plan. Another important approach is to be able to see the marketing through customer's eyes and with the help of that to develop the plan further. (Agndal & Axelsson 2012 p. 62, 78; Meerman 2011 p. 173)

When a company is creating a marketing plan they need to examine their past, the present and the future. This is essential in order to make the plan as realistic as possible. To reinforce the picture of a company and its present situation, a SWOT analysis comes in hand. (Agndal & Axelsson 2012 p. 61, 65-66, 78)

2.1.1 Past, Present and the Future

Examining the question "what have we done?" will give an oversight to a company's past. It will be an inspection to the marketing and sales actions that has been made. Knowing which actions in the past were successful and which were not, and knowing why they were it, will be helpful when creating and updating a marketing plan. Learning from the mistakes done in the past will most likely prevent them happening again. Although, one must keep in mind that the markets are constantly changing and what did not work before might actually work today, and the other way around. However, since the most important task of a marketing plan is to raise the profits by gaining new customers, all mistakes should be prevented. (Agndal & Axelsson 2012 p. 61)

After the past has been studied, the company should examine the present situation by answering the question "where are we now?" A helpful tool for this phase is making a SWOT analysis, which will be explained later on in this chapter. (Agndal & Axelsson 2012 p. 63, 65-66)

Setting goals and identifying the motives behind them is one of the most important part of a marketing plan. “Where do we want to be?” and “how do we get there?” are questions that comes in handy. According to Meerman (2011 p. 139) the goals should be clear and challenging yet never impossible to reach. In case of a company’s marketing goals, it is common that they are either directly or indirectly set for reaching business profits. However, when it is a question of online marketing, the goals should rather be about growing a company’s revenue by a certain amount of percentage and then getting a certain amount of visitors per month on the company’s website, or in this case the company’s social media profiles. (Treadaway & Smith 2012 p. 73)

When the goals has been defined and the company’s overall picture is clearer, it is time to start thinking about how to implement the actual marketing plan. A marketing plan is usually done for a longer period of time: for six months, one year or for several years ahead. This means that the company should carefully consider the possible changes in the future, as well as other factors affecting the implementation. First of all, does the company have enough resources to carry out the plan? If yes, what kind of actions and activity programs should be used, who are going to be responsible of those actions and their implementation, what kind of budget does it require and in what ways is the company going to keep track on how the implementation will succeed? (Agndal & Axelsson 2012 p. 70, 74-75)

As already mentioned earlier, a marketing plan is an important part of a business, but so is the planning process. During the planning, the people involved will learn much more of the company. This does not only mean an overview of the company but also its competitors and the smaller details that are essential in order for the company to be successful. Creating a marketing plan will also teach organizing and prioritizing, and most of all, it will create a better interaction between both internal and external actors that are involved with the company. (Agndal & Axelsson 2012 p. 74-75)

2.1.2 SWOT Analysis

There are several different tools that a company can use to build a picture of the company’s present situation which will be helpful for creating an executable marketing plan.

One of the most common ones is a SWOT analysis which helps to evaluate the external environment and the internal capabilities of a company. It consists of four segments, two of them which includes the internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and two that includes the external factors (opportunities and threats). (Team FME 2013 p. 5)



Figure 1. SWOT Analysis. (Team FME 2013)

When a company is identifying the internal factors they should consider things such as their public image, the skills of their employees as well as their financial position. These are all things that makes them unique compared to their rivals. *Strengths* are things that has a positive impact on the company and should therefore be capitalized. In other words, they can either add the value of the company or increase their competitive advantage, or both. *Weaknesses* are those things that sets the company into disadvantage compared to their competitors and should therefore be shored up. (Team FME 2013 p. 12, 15)

The external factors are those that are beyond the control of a company, in other words, things over which a company does not have any influence for. *Opportunities* are things arising for example from government policies, rules and regulations, changes in technology, social patterns and lifestyles of the consumers, growing markets and new distribution channels. They are all factors that a company should invest in. However, the same things can sometimes also be seen as *threats* for a company and if possible, they should be turned into opportunities. (Team FME 2013 p. 17)

As most things, using a SWOT analysis has its pros and cons. A positive thing is that once it has been done, it can be used for many different things. However, it requires a lot

of thinking as well as the ability to judge in order to get the full benefit of it. Another negative aspect is that some things can be seen as both advantages and disadvantages which is why it works more as a guideline than as a perfectly reliable tool. (Team FME 2013 p. 9)

2.1.3 Benchmarking

In a nutshell, benchmarking is all the different actions a company does to compare themselves with a rival company and then adapting the rival company's ways of doing certain things. In other words, it is a company's way to acknowledge that someone else is better at something and realize they need to either reach the same level or to aim even higher. (Niva & Tuominen 2012 p. 5; Stapenhurst 2009 p. 3)

Why should a company do benchmarking? Because adapting better ways to do something might result in better efficiency and because with a help of benchmarking a company can identify the weaknesses of their rival companies and make sure they do the same thing much better. (Stapenhurst 2009 p. 3, 13)

According to Niva & Tuominen (2012 p. 34-45) there are 10 easy steps for doing benchmarking. The picture above describes the benchmarking process with the help of a sports performance, even though the idea is the same with whatever a company chooses to benchmark.

1. Determine what to benchmark

Basically, a company can benchmark almost anything but the idea is to choose a specific

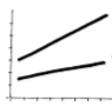
<p>1. Determine What to Benchmark</p> <p>High jump 30 cm in two years</p> 	<p>2. Identify Benchmark Companies</p> <p>Finland's high jump record holder and his coach</p> 
<p>3. Measure Performance Gap</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Progress - Current - Prediction 	<p>4. Identify Enablers Resulting in Excellence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coaching process - Training process - The Jump
<p>5. Learn How WE Do It</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coaching - Training - The Jump - QUESTIONS - Speed exercises and recovery 	<p>6. Learn How THEY Do It</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coaching - Training - The Jump 
<p>7. Establish Performance Goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High jump performance - Trust - Condition 	<p>8. Adapt and Implement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A high jump trainer - To attract sponsors - A new jumping style - A new training plan 
<p>9. Continuous Development to Gain Superiority</p> 	<p>10. Start Again with Higher Targets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Olympic gold - Long jump - 100 m 

Figure 2. 10 Steps for Benchmarking. (Niva & Tuominen 2012)

task that has an effect on the company's success. (Niva & Tuominen 2012 p. 36)

2. Identify benchmark companies

It does not matter in which sector a benchmark company is operating in but it should be a company that performs the same task much better. To get the best results a company should choose to benchmark a company that is clearly the best at doing the chosen task and not a company that does it only a little better. This part might be a tough one since it depends a lot of the size and activity level of the benchmark company whether it is easy to find information about or not. (Niva & Tuominen 2012 p. 37; Stapenhurst 2009 p. 16, 89)

3. Measure performance gap

At this point a company should examine how the benchmark company has taken care of the chosen task during a certain time and how they have planned to do it in the future. Only then are they able to compare those facts with how they are doing the same matter. (Niva & Tuominen 2012 p. 38)

4. Identify enablers resulting in excellence

The company should identify those processes, accomplishments and all the factors that the benchmark company has used in order to gain their high level on the matter. (Niva & Tuominen 2012 p. 39)

5. Learn how we do it

A company needs to identify how they are currently doing the chosen task in order to succeed with the benchmarking process. If they cannot recognize their own ways of doing things, it will be difficult to compare them with the benchmarking company. (Niva & Tuominen 2012 p. 40)

6. Learn how they do it

This means doing the same thing as in step five, except that it should be done from the benchmark company's point of view. (Niva & Tuominen 2012 p. 41)

7. Establish performance goals

The goals that a company should set for themselves should be something that can be achieved immediately but also something for the longer period of time. As well as in the overall marketing plan, setting goals is one of the most important part of the benchmarking process. (Niva & Tuominen 2012 p. 42)

8. Adapt and implement

For a company to be able to implement their benchmarking plan they should make sure that everyone involved in the process are both committed to it and that they have everything they need in order to carry it through. (Niva & Tuominen 2012 p. 43)

9. Continuous development to gain superiority

The company should make sure that they are doing the best they can to carry through the whole benchmarking process. (Niva & Tuominen 2012 p. 44)

10. Start again with higher targets

When the benchmarking process is done and the goals has been reached the company should start the whole process again. Only this time the goals should be set even higher and within the possibilities the benchmarking company should not be the same one as before. (Niva & Tuominen 2012 p. 45)

2.2 Marketing in Social Media

Social media refers to virtual communities where people can communicate and share information with each other through pictures, videos and text. It includes e.g. social networks (such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn), blogs (Blogger and Blogspot), photo sharing sites (YouTube, Flickr, Pinterest and Instagram), wikis (such as Wikipedia), social bookmarking sites and mobile applications. (Carlsson 2012 p. 10; Meerman 2011 p. 37)

For private people social media brings e.g. possibilities to keep in touch with other people, create contacts, as well as share and find information. For companies it offers even more

possibilities. A well-managed social media marketing can most of all increase the revenue, but it can also change the company's image and offer possibilities to gain feedback more easily. It can also be a helpful tool for learning about the customers and their behaviours, to find inspirations, to raise the knowledge of the company and most of all, to offer better customer service by being closer to consumers. (Barefoot & Szabo 2009 p. 5; Brown 2012 p. 21; Carlsson 2012 p. 27; Treadaway & Smith 2012 p. 62-63)

Using social media gives easier ways for companies to communicate with their customers and to see what is going on around them. Even so, it is also one of the biggest challenges most of the companies has ever faced. Social media communities are changing fast, new ones are constantly being created and consumers are jumping from one to another. Making the most out of social media requires researching different networks, knowing which ones to use since clearly a company cannot be on each and every one of them. As well as learning how to differentiate themselves from the thousands of other companies, identifying the customers and knowing how and when to be there for them. (Barefoot & Szabo 2009 p. 14, 17; Carlsson 2012 p. 194; Lewis 2013 p. 13, 18, 65-66; Sigala et al 2012 p. 69)

2.2.1 Social Networks Shortly

According to a research made in 2014 (Pönkä 2015), approximately 43 percentage of Finnish people were using Facebook which made it the most popular social media channel in Finland. Another research (Mättö 2015) shows that the next popular Internet based channel was Google+ followed by Instagram and Twitter. A third research (Lintulahti 2014) showed that on the top four social



Figure 3. Social Media Explained. (Ray 2015)

media channels that Finnish companies used for content marketing were LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. Instagram was the third last on the list.

The above picture demonstrates the main ideas of the most common social media channels. In some ways the ideas behind *Twitter*, *Facebook* and *Instagram* are quite similar. Twitter is a microblogging service where people can share their thoughts and stories by shortening them to only 140 characters, this is called tweeting. For companies it means a platform where their customers can easily share their experiences and other registered users will be able to re-tweet them forward, which leads to big audiences. Facebook is the most common platform where people can not only keep in touch with their friends and family but also make new contacts, share their likes and interests and more importantly, find information. The biggest challenge for companies in Facebook is to create content that can differentiate them from others and attract potential customers to their page. Instagram is a photo sharing service made mainly for smartphones. The idea is to take a picture that can be edited with different filters and then share the picture with other users. The pictures can be browsed with an Internet browser but in order to be able to add pictures, like them and write comments, it is necessary to download the Instagram –application on a smartphone or a tablet. (Bendror 2013; Saint 2010)

For private people *Foursquare* is mainly an online platform where they can check themselves into different places and share their location with other users. Companies can exploit this service by getting more visibility with people checking themselves into their locations. *YouTube* is the right channel for people and companies either making or watching videos, or both. (ibid)

The main idea with *LinkedIn* is basically similar to Facebook. However, it is based on professionalism and people finding new business contacts or new jobs. LinkedIn user profiles usually includes full business and educational backgrounds, as well as people's areas of expertise and interests. (Bendror 2013)

Pinterest is used for bookmarking interesting content and sharing it with other users with similar interests. A company can use it for gaining more visibility, since one share can

reach millions of users. *Google+* can be seen as a mix of Facebook and Twitter. Originally it was created as an option for Facebook. But even though it is used for similar purposes the difference is that all the published posts are also visible for everyone on Google searches. This means that when consumers are searching the company from Google, they will also see the company's *Google+* profile and the posts that has recently been made. However, compared to Facebook and Twitter, *Google+* is more effective in reaching more users since the first two do not show the full profile on Google searches, usually only that a Facebook or Twitter profile for the company exist. (Bendror 2013; Brown 2012 p. 74; Pinterest 2015)

In addition to these social networks there is also e.g. *Flickr* which is a photo and video sharing platform that allows the users to upload a certain amount of data per month and enables other users commenting the content. Both the videos and photos can be tagged with different words in order to help people to find them. And then there are blogs. According to Meerman (2011 p. 57, 59) blogs are sometimes useful tools for marketing online. Basically, a blog is an ordinary website that is focused on a certain topic. It can be about travelling, food, fitness, books, music or whatever creates interest. A blog can be a great way for a company to bring out their ideas or to share their stories with the audience. However, maintaining a blog requires a lot more time than many other social media channels. (Barefoot & Szabo 2009 p. 8, 12; Flickr)

2.2.2 Why Social Media?

Before social media took over the marketing companies were the ones to choose the right time for advertising a certain product. Consumers saw the companies as distant actors and the actions between a company and its customers were mainly reduced to as minimal as possible with only the required duties carried out. This kind of marketing is called as *push marketing* and in some ways, it can be thanked for most of the negative feelings we today have towards advertisements. When different programs made for blocking the commercials became more popular among consumers, companies needed to come up with new ways for marketing. (Brown 2012 p. 33; Carlsson 2012 p. 42, 38)

Today we talk about *pull marketing*. The information and interesting content are available for consumers whenever they feel it is the right time for it and when they have the need for it. At the same time it gives the companies better opportunities to listen to the consumers, learn about their behaviours, see what they are talking about and be a part of the conversation. But mostly, it gives the companies a chance to be closer to the consumers. (Brown 2012 p. 33; Carlsson 2012 p. 42, 59, 75; Meerman 2011 p. 47)

What companies should do in social media is to create content that is both informative and interesting. The content should be available on the right time, but there should not be too much information. The companies need to be quick and up-to-date and they need to offer more than their competitors. In addition, the companies should keep an eye on the conversations that are going on in the social media, be a part of them and be there for the consumers. However, it is good to keep in mind that in social media a company is not always seen as a distant business but rather as a part of the community and conversation. And since there most likely will be conversation, it is up to the company to decide whether they want to be a part of it or not. (Anderson 2014; Carlsson 2012 p. 38; Meerman 2011 p. 47, 79; Treadaway & Smith 2012 p. 62)

The same way as in the so called traditional marketing, it is essential for a company to identify their goals, i.e. why they want to be a part of social media. The goals can be similar to the ones in a company's business plan, such as to get more customers and more satisfied customers, as well as to build a better image for the company and to get more profits. Whatever the goals are, they create a bottom for the actual plan. However, finding a right way to operate in social media requires a lot more than only a plan. It requires researching and benchmarking. (Carlsson 2012 p. 133, 153, 159; Treadaway & Smith 2012 p. 73)

In order to reach the goals a company needs to know where their present and potential customers are and which social media channels and actions suits them best. One of the most fundamental things is to know when to share certain information, how to share it and how to make it attractive. The right time to post something on social media depends on the platform. It can be on a certain day when there is less traffic on the channels so that the post will not get lost in the activity feed or it can be on the time when a certain

topic is hot. If a company uses different channels, the posts should differ from each other but not too much. It is also good to keep in mind that communicating on Twitter and Facebook is different than communicating e.g. on Instagram and YouTube. Therefore, a post should always be made for one channel at time. (Carlsson 2012 p. 53; Lewis 2013 p. 11; Meerman 2011 p. 30)

Something else to keep in mind are the ethics and of course, the rules of different social media platforms. The risks behind the posts on different platforms are bigger in the case of a company, which is why the persons responsible of the posts should always behave properly, never misuse the power it brings, respect other users and never forget that there is always a person behind each computer screen. It is also good to remember that all of the things posted on Internet will most likely stay there forever. (Carlsson 2012 p. 178, 187; Lewis 2013 p. 11; Treadaway & Smith 2012 p. 31)

Because there are no guarantees that marketing on social media will work, every company should prepare a crisis management plan. This includes making sure that all the employees are aware of the situation and also to implement the actions in a way that helps to prevent possible setbacks. This part could be combined with the ethics and behaviour in social media which, in addition to those already mentioned above, also includes appreciating the consumers and keeping in mind what they see as trustworthy. (Barefoot & Szabo 2012 p, 132-133; Brown 2012 p. 133)

So why should a company be a part of social media if there are so many rules to obey and only a small chance to become a greatly successful operator? Social media is not so much for buying products as it is for searching for information of different products and services, and for getting support from companies. Being part of social media gives companies more opportunities to improve themselves and to better meet the demand of the consumers. Compared to the real world, social media offers smaller companies better chances to compete with bigger ones since the activity and profiles on different social media platforms are not usually based on the size of the companies. Anyone can create a positive profile and become visible and popular. Jay Baer's phrase "If you sell something, you make a customer today; if you help someone, you make a customer for life" boils down to the reason why companies should utilize social media. And because creating lasting

customer relations will in the long run most likely increase a company's image and profits. (Anderson 2014; Barefoot & Szabo 2009 p. 17; Brown 2012 p. 25; Sigala et al 2012 p. 54, 70)

2.2.3 How to Measure the Benefits

In order for a company to see what kind of actions works in social media and what does not, there needs to be ways to measure the success. On most of the business sectors the measurements are made with numbers but when it comes to using online platforms, it is not as easy as it might seem. Most social media channels does not have specific programs to collect the required information automatically which means that the companies should choose a specific person to handle the social media marketing in order to make the following easier. (Carlsson 2012 p. 115)

The direct results can be measured with number of readers, likes or comments left on a post. Indirectly the benefits can be measured with increased profits or sales, grown visibility, customer satisfaction or grown trust from the customer side. The most common measurement used is the so called *RoI* (Return on Investment). In traditional marketing it indicates how much profits a company has done on an investment after the expenses are taken off. When it comes to marketing in social media, RoI can be measured by looking at how much the sales has gone up or down after a company has joined one or many social networks. (Barefoot & Szabo 2009 p. 101-102; Brown 2012 p. 36, 44; Carlsson 2012 p. 115-116)

Two other interesting ways for measuring the benefits of social media marketing are called *RoB* (Return on Blog) and *RoE* (Return on Engagement). RoB is used to measure how much conversation and value a blog has brought to a company. Whereas RoE will tell if the customers' commitment towards a company has changed after joining the social networks. RoE can be measured with the help of the amount of customers' comments, downloaded pictures that are related to the company and by questions gotten from the customers. (Carlsson 2012 p. 115-116)

A company can use all the three different ways to measure the benefits that social media has brought them, or they can use only one of them. In any case, they should keep an eye on the possible changes that the social media can bring to the company and collect as much information as possible in order to know what kind of actions they should renew or change in the future.

Measuring the benefits on Facebook has been made easier with an application called Facebook Insight. The idea of the Insight is basically the same as with Google Analytics which collects some useful information of the visitors on a company's website. However, Facebook Insight is focused only on a company's Facebook page. What a company can collect with this application is e.g. how many "likes" has their page gotten, how many people are somehow related to their posts (either by liking something, sharing something, talking about the company or by mentioning the company on their own posts), how many people has seen something that is related to the company, how many people have visited the Facebook page during a certain time and from which countries are their followers coming from. (Barefoot & Szabo 2009 p. 101; Ohje- ja tukikeskus 2015; Treadaway & Smith 2012 p. 206-214)

3 DIGITAL MARKETING PLAN

Three different studies (Tilastokeskus 2014; Bennett 2014; Mättö 2015) show that Facebook is the most used social media channel among Finnish people, and also Instagram lies on the top four. According to Pönkä (2015) approximately 43 percentage of all Finnish people has a profile on Facebook, whereas 13 percentage (Tilastokeskus 2014) of the Finnish people were using Instagram in 2014. Another research (Pönkä 2014) indicates that in 2014 58 percentage of 13-64 years old Finns were using Facebook and that the amount of over 40 year's old Finnish users was increasing. The same study also show that the middle age of Finns on Facebook in 2014 did increase with 2.3 years from the year before and was then 33.5 years.

Why I chose to recommend these two channels for Gaia Travels was mainly for six different reasons: (1) Gaia Travels already has a profile on both channels; (2) they already

know how these channels work which means they can start right away and not spend their time on learning something new; (3) because both Facebook and Instagram are popular channels in Finland; (4) because Facebook bought Instagram in 2012 (Geoff 2014) which makes it possible to connect the two profiles together; (5) the target customers of Gaia Travels are groups where the adults usually are 30 years old and older, and the amount of older users in Facebook is increasing (Pönkä 2014) and; (6) because most of their rivals already are on Facebook and Instagram.

No doubt there are other social media channels that would bring advantage for Gaia Travels as well. However, with a limited time to use for social media marketing Gaia Travels should first focus only on a couple of channels before starting to use new ones. It is better to build a positive and active image on two channels at a time than to build an average or even a lousy and passive image on many different channels at the same time.

Before going in to the details of how Gaia Travels can utilize both Facebook and Instagram, the reasons for how I came up with these recommendations should be explained through a SWOT analysis and a benchmarking process.

3.1 SWOT Analysis for Social Media

The SWOT analysis that I made of Gaia Travels is focusing only on their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats arising from their current use of Facebook and Instagram. A SWOT analysis of the whole company could have been made but when the aim is to give Gaia Travels suggestions for exploitation of Facebook and Instagram, it is more useful to focus on the internal and external factors that can help them to better use these channels.

<p style="text-align: center;">STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being already a part of Facebook and Instagram • Possibility to succeed on the two chosen channels • Positive image on both channels 	<p style="text-align: center;">WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passive marketing actions in Facebook and Instagram • Limited resources to use • Irregular posts • Similar posts • The amount and content of the posts • Not gaining lasting customer relationships from either channel • Only small amount of followers
<p style="text-align: center;">OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More and more people are using social media for information searching • The popularity of Facebook and Instagram in Finland • Increasing amount of Finnish users on both channels • The connection between Facebook and Instagram • The amount of users over 30 years old is increasing 	<p style="text-align: center;">THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitors in Facebook and Instagram • Constant changes in social media • More and more people are using social media for information searching

Table 1. SWOT Analysis of Gaia Travels' use of Social Media.

To begin with the strengths of Gaia Travels in Facebook and Instagram: Being already part of both channels has its benefits since it means they already have the skills to become active, they know how to use both channels and they already have a small amount of followers. This also means they have the possibility to become successful. The positive image they already have gained on both Facebook and Instagram is a good thing even though the reason for it might be because of their lack of activity. At least being passive prevents harming the company.

Weaknesses: A big amount of companies in today's world are part of social media and most of them knows how to exploit it. Being passive and lacking the activities will not help to increase the positive image of Gaia Travels. A big issue for their lack of activity is their limited resources that includes the time they are able to use for marketing on social

media which probably is also the reason behind their irregular and not so creative posts. All this comes down to not reaching followers and therefore the amount of lasting customer relationships coming from Facebook and Instagram is quite minimal.

Opportunities: People becoming more and more active on searching information from social media can be counted as both an opportunity and a threat. If Gaia Travels do not improve their activity on Facebook and Instagram, it will be a threat for them because the current and potential customers might find another companies which they can reach more easily through these channels. If they choose to become more active on these channels they will most likely reach more customers, become closer with them and this ways achieve even more positive image. The popularity of Facebook and Instagram in Finland and the amount of Finnish users increasing means more potential customers for Gaia Travels. The fact that Facebook owns both of the channels is helpful since it makes it a lot easier to handle both of them at the same time when they can be connected with each other.

Threats: The rival companies are always a threat, especially on social media where the rivals are not only those ones that are operating on the same business but everyone who can reach more followers. This is where benchmarking comes in good hand. Keeping up with the constant changes on the whole social media, new platforms being created and the popularity of different channels changing, brings their own difficulties also for Gaia Travels. This means that even though they only have two hours per week to use for the marketing activities on social media, in a longer time it will require more time in order to be up-to-date with everything going on there.

3.2 Benchmarking in Practice

Since the aim of this thesis is to provide recommendations for social media marketing for Gaia Travels the benchmarking proved to be a useful tool in order to find some ideas how they could exploit different channels. I chose to examine six companies that are more or less bigger than Gaia Travels. Why I chose these companies was because of two reasons:

they are all working in the same field as Gaia Travels, although they might not be providing villas only in Italy and; because each of them have more followers on their social media channels than Gaia Travels.

Depending on the country where the companies are operating in or from which country their customers are coming from, there was some differences in the channels they are using. All of the companies are using both Facebook and Twitter, only four of them are using Instagram, three of them Google+, two of them Pinterest and only one of them is using YouTube. One of the companies is however using all the channels mentioned above. A couple of the companies have much more followers on their Facebook page than the others, more than 20,000. I chose these two companies because I wanted to see if they had been doing something differently in order to gain that much “likes”.

What was interesting to see was that none of these companies stood out from others. They all had quite similar posts on the different channels they are using and the most common ones was about promoting their own villas. Some of the companies was sharing interesting stories, articles or something that had to do with the locations of their rental villas. However, those posts had not gotten an amount of “likes” that would be worth of mentioning. One remarkable observation was that almost all of these companies had organized at least one either a bigger or a smaller competition during the last year.

In the end it is difficult to say what those actions are that makes these companies more popular on social media than what Gaia Travels is. Is it because they are being much more active so their followers have something to follow, or because the posts on their profiles were not all about advertising villas, at least not directly. Or was it because of the competitions why they had gained so many “likes”? If so, how many of those “likes” or followers are those who actually could be using the services from these companies? Whatever the exact reasons are that has made these six companies more popular than Gaia Travels, they should consider of doing something similar.

3.3 Recommendations for Facebook

Becoming popular and reaching huge amounts of followers on Facebook requires both time and investments. With “time” I mean weeks, months and even years of activities that will keep the current followers interested so they will not unfollow the page but keeps sharing the posts forward which then leads to the amount of new followers growing. With “investments” I mean a company’s contribution, interest, knowledge, will and understand of why they should be involved with social media.

Even though Facebook or none of the social media channels will not probably directly bring a company new customers, one should understand that the cornerstone is to spread the knowledge of the company. Someone always knows someone and the bigger a post spreads, the bigger are the chances that somewhere along the way it will reach people who becomes interested of what the company has to offer. No matter what we want, the truth is that the world is becoming more and more digital, and a company who wants to be successful needs to be a part of it.

To start with, Gaia Travels needs to set goals for themselves. As already mentioned in the theory part of this thesis, the goals can be e.g. getting new customers, getting new visitors on their website with the help of Facebook and Instagram, to build an even better image and/or to grow their revenue with a certain percentage. An easy goal to start with could be e.g. growing the “likes” on their Facebook page with 1,000 by the end of March 2016. When they succeed with the goal, they can set a new goal and reach for even bigger amount of “likes” or for the same amount but in a shorter time.

The next step will be to think about what people would be interested in. For example, what do people think when they think of Italy? Food, wine, football, history, music, beautiful landscapes, Italian language, films, books, warmth, sea and art could be things and also reasons why people want to travel there. These are all things that Gaia Travels could use to build their Facebook page even better. Of course the posts could be about almost anything, but they should somehow create a connection with the company. Why would e.g. a post about Thai boxing make people interested in travelling to Italy?

A proven fact is that there are certain times when posting on Facebook is most advantageous. According to Patel (2015) the best times to post are on early afternoons on Thursdays and Fridays because the happiness of people increases by 10 percentage towards the weekends. However, to become more active and to keep a certain regularity I would recommend Gaia Travels to post at least three times per week. This way the followers would not have time to forget the company and they would not become irritated with too many posts either. In any case, Gaia Travels should make sure they do not make several posts during one day but rather divide them for different days. The posts does not need to be done on the same days each week and the content should preferably vary. That does not mean they need to be something totally different each time, but a similar post should not be done e.g. on each Monday. At least not within a longer period of time.

Most of the posts that Gaia Travels has published after joining Facebook in 2010 has been about advertising the villas they are providing. Of course, this is essential when it is a question of a company. However, even the advertising can be done more interesting. Why not share a story or an interesting fact that somehow relates to a certain villa? It does not have to be a long story as long as there is something. Even a simple fact that there might be a famous wine yard or a restaurant that serves extremely delicious pizza near a certain villa will create interest and those who might already be thinking about travelling to Italy could get more hype to do it. For those who already has booked the villa this would be a useful way for getting information of what to do there.

In between the advertisements there can e.g. be posts about different films made of Italy, famous filming locations, about books written of Italy and even some recipes for Italian foods. Every now and then Gaia Travels could share Italian music on their Facebook page through YouTube. However, in that case they should make sure the video is legal and that they are allowed to share it. A fun and useful theme would be teaching some Italian words and/or phrases for the followers since it usually is helpful to know even a little of the language of a country where you are travelling to.

To reach even more “likes” Gaia Travels could set up some small competitions. The prizes does not always need to be big ones, sometimes they can be as small as movie tickets or something even smaller. Competitions are usually a fast way for reaching more

followers, even though they might not become customers or they might “unlike” the page soon after the competition. That is why a possible competition could be set up first after Gaia Travels has improved their Facebook page. This way the people who joins the competition might experience the content that Gaia Travels is sharing interesting and keep on following them afterwards.

A competition should be something that would require people sharing something on their own profiles. A good example could be a picture sharing competition where people would need to share a holiday picture of their own. The picture should either be shared on their own profile by using certain hashtags (e.g. #gaiatravelspicturecompetition) and by tagging the company to the pictures, or on Gaia Travels own Facebook page. This kind of competition would also allow to combine Facebook and Instagram if the participants could choose on which channel they would like to share the picture on. The winner of the competition could be chosen either by selecting the best picture or by seeing which picture gets most “likes”. A picture competition would however require setting up rules and regulations e.g. about the usage of the pictures.

The same way as posting pictures would probably increase conversation, so would also posting questions on Facebook. This way the followers would be tempted to answer and the whole post would also be visible on most of their own Facebook profiles for their friends. A question does not need to be anything special, it can be as simple as “how did you spend your holiday?” or “how are you planning to spend your weekend?”

A rather useful way for getting people to visit Gaia Travels Facebook page (as well as their Instagram profile) would be to add a “Like us on Facebook” and/or “Follow us on Instagram” button at the end of each e-mail. The same applies with their website. Also, asking people to give reviews on Gaia Travels Facebook page of the service they have gotten would most likely increase the amount of “likes”, as well as the amount of conversation.

What else Facebook can offer for Gaia Travels than new “likes” and hopefully new customers is also information of their followers as well as from their competitors. For the

part of getting information of the followers Facebook offers the application called Facebook Insights, which has already been explained earlier in this thesis. However, there is also an application where a company can choose maximum five different companies that are either working on the same field or in the same area. The application will show the competitors Facebook profiles, their posts and the amount of new “likes” they are reaching. It is definitely a tool that Gaia Travels should use, not only because of the benchmarking possibilities it has to offer but also because it gives a chance for them to keep themselves up-to-date.

At some point in the future, or why not even now, Gaia Travels should consider of using Facebook advertisement. Basically, the idea is the same as with Google Adds. The user get to choose how much money they are willing to use for the advertisement, they can create it by themselves and they get to choose who can see it. For example, Gaia Travels could decide that only Facebook users from 30 years old and up who are interested of wines and Italy will see the commercial on the right hand side of their Facebook news-feed. This is a good way for increasing the company’s visibility and it is still cheaper than advertising on TV or newspapers. (Barefoot & Szabo 2009 p. 188)

Unfortunately, no one can promise that Facebook, or any other social media channel either, will bring success to a company, but it is worth a try. Who would not today rather buy from a company that is being active on social media than from a company that is not?

3.4 Recommendations for Instagram

After the launch of Instagram in 2010 it reached one million users in a short amount of time. Today the channel has over 400 million monthly active users which makes it seventh most used social media network worldwide. Ever since Facebook bought the platform in 2012 it was made possible to connect the two profiles. However, even though it is possible to see a company’s Instagram feed on their Facebook page, it is not possible to see their Facebook feed on their Instagram profile. (Geoff 2014; Hemley 2013; Statista 2015c)

Compared to Facebook, Instagram is easier to use since it offers only limited amount of actions one can do. Basically, there are three essential things to remember: use hashtags that can be easily found and can be connected to the company; the videos posted on Instagram can only be 15 seconds long so use the time efficiently and; post pictures that are interesting. With those three steps there is already a chance that a company can reach followers.

The same way as with Facebook, there are certain times when posting on Instagram will bring most benefit. According to the research made of Patel (2015) the best time is on Mondays or any days after the working hours. The research also indicates that Sundays are the worst days to post. Another factor that applies also with Instagram is the fact that there should not be made more than one post per day since most likely the followers are not interested of seeing too many pictures from the same user in a short amount of time. (Hemley 2013)

After joining Instagram in 2014 Gaia Travels has only published two pictures and reached five followers. Reaching followers on Instagram might be a bit more difficult than getting “likes” on Facebook. The easiest way to start would be getting the Facebook users to follow the Instagram profile and first then start reaching for other users.

First of all, Gaia Travels should make a post on Facebook that they have an Instagram account. Even though they already have connected these two profiles people might not come up with looking for it, unless they are given a reason to do it. Second thing to do is to start following back the followers. As funny as it might sound, many people are on Instagram for the reason of getting followers, which is also why many users stops following a profile if it is not mutual. When Gaia Travels reaches more followers, it is not necessary to follow all of them back. By then they should know which ones are worth of following back. Those users can be people, brands and businesses that share the interest for Italy, are located in Italy, some that can provide useful information or e.g. give new ideas for marketing on social media.

Third thing for Gaia Travels to do is to come up with a hashtag that they should use on each picture they post. The same hashtag can also be used in Facebook if it is required.

What I noticed on Instagram was that there are a company named Gaia that is using #gailifestyletravels and a person who is using #gaiatravels. This means that Gaia Travels should pick a hashtag that differentiates them from these two but is still connected to themselves. A simple one to use could e.g. be #gaiatravelsfinland.

When in Facebook the posts can be more or less similar with each other, on Instagram the pictures and videos should always be different, unless there is a certain theme a user wants to share. The same way as in Facebook, if Gaia Travels shall post pictures that will advertise the villas they are providing, there should be something more to make them compelling.

The positive thing about Instagram is that the pictures and videos posted can be about anything and they probably will still get likes. When it comes to Gaia Travels, the pictures could be about the landscapes close the villas, funny pictures of everyday life in Italy and what I believe some users are interested of seeing is what happens behind the scenes. Gaia Travels could post pictures of a normal day at the office or when they are choosing a new villa for their selection. The pictures could be about local restaurants including pictures of the food they are serving as well as from all kinds of people. Anyhow, the pictures should be self-taken and not the ones that can be found from Google. And for a Instagram picture to reach more “likes”, they can be shared on the Facebook page of Gaia Travels.

To make the pictures even more compelling, Instagram is offering different kinds of filters to use. Having a profile with both black-and-white as well as older looking pictures makes it more interesting to follow. After all, people are on Instagram because of seeing pictures and videos, so why not make them more pretentious.

3.5 Additional Recommendation

At the beginning it is more useful and effective for Gaia Travels to focus only on Facebook and Instagram. This way they can make sure they have the skills to use those channels and that they will not just leave them halfway done. The worst mistake in this case

would be to try being active on too many channels at the same time and not succeeding on any of them really well.

In the future, when Gaia Travels has become more active on Facebook and Instagram, when they have reached more followers and their posts has become more regular, they could start expanding in other channels. With more time and more resources to use, publishing videos of the villas on YouTube and putting up a YouTube channel would be useful. Sometimes people does not only want to see pictures of what they are buying but also see videos of the product.

If someday Twitter becomes more popular in Finland, with only five percentage of Finnish people using it in 2014 (Bennett 2014), Gaia Travels should definitely invest in it. However, at the moment there is no bigger use for it. Learning how to use it and becoming active there would probably require more time than becoming active on Facebook and Instagram, since Twitter would be a new channel for Gaia Travels. Same thing applies with Google+ which is a useful channel and could reach even more people because of the visibility on Google searches. However, it would also be something new for Gaia Travels which is why it would require more time.

In addition for already being on Facebook and Instagram, Gaia Travels is also using Pinterest and Flickr. These two channels probably will not bring any bigger use for Gaia Travels, but there is no point of deleting the profiles from those channels either. The 348 uploaded pictures on Flickr will at least help the consumers to find pictures of the villas that Gaia Travels is providing. And who knows what the future will bring, if these two channels will grow their popularity and someday become more useful for both companies and private people.

4 CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was with the help of a benchmarking process and some earlier researches, to give suggestions for Gaia Travels how they could exploit Facebook and Instagram in their marketing. The reasons why I chose to recommend these two channels

was mainly because both of them are popular among Finnish consumers, of which the target customers of Gaia Travels consists of, and because Gaia Travels already have a profile on both channels. Other important reason for choosing those channels was the fact that they are connected to each other, which makes it easy to use both ones at the same time.

With a limited time to use and in order to get the improvement process started I do not see it necessary to start using new channels, even though e.g. Google+ proved to be more popular in Finland than Instagram. I also do not see it important for Gaia Travels at this moment to invest in the two other channels, Flickr and Pinterest, which they already are a part of. Focusing on two channels at a time and becoming active on those is a better option than trying to be successful on too many channels at the same time, which might only lead to bad results. However, Gaia Travels should keep their profiles on both Flickr and Pinterest since they might become useful in the future.

Explaining what a marketing plan is and what it consist of helped to understand how a company should make the plans for their social media marketing as well as why it is important to include social media marketing in the actual marketing plan. A SWOT analysis of Gaia Travels' use of Facebook and Instagram was made in order to get a good picture of where they stand now and what can affect their future on those channels. According to the earlier researches made, the middle age of Finnish Facebook users had increased to 33.5 years in 2014 and the amount of over 40 years old users was expected to increase. These are both facts that creates opportunities for Gaia Travels since their target customers consist of groups where the adults are over 30 years old.

For the benchmarking process I chose six different companies that were all providing villas and had more followers on both Facebook and Instagram. The reason why I chose these companies was because I wanted to see if there was some specific factors that had made them to become popular on these channels. However, the results showed that they were all performing quite similar actions e.g. on Facebook and that none of their published posts stood out from each other. In other words, I did not find that there would be any specific action that had made them reach their followers, but rather that only being

active and posting interesting content and setting up competitions every now and then was the reason why people were “liking” them.

Finding researches, doing benchmarking and making a SWOT analysis confirmed the thought of the fact that Gaia Travels should become more active on both Facebook and Instagram. The recommendations for Facebook included posting content of different things that would make people interested of travelling to Italy, to set up competitions, to make the advertisements of the villas they are providing even more interesting by adding some useful facts to them and to create conversations with the help of questions and customer reviews. I suggested that Gaia Travels should post something on Facebook at least three times a week but on different days since it is not recommendable to post many times during one day. Another suggestion was to add a “Like us on Facebook” and/or “Follow us on Instagram” buttons on their website and e-mails. This way they would reach even more people and raise the knowledge of having a profile on both channels.

The recommendations for Instagram included posting pictures of things happening in Italy on normal days, sharing pictures behind the scenes and whatever Gaia Travels considers as interesting. The absolutely most important things are to come up with a hashtag to use that can be easily found and somehow connected to the company, and to post pictures that are self-taken. One easy way for getting followers is to publish a post on Facebook that Gaia Travels has an Instagram account so their Facebook followers could start following them on Instagram as well, and to follow back the ones that are following the company. A positive side with both channels are that they work together, which is e.g. why Gaia Travels should definitely share their Instagram pictures on their Facebook profile.

After improving their activity on both Facebook and Instagram, Gaia Travels could start considering of joining other social media channels and expanding their visibility. However, this would mean that the other channels would become popular among Finnish people in order to be useful for Gaia Travels.

5 FINAL WORDS

Writing this thesis has been both interesting and educational. I am satisfied with the result, even though it was not exactly what I had in my mind in the beginning. I wanted to write my thesis about social media since it is something that interests me. Coming up with Gaia Travels as my commissioner was a pure coincidence as I happened to stray on their Facebook profile. When I saw there was not that much activity happening I started to examine other social media channels that they were a part of. This gave me an idea of doing a plan for social media marketing for them. However, the more I examined their situation and the researches I found, the more I became aware of that the best option for them would be to become active only on Facebook and Instagram, at least for now.

Finding information, and most of all finding reliable and up-to-date information, was a challenge. The social media is developing quite fast and sometimes it is difficult even for those who are using different channels daily, to keep up with all the changes. I cannot be sure of how long the recommendations I made will be up-to-date, but I truly hope they will be helpful for Gaia Travels and that they will help them to get started. In order to know if this thesis was a success I hope to hear if the recommendations I have made will work or not and I, for sure, will try to keep an eye on the progress that Gaia Travels might be making.

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