Creating a digital marketing communications action plan for an e-organization

Kauppinen, Juliana

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Laurea University of Applied Sciences
Leppävaara

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Kauppinen Juliana
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Laurea University of Applied Sciences **Abstract**
Laurea Leppävaara
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This product-oriented thesis focused on researching marketing communications and more specifically digital marketing planning in the context of the e-business environment. The topic is important for successful marketing communications implementation in the continuously changing market environment. The thesis project was commissioned by a European Commission funded open data e-organization, WeLive. The objective was to create an action plan for WeLive's marketing communications. The purpose of the thesis was to establish how marketing communications efforts could be implemented in a way that maximizes the awareness in WeLive's target segments. Therefore a digital marketing communications action plan was created as the end product. Furthermore, an on-going digital marketing publication and syndication process for WeLive's future marketing communications was suggested. The commissioner benefitted from the thesis by gaining target group specific information about how to utilize digital marketing communications modes and channels in a cost-effective way.

The guiding research question was: 'What type of marketing communications actions need to be taken to maximize the awareness in the target group of WeLive open innovation platform during and following its piloting campaign?' Benchmarking and e-survey were chosen as the ruling research methods. Establishing which type of marketing communications efforts are used in the best performing open data e-organizations was set as the benchmarking objective. Furthermore, the objective of the e-survey part of the study was to establish if the benchmarking findings were accurate also for the WeLive specific target segments, as well as further specifying the channels. Also a literature review of marketing communications and digital marketing planning was conducted to establish the theoretical framework as the basis for the empirical research. The primary data collected through the research was analyzed qualitatively.

The most important aspect of the research findings for this thesis was that using online channels, mainly e-mail and Twitter, for direct, interactive and word-of-mouth marketing is the most suitable mix of marketing communications channels and modes for WeLive. One example of the findings of the research was that banners or pop-up windows for offering e-mail subscription are beneficial. Despite the debate about the extent of importance of traditional marketing in today's market environment, this thesis argues that utilizing the traditional marketing communications mix is nevertheless beneficial as long as it is used with the requirements of modern marketing communications in mind.

Keywords: marketing communications mix, digital marketing planning, e-mail marketing, Twitter marketing, e-business environment

Laurea-ammattikorkeakoulu
Laurea Leppävaara
Liiketalouden koulutusohjelma

Tiivistelmä

Kauppinen, Juliana

Digitaalisen markkinointiviestinnän toimintasuunnitelman luominen e-organisaatiolle

Vuosi 2016 Sivumäärä 79

Tämä opinnäytetyö keskittyi markkinointiviestintään sekä digitaaliseen markkinointiin e-toimintaympäristössä. Aihe on tärkeä, koska edellytykset markkinoinnille nykypäivän muuttuvassa markkinaympäristössä ovat vaativia. Toimeksiantajana opinnäytetyölle toimi avoimen datan internetpalvelua kehittävä, Euroopan Komission rahoittama WeLive-organisaatio. Opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli luoda markkinointiviestinnän toimintasuunnitelma WeLivelle. Opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli selvittää mitkä markkinointiviestinnän keinot sekä kanavat sopivat parhaiten kasvattamaan WeLiven näkyvyyttä kehittäjäkansalaisten kohderyhmässä. Opinnäytetyön lopputuotoksena kehitettiin markkinointiviestinnän toimintasuunnitelma WeLiven pilottikampanjalle. Lisäksi tulosten pohjalta koottiin prosessikaavio ehdotukseksi WeLiven digitaalisen markkinointiviestinnän toimille tulevaisuudessa. Toimeksiantajan hyöty opinnäytetyöstä oli saada kohderyhmäkohtaista tietoa siitä, miten digitaalisia markkinointiviestinnän keinoja ja kanavia voidaan hyödyntää kustannustehokkaasti.

Opinnäytetyön kaksiosainen tutkimus suoritettiin tekemällä benchmarking-vertailu sekä internetkysely. Lisäksi tutkittiin kattava määrä kirjallisuutta pohja-aineistoksi omalle tutkimukselle. Tavoitteena benchmarkingille oli selvittää minkälaisia markkinointiviestinnän keinoja on hyödynnetty parhaiten menestyvissä kohdeyrityksissä. Internet-kyselyn tavoitteena oli selvittää pätevätkö selvitetyt tulokset myös WeLiven omien kohdesegmenttien osalta sekä tarkentaa mitkä kanavat sopivat parhaiten kohderyhmälle sen omassa toimintaympäristössä. Tutkimusaineisto käsiteltiin kvalitatiivisesti.

Tärkein tutkimustulos oli, että WeLiven markkinointiviestintää tulisi tehdä pääasiallisesti digitaalisen markkinoinnin keinoin. Tuloksena markkinointiviestinnän mixistä parhaimmin sopiviksi muodoiksi valikoituivat suoramarkkinointi, interaktiivinen markkinointi sekä word-of-mouth markkinointi. Pääasiallisiksi markkinointikanaviksi valikoituivat sähköposti sekä Twitter. Yhtenä esimerkkinä tutkimustuloksista oli se, että sähköpostiuutiskirjeen tilauksen aktiivinen tarjoaminen esimerkiksi ponnahdusikkunan kautta edesauttaa markkinointiviestinnän tavoitteiden saavuttamista kohderyhmässä. Huolimatta keskustelusta, jossa perinteisen markkinoinnin tarpeellisuudesta kiistellään, tämä opinnäytetyö väittää, että perinteisen markkinointiviestinnän mixin hyödyntäminen kannattaa yhä. Edellytyksenä on, että perinteistä markkinoinnin teoriaa sovelletaan harkitusti yhdessä uudemman markkinointiviestinnän teorian kanssa.

Asiasanat: markkinointiviestinnän mix, digitaalisen markkinoinnin suunnittelu, sähköpostimarkkinointi, Twitter-markkinointi, e-liiketoimintaympäristö

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1 Introduction

Marketing has never been more complicated, as the market has become increasingly customer oriented. Customers have more options to choose how they would like to be approached by marketers. Even more complications are caused for marketers by the increasing amount of information that publics have of advertising and media especially. Also standing out from the crowd has become more difficult in terms of companies marketing their products or services, as the options are vaster. Attracting the attention of customers is a highly demanding task, as an average consumer might be exposed to as many as 5000 marketing messages each day, either consciously or unconsciously. As a result of the overload of advertisements, marketers have started responding to consumers' resistance of advertisements by offering for example commercial free services for an extra fee. That is only one sign of the requirement of even more creative ways to implement marketing in a differentiating way. Ultimately the marketer's task is to choose the most appropriate strategy for implementing marketing communications efforts in today's highly demanding market environment. (Florès 2014, 34 & 194; Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen 2012, 173; Wright, Khanfar, Harrington, Kizer 2010, 74.)

Drawing strict boundaries between different modes of marketing communications such as advertising and direct marketing no longer entirely serves the original purpose of making profit through marketing. Instead, what is more appropriate to focus on in today's marketing environment is to give way to a more customer oriented approach. Companies and organizations such as the case organization WeLive that are arising from and operating through the Internet are inevitably in a better position than their counterparts. They are inherently organized around their customers from the very beginning. In fact, many recent trends have suggested that traditional mass media advertising will not have any affect in the future. The most appealing communication channel for advertising trends with expected growth is online. (Florès 2014, 200; Wright et al. 2010, 74.)

A series of stages in the past have led to even the most traditional organizations and businesses evolving their approaches around the Internet. This Internet-centered approach can be referred to as e-business or e-organization mindset. The amount of innovation in e-business is rapidly growing with continuous introduction of new technologies, new business models and even entirely new marketing communications approaches. The reality is that no business can go on without reviewing the use of internet-based communications approaches. The benefits, costs and risks of implementing social media marketing are reviewed in most marketing communications plans. This applies to both traditional businesses as well as to more modern and inherently Internet-based organizations. (Chaffey 2011, 6.)

1.1 Outline of the theoretical framework

Despite of some on-going discussion of whether traditional marketing plays any role in today's market environment, this thesis argues that some appropriate traditional theories should still be utilized to work as the basis for a modern marketing communications plan. The process of planning takes a longer time and more effort, but the outcome is well worth it. Combining the theories as a suitable mix of old and new will result in successful implementing of marketing communications for an e-organization that is inherently online based and operates with the core values of the sharing economy on mind.

The theoretical framework of this thesis was first rather broadly defined to cover marketing communications as a whole. However, as the process went on the theory was more precisely specified to cover digital marketing communications due to the research outcomes. As the basis for using modern marketing communications tools the traditional marketing theory is discussed and reviewed in the first theoretical part. The theoretical framework of this thesis is therefore describing digital marketing communications planning through the use of traditional marketing communications modes.

The most essential reference books for the theoretical framework are for the first part Marketing Management (2012) by Philip Kotler, Kevin Lane Keller, Mairead Brady, Malcolm Goodman and Torben Hansen. Kotler's marketing communications mix is used for guiding the whole theoretical framework of the thesis. For the second part covering digital marketing communications the main theoretical reference book used is E-business & E-commerce Management (2011) by Dave Chaffey. The keywords of this thesis are marketing communications mix, digital marketing planning, e-mail marketing and Twitter marketing, in the context of e-business environment.

1.2 The objective, research questions and thesis process

The objective for this thesis is to find out the best suitable marketing communications modes and channels for piloting campaign of an open innovation platform. As a commissioner for this thesis is a European Commission funded open innovation platform organization WeLive. The WeLive open innovation platform pilot in March 2016 has the objective to increase awareness of the platform among the target users. The ultimate objective for this thesis is therefore to establish an action plan for the WeLive's piloting campaign's marketing communications that aim to be implemented in a way that maximizes the awareness in the target group.

The guiding research question for this thesis is 'what type of marketing communications actions need to be taken to maximize the awareness in the target group of WeLive open innovation platform during and following its piloting campaign?’ Sub-questions that were set for the research for this thesis are: ‘Which modes of the Kotler’s marketing communications mix should the pilot campaign be implemented with?’ ‘Through which channels should the marketing communications of the WeLive platform be implemented?’ And finally: ‘How to ensure achieving the marketing communications objectives of WeLive with low marketing budget?’

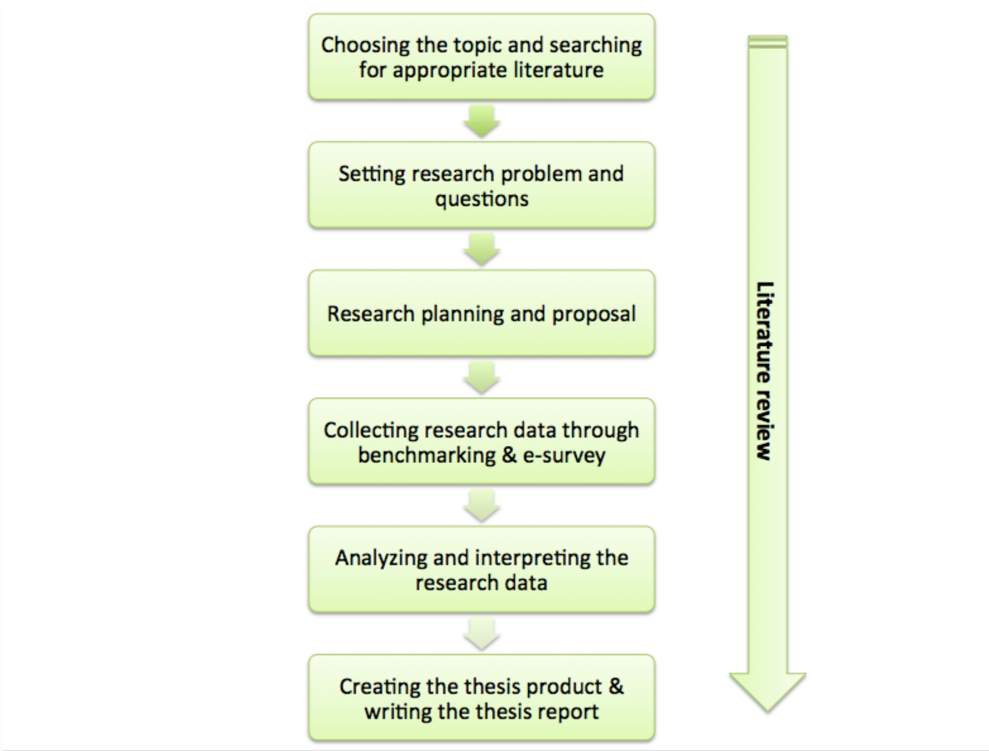

Figure 1. The overview of the research process of this thesis (based on a figure by Collis & Hussey 2009, 10.)

This thesis is a product-oriented thesis, as the ultimate objective is to create a practical marketing communications action plan as the end product. The thesis process can be divided into six steps, as the figure above shows (Figure 1.). However, roughly three main steps can be summed from the overall process, first being building the theoretical framework, second part constituting of the empirical research and the third part being the developing of the action plan for the marketing communications of the WeLive platform pilot. Throughout the process a literature review is conducted for the purpose of gaining holistic knowledge of the themes that the thesis revolves around.

1.3 Limitations

This thesis is focusing on the WeLive-project only for the part of the pilot of the WeLive platform that takes place in the Helsinki region. For the purposes of avoiding unnecessary repetition the WeLive platform pilot in the Helsinki region is from this on referred to as simply WeLive pilot to keep the text easier to read. Therefore it should be noted that the WeLive pilot that is being researched and discussed in this thesis excludes the parts of the WeLive-project that take place outside the Helsinki region.

As perhaps the greatest challenge in this thesis project has been to establish the categorization of WeLive as an organization. WeLive operates in an e-environment, which is a common setting for organizations and companies to work in nowadays. WeLive's business model is not of the traditional type, as the primary funding comes from a public European Commission even though the project is aiming to serve both private companies and public administrations, as well as private citizens. Therefore WeLive cannot be categorized entirely as a public, non-profit organization but it is not solely operating in the independent private sector either. From the marketing point of view the lack of straightforward categorization for WeLive has led to some challenges in utilizing traditional marketing theory as the basis for the decisions. The way to overcome these challenges has been thoroughly going through theoretical marketing knowledge of the categories that WeLive fits and then through the gained knowledge deciding which information is valid and excluding the information that is not.

These challenges in the categorization have however led to some limitations in the usability of the results of the research. To be able to utilize the results of the research conducted in this thesis, the target organizations need to be of a similar kind to the WeLive organization in order for the research results to be accurate. More specifically this means that the targeted e-organization is inherently online based and operates through service design methods with the core values of the sharing economy on mind.

2 The case organization and its operational environment

According to Kotler et al. (2012, 173-174) to be able to develop and implement marketing plans, it is important that several aspects of the company's operational environment are considered beforehand. The marketing environment changing more rapidly than ever, it is vital for companies to have updated information about its surroundings in the form of recognizing macro trends as well as keeping track of micro effects. The immediate microenvironment includes the company's customers, competitors, its suppliers and distributors. The macro environment refers to the bigger picture consisting of five major forces that affect all businesses. They are most usually scholarly referred to as political, economic, physical, socio-cultural demographic and technological forces. To determine the profit potential of an opportunity it is necessary to make market research before establishing any plans. In the recent past years multiple major social changes have greatly affected on the development of the market environment that require marketers to target their customer groups even more precisely (Florès

2014, 34). These major changes are discussed later on in this thesis for the parts they affect the case organization's operation and marketing communications planning.

Also part of the macro environmental effects are unmet needs and trends of the consumers. It is important to recognize them and to respond to those needs and trends that can be categorized into three groups of fads, trends and megatrends depending on their impacting power and length. Fad is the most short-term type of them and it has no impact on the real customer needs in the long run. Trend is more durable and has some momentum that can be utilized for the profit of companies where as megatrends have large influence on the macro environment for seven to ten years or even longer. (Kotler et al. 2012, 175-176.)

The biggest megatrend that fundamentally affects WeLive's operations is having large amount of technology on the marketplace. Still after several years of increasing it is not showing signs of slowing down, in fact quite the opposite. Global communication and connections are enabled in real-time online. It is important for marketing professionals to understand and embrace the vast range of digital technologies. Also monitoring new and emerging technologies has become more important in order to implement successful marketing efforts in today's operational marketing environment. (Kotler et al. 2012, 23.)

2.1 What is WeLive?

The WeLive project has started in January 2015 and is planned to be implemented until December of 2017. It is providing an open model for the design, production and provision of public services. WeLive is strongly utilizing the user-oriented methods of the Service Design concept. The scheme of WeLive aims to harness the open data that is accumulated to public administrators, organizations, businesses and private citizens as new service innovations created through collaboration. An Open Innovation Area platform is designed to work as a place where city agents work together on thinking, creating, financing and deploying new services. On the WeLive platform, users who are not familiar with information and communications technologies are able to compose public service applications from existing blocks. WeLive Marketplace will help those who are interested in buying them and business activity for public services is boosted through the procedure. (Kauppinen 2015; Sanchez 2014.)

Spanish Tecnalia coordinates WeLive and altogether 12 participating partners come from four different countries, including Spain, Finland, Italy and Serbia. Three out of twelve partners represent public administrations, four represent research and the rest are businesses. In addition to the main partners, the partners from Finland are the city of Espoo, the city of Helsinki (Helsingin Tietokeskus) and the Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council. WeLive project will have its pilot held in two parts taking place in three cities, Bilbao, Trento and Novi Sad and in one economic area of Uusimaa. Laurea-University of Applied sciences is also one of the partners in the project and is utilizing thesis work of students from different fields such as the business management field. (Kauppinen 2015.)

WeLive as an e-organization

There is no straightforward consensus on the definition of what is an e-business or an e-organization. The concept of e-business can refer to all information exchanges that are mediated electronically. It is not distinct from traditional information systems management. Short and simple description would be that e-business is “the transformation of key processes through the use of Internet technologies” (Chaffey 2011, 12). Additionally e-business emphasizes involving innovation. As an even broader sense e-business can be understood to be integration of activities such as fully integrating information and communications technologies into all business operations and possibly even fundamentally redesigning the business processes to evolve around ICT’s. (Chaffey 2011, 12.) WeLive can definitely be categorized as an e-organization. It has redefined its business operations virtually fully around information and communications technologies. Also WeLive’s whole operation is emphasizing involving innovation and creativity in its business operations.

2.2 Micro & macro environment of WeLive

In the immediate microenvironment of WeLive project are its three main target groups consisting of public administrators, citizens and companies. At the moment the participating public administrators are the cities of Espoo and Helsinki, and the Uusimaa Regional Council. The target group of citizens consists of active people who are interested in developing public services digitally on a voluntary basis. The operational environment is the Uusimaa region in southern Finland. The three Finnish participants in the WeLive project are the city of Espoo, the city of Helsinki for the part of Helsingin Tietokeskus (information center of Helsinki) and the Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council. These are all located in the Uusimaa region, which therefore forms the majority of the operational marketing microenvironment for the WeLive pilot.

Uusimaa region constitutes of 26 municipalities and it is the largest demographic area in Finland and most of Finland’s consumption takes place in the area (Uusimaa Regional Council 2014). It has a population of 1,6 million people which constitutes 29% of the whole population of Finland (2014). The population has lately been growing strongly due to migration of 14 000 people a year on average and therefore it has been estimated to possibly reach 2 million by the year 2035 in the Helsinki-Uusimaa area. In the area also the age structure is beneficial for companies as there are more young people than elsewhere in Finland, which means that also the working population is large (European Commission 2015). Over 80% of the area's distribution of labour is on the service sector and altogether 99 500 business establishments are located there (Uusimaa Regional Council 2014).

In the Helsinki Metropolitan area of Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa and Kauniainen, more than a third of Finland's GDP is generated. It is both a logistical hub and an economic engine of growth for the whole of Finland from international point of view. The challenges of the global economy can still be seen in the area, but strong will for recovery has created a lot of entrepreneurial spirit leading to new ways of thinking and working towards innovations. Being the highest in the country, the educational level in the region encourages innovation and creates top-quality research as well as good work force for the labour market. The asset for this area can be seen to be the good co-operation that happens between companies, schools and public administrations, which means there are vast amount of prospects for WeLive to harness in the area. (Uusimaa Regional Council 2014.)

Trends and megatrends in WeLive's operating environment

In order to be able to fully understand what type of organization WeLive is, it is necessary to recognize and understand some fundamentally important trends and megatrends that are shaping its operational environment. These trends not only affect the operational environment but are also the force behind enabling services like WeLive to even exist. The combination of trends and megatrends in the current marketplace refers to the unique characteristics that form the basis for all business decisions including decisions about which type of marketing communications to choose. As can be seen from the previous description of WeLive, the core concepts of its operations are service design, open data, innovation and collaboration.

One force that has dramatically shaped people's lives throughout the recent years is the abrupt rise of new technologies. New technology always creates major long-term consequences that not always are foreseeable. Both consumers and businesses operate in a world based on technology and a majority of consumers' time is now spent with one form or another of technology. Marketers need to focus on monitoring especially four technological trends, which are accelerating the pace of change, unlimited innovation opportunities, research and development budgets that are variable and the regulation ascent of technological change. (Kotler et al. 2012, 129 & 190-191.)

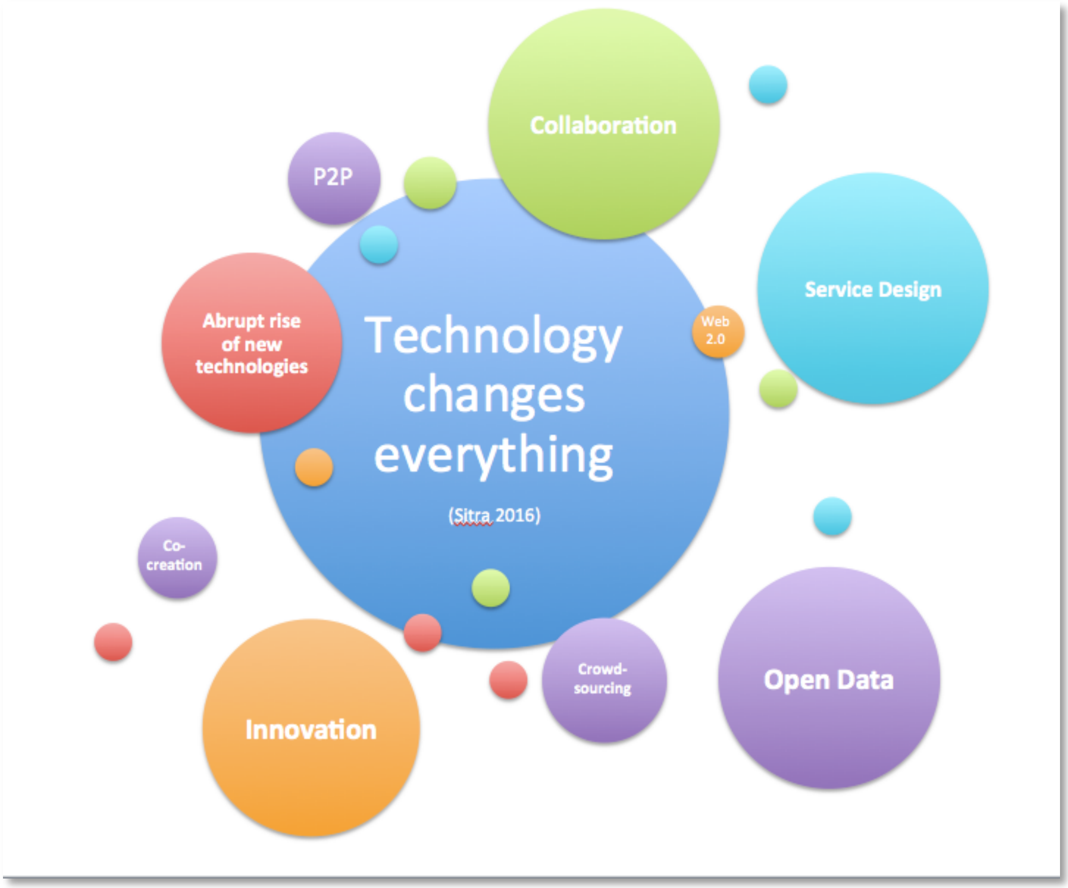

Figure 2. Trends and megatrends in WeLive's operational environment

The figure above (Figure 2) shows the technology-driven trends that have high impact on WeLive's operating environment. In the core of it is the megatrend of technology having an immense affect on everything by changing the world. All the trends presented in the figure are based on networks and openness of ideas and knowledge. They have high level of connectivity and personalization and therefore they enable differentiation from competitors. Customer co-creation, collaboration, crowdsourcing and P2P (peer-to-peer) all rely on people participating in something together. This is ultimately what the networked sharing economy mindset's core values are all about. (Chaffey 2011, 24; Keehley & Abercrombie 2008, 145; Kotler et al. 2012, 28 & 133; Wang 2015, 107-111, 113-115 & 120.)

Open sharing of ideas and information is also the core idea behind WeLive. The WeLive platform aims to have its users creating ideas and sharing them to other users for solving public issues collaboratively. WeLive is part of the P2P (peer-to-peer) mindset as it utilizes innovation, sharing of knowledge and is creating new together with several stakeholder groups. The Service Design methods are a vital part of WeLive's operational procedures.

2.3 Segmentation of the target group

Segmentation refers to identifying and dividing different specific groups within the target market. The aim is to be able to develop differentiating product and service offerings and to create different ways to conduct marketing communications according to each segment's specific needs. The use of digital technology in marketing has the advantage of offering more specifically targeted messages in a more easy and cost-effective way than through the use of traditional media. What marketers especially need to consider is whether it is beneficial to separate communications for new, existing and lapsed contacts. Another option is to simply target all in the same communications mode but with a differentiated content aimed at each group to establish a relationship with the company. Demographic segmentation can be used in an online-based marketing as well as traditional marketing. Typically demographic segmentation is based on age, sex or social group and online it is usually used for building e-mail lists and display advertising. (Chaffey 2011, 408-409.)

However, Euromonitor marketing study (Dodson 2007) implied that the traditional segmenting of consumers using demographics like gender and age as indicators is no longer valid, or at least is becoming less exhaustive. In contrary what matters more now is how consumers identify with those who have similar lifestyles. This implies that companies should focus on more wholesome lifestyle concepts in their marketing of products and services. This type of reasoning explains also the high success of blog marketing and other social media marketing as consumers identify themselves through the lifestyles of others. (Kotler et al. 2012, 182.)

The target group for WeLive's marketing communications action plan has been restricted to cover only citizen developers in the Helsinki region. The concept of citizen developer can refer to citizens who are interested in developing solutions to public issues both on a technological level and on a non-technological but innovative ideation level. Furthermore, the group with technological skills can be divided into two groups according to the level of technological skills they possess. Dividing the target group into smaller more segmented groups helps in planning the marketing communications efforts as each group has slightly different interests and therefore they also have differentiating needs to respond to. The segmented groups for WeLive's marketing communications action plan are presented below (Figure 3).

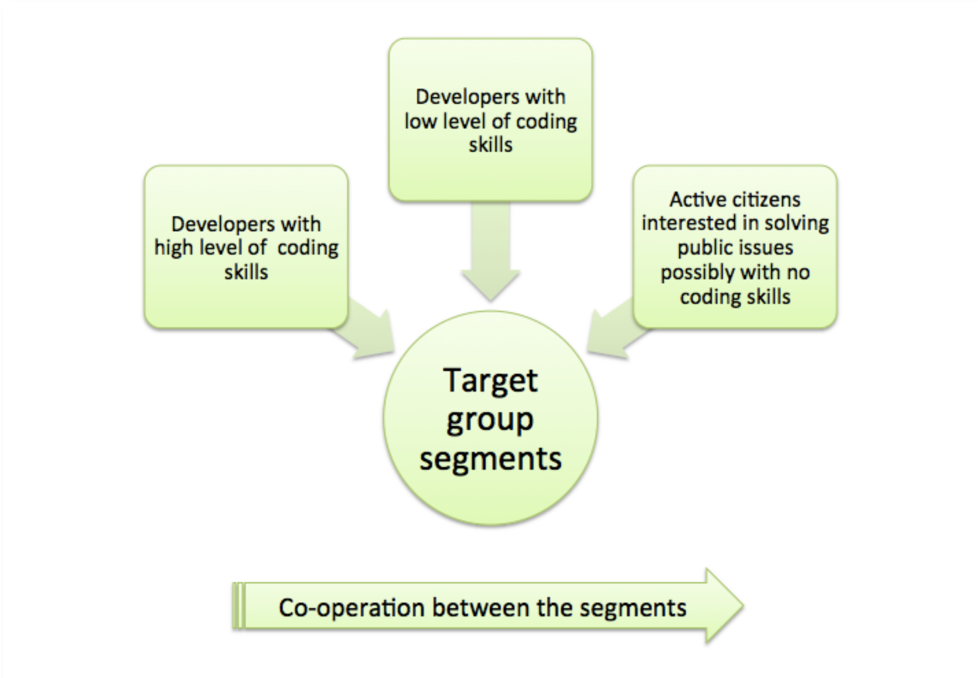

Figure 3. Segmenting of the target group of WeLive

The technologically-driven citizen developers with high level of coding skills can create products or services using high level programming, which means they have excellent knowledge of how to code or possibly even wider understanding of programming as a whole. This group can include for example graduating or already graduated it-students. Offering soon graduating or recently graduated a possibility to take part in a real-life project and gain valuable working experience works as a tempting reason for attracting them to share their knowledge for WeLive's purposes. This group can be reached best on Internet sites targeted for programmers such as the apps4finland website (http://www.apps4finland.fi/) as well as other open data communities' websites.

Citizen developers with low level of coding skills can be for example information technology students in early stages of their studies and self-taught people who are interested in and already have some knowledge of coding. As an example of self-taught people with interest in coding, are business students or business graduates who want to utilize coding in their future careers. This group of business students willing to gain more computer science-related skills is a great prospect for projects like WeLive as in today's world those skills are required in a wide range of jobs. Having coding skills as a business graduate is a great asset in search for a job. Business students on the other hand have a variety of skills that purely computer science oriented people are lacking, which means that co-operation between the two groups would benefit them both. Prospects from this segment are most likely to be found in university or polytechnic school environments such as Aalto University communities or Laurea University of Applied sciences communities, such as for example LaureaES.

Active citizens interested in solving public issues possibly with no coding skills are a group that WeLive should address to in the purpose of gaining valuable ideas for what kind of public issues require improvement in the daily lives of the citizens in the area. The active citizens are most likely living in areas that are lively and close to a vast amount of services such as for example downtown Helsinki.

3 Traditional marketing communications theory

This chapter includes some traditional marketing communications theory to work as the basis for modern digital marketing communications planning. In today's world where consumers have more and more options to choose the marketing messages they want to receive and the channels they choose to follow, it is hard for marketers to design suitable marketing communications strategies. It is not enough anymore to use only one form of communications and it certainly is not an option to choose not to communicate at all. What marketing communications is ultimately all about is choosing what the company wants to say, when, how often and in which way to say it and also defining the target for which it will be said. (Kotler et al. 2012, 775.)

According to Kotler et al. (2012, 776-777) marketing communications play an important role in how a company builds relationships with its customers through a dialogue that determine the company's voice. It includes both direct and indirect means of attempting to inform, persuade and remind customers about the way the company markets its brand. In the long run companies can establish and maintain their brand image through marketing communications and that way also affect increasingly on the monetary value of the company in the eyes of the stakeholders. Advertisements are everywhere and consumers are exposed to thousands of advertisement messages daily, which makes it very difficult to stand out from the crowd.

One of the most important concerns of marketing professionals has always been brand awareness. Awareness is defined by Florès (2014, 33) as having ability for a prospective customer to recognize and remember a brand's existence and that the given brand belongs to a specific product category. Awareness can be seen as the foundation of any communication strategy. Having a brand that a customer recognizes refers to closeness, trust and a wanting to buy the product. Establishing a presence in the mind of the consumer and furthermore building a rooted brand image in a specific sector are what awareness essentially is about.

To capture the consumer's attention a constant search for creativity to build brand awareness is required. However, in the recent years there have been indications that advertising that is based on creating awareness is becoming less effective. The two traditional advertising mechanisms that no longer work today are conviction-persuasion and projection-identification. The first one refers to a situation where a marketer tries to prove their product is superior to competitors' by presenting factual arguments as prove. The latter one refers to a situation when those people that customers like to resemble use the product to persuade the customers to use it too. (Florès 2014, 34.)

3.1 Marketing communications mix

In brand equity building the most important element can often mistakenly be considered to be advertising. However, advertising is not the only element, nor is it the most important one in the marketing communications programme of a company. It often is the most visible part of it and granted, many times is an important one in this communications environment. The eight major modes of communication are listed on Kotler's (2012) marketing communications mix presented below (Table 2). (Kotler et al. 2012, 777.)

Mode of marketing communications mix	Examples	Description
Advertising	Posters, brochures, media advertisements	Non-personal message showing ideas, products or services in a paid form
Sales promotion	Contests, fairs, exhibits	Short-term incentives targeted to encouraging trial use or purchase
Events and Experiences	Sports, causes, festivals	Creating special brand-related interactions by sponsoring activities
Public relations and publicity	Seminars, community relations	Presenting or protecting company's image or market offering in a variety of programmes
Direct marketing	Catalogues, e-mail, blogs	Directly communicating with specific customers and prospects
Interactive marketing	Blogs, websites	Engaging customers or prospects online or raising awareness or improving brand image directly or indirectly
Word-of-mouth marketing	Person-to-person, blogs	Relating to i.e. experiences of products, carried out through people-to-people discussion or written/electronic communications
Personal selling	Sales meetings, samples	With the purpose of presenting, answering questions and taking orders interacting face-to-face with prospects

Table 1. Marketing communications mix: examples and definitions (Kotler et al. 2012, 777-778).

It is important to achieve an appropriate strategic positioning by integrating the marketing communications activities. Integration is important to be able to deliver a consistent message despite using multiple modes of marketing communications. All potential customer interactions with the company must be assessed and then evaluated which impressions have the most influence, as was done in the developing process of the thesis product. This helps in designing, implementing and budgeting the right marketing communications programmes. (Kotler et al. 2012, 779.)

The choice of which marketing modes a company decides to utilize from the marketing mix varies vastly depending on the size, industry and other factors regarding the company. Changes in the choice of which modes of marketing communications a company uses are made from time to time in most companies throughout the business operation. All of the tools in the marketing communications mix have their own unique characteristics. (Kotler et al. 2012, 795.) The marketing communications modes chosen for the case organization of this thesis are direct marketing, interactive marketing and word-of-mouth marketing. These three modes are described here more thoroughly and the other five of the marketing communications mix tools are briefly explained in the table above (Table 1). According to Kotler et al. (2012, 798) some of the factors that affect on the choice of the marketing communications mix are which type is the market offering, what is the consumer readiness of purchase and the stage in the traditional product life cycle. Also in some cases the company’s market ranking affects the choice.

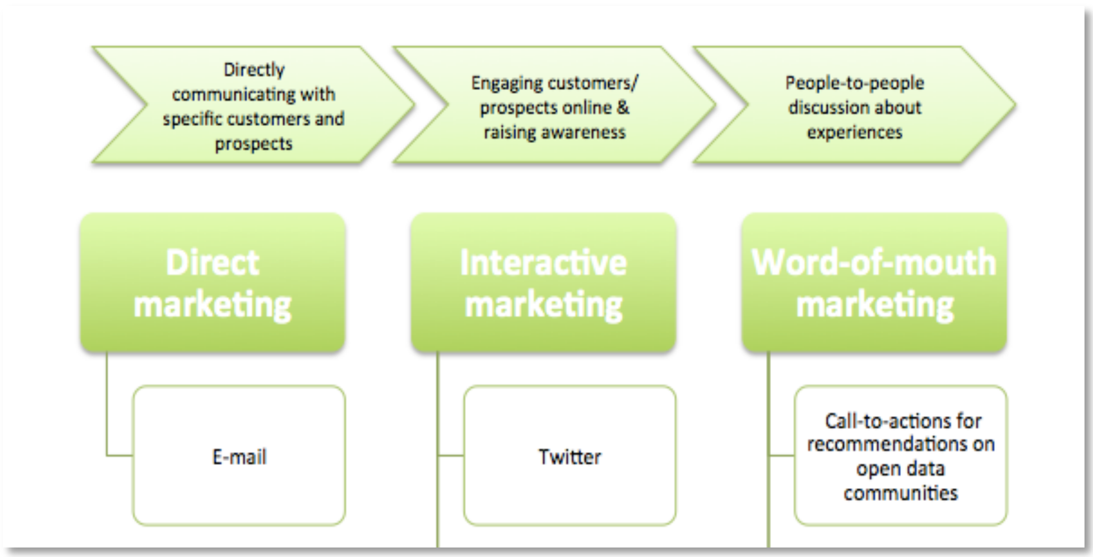

Figure 4. Marketing mix choices and the main channels for WeLive

According to Kotler et al. (2012, 798) direct and interactive marketing have more than one particular form. They can be implemented either over the phone, in person or as in the case of the product of this thesis, online. However, both direct and interactive marketing share three common characteristics that are distinctive from other modes. These characteristics are customized appeal for a specific addressed individual, being up-to-date because it can be made in short time and being interactive as the recipient's response can affect the message. These three characteristics all describe digital marketing channels and especially social media, which are used as the core for the thesis product as well.

Word-of-mouth marketing refers to a mode of marketing communications that also has many forms both online and offline. It also has three characteristics to separate it from the rest of the eight tools in the marketing mix. These characteristics are, being credible and therefore highly influential, being personal through intimate dialogue and being timely as it happens when people are most interested, usually after a significant event or experience. Word-of-mouth is a key aspect in marketing on social networking sites. Major networking sites like Facebook can offer bigger visibility whereas smaller niche social networks can have more influence and bigger potential for good word-of-mouth in a more targeted market. The word-of-mouth marketing planned for WeLive focuses on creating influential personal dialogue online by encouraging people to discuss about experiences evolving around the pilot of the WeLive platform. (Kotler et al. 2012, 790 & 798.)

The choice of marketing communications modes varies depending on the type of market that a company operates in. In general consumer marketers tend to focus a lot of their effort into advertising whereas marketer for a more complex business-to-business sales uses personal selling as the main mode. The stage of readiness for the buyer to make a purchase affects on the choice, as the cost effectiveness of each mode in each stage is different. In the stage of awareness building the most cost effective modes are advertising and publicity when compared to sales promotion and personal selling modes. However, this comparison can be seen to only apply to businesses that are selling consumer products and have sufficient budget for the marketing communications efforts. Also in the introduction stage of product life cycle advertising is the most cost effective mode, as well as events and experiences and publicity are too. Also direct marketing and sales promotion can be used in this stage for inducing trial use. (Kotler et al. 2012, 798-800.)

3.2 Marketing communications process

The communications process consists of nine elements that are presented in the figure (Figure 5) below. The model of the elements of the communication process emphasizes the key factors in effective communication. In order to get a message through it is necessary for marketers to encode their messages in such a way that considers how their target audience is usually decoding messages. The message needs to be also transmitted through efficient media that reaches the target audience. Feedback channels are also needed to create in order to monitor the response to the marketing message. (Kotler et al. 2012, 780, 804.)

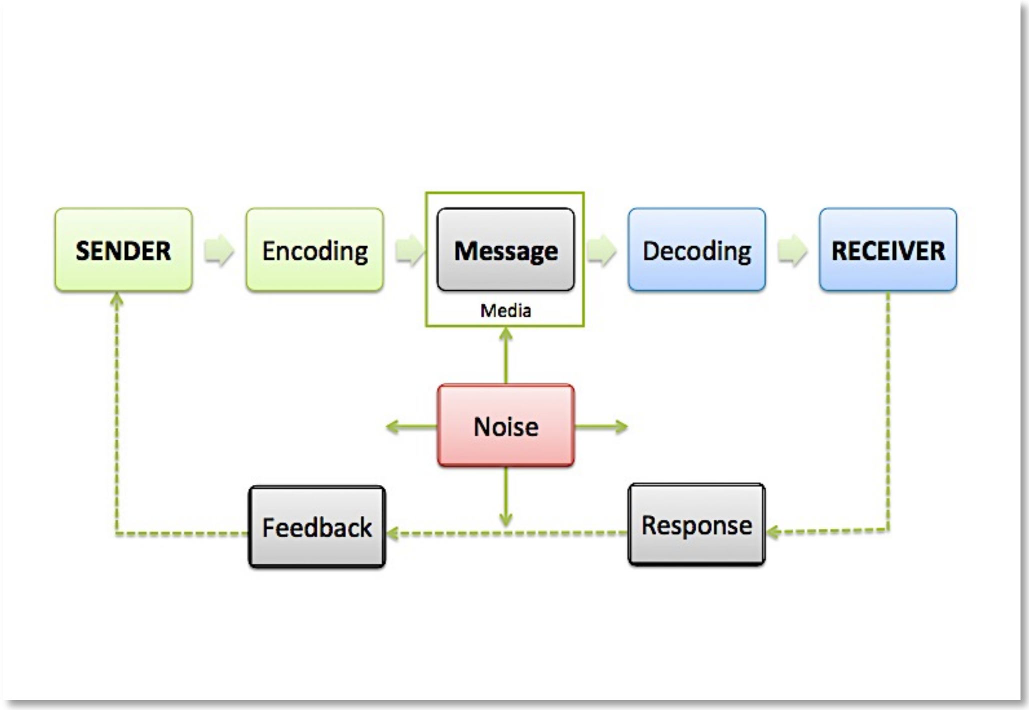

Figure 5. Elements in the communication process (Kotler et al. 2012, 780).

Objectives for the communications can involve category needs, brand awareness, and brand attitude or brand purchase intention. Three problems need to be solved for formulating the communication issues. First of all what to say (message strategy), secondly how to say it (creative strategy) and lastly who should say it (message source). Communications channels can be personal (advocate, expert and social channels) or non-personal (media, atmospheres and events). The most desired budgeting method is called the objective-and-task method. It is a method that obligates marketers to define specific objectives to use for setting an appropriate budget. (Kotler et al. 2012, 804.)

The distinct advantages and costs of each communication tool and the company's market rank need to be thoroughly researched in order to be able to decide the most suitable marketing communications mix. The type of product market they are selling in needs to also be taken into consideration as well as the readiness of the consumers to make a purchase and the product's stage in the traditional product life cycle. Integrated marketing communications is required for managing and coordinating the whole communications process. The purpose of an integrated marketing communications plan is to evaluate the strategic roles of multiple communications disciplines and to combine them to provide clarity, consistency and the biggest impact possible. All of this should happen through seamless integration of discrete messages on multiple marketing communications channels. (Kotler et al. 2012, 804.)

3.3 Developing effective communications through eight steps

Four concerns should be overcome in effective communications. Connection should be established, reward promised, action inspired and a memory needs to be stuck in the minds of the customers. These matters can be accomplished through eight key steps of developing effective communications that are presented below (Figure 6). (Kotler et al. 2012, 782-783.)

Figure 6. The eight steps in developing effective communications (Kotler et al. 2012, 782.)

Identifying the target audience is what the process starts with, as there must be good image of the current and potential buyers or users. The target group is what influences on what, how, when, where and to whom to send the marketing message. It should be established whether the target is new or a current user, is it loyal to a certain brand, and if it is heavy or light user. According to the answers the communication strategy will build up to be differentiated. (Kotler et al. 2012, 782.)

The objectives for the communications can be identified in four different ways according to Rossiter and Percy (1997). First possible object is category need, which should always be the objective to start with when it comes to communicating about new-to-the-world items such as electric cars. Second objective option would be brand awareness, which is what provides a foundation for brand equity. Third option for an objective is brand attitude, which can be either positively or negatively oriented. The last fourth objective is brand purchase intention, which refers to either self-instructions for buying or taking action related to purchasing. However, most usually companies need to achieve more than just one objective at a time and therefore multiple objectives can be determined for the marketing communications. (Kotler et al. 2012, 783.)

Designing communications means solving the message strategy, creative strategy and the message source. Message strategy determining refers to planning what to say by searching appeals, themes and ideas connecting the brand positioning and establishing points of parity or points of difference. Creative strategy defines how to say the message, which then determines how effective the communication is. Also the content of the message has its impact on the effectiveness. Creative strategies are what marketing professionals use to translate the marketing message into a targeted communication. The creative strategies can be classified into the categories of informational or transformational appeals. In the informational appeals the ruling factors are logic and reason from the part of the consumer. Asking questions and giving the readers or viewers the opportunity to form conclusions are usually what works and two-sided messages work better than one-sided ones. Transformational appeal is based on benefits or images that the consumer might have of certain non-market offerings. Negative appeals might be utilized for getting the consumers to act on, for example a fear of losing teeth might get someone to buy certain toothpaste. The message source tells who should say the message, which not always is the company itself but might rather be for example a celebrity working as a spokesperson for the brand. (Kotler et al. 2012, 783-786.)

The decision of selecting the most suitable communications channels becomes more and more difficult as the amount of channels increase over time. There are both personal and non-personal communications channels and both categories also have sub-channels. The non-personal communications channels include media, sales promotion, events and experiences and public relations channels. They are targeted to more than one person. Personal communications channels on the other hand are more individualized. The personal communications channels can be further divided into groups of advocate, expert and social communications channels. They include channels such as blogs, Facebook, Twitter and other social networking sites online. Which ever channels are chosen, companies should focus on communicating how their cause can be connected to their target audience’s values instead of asking the target audience to start valuing the company’s cause. It is also vital to communicate to the target group where and when it is best for the group to be reached in order to have as high impact as possible. (Kotler et al. 2012, 789 & 792.)

The step of establishing budget for the marketing communications might be one of the toughest to make as it varies greatly of how much different companies are spending on the marketing communications and there is no one simple solution to it. However, some methods have been created to ease the process. Often used method for budgeting the marketing communications is the affordable method where the company spends as much as it thinks it can afford. This type of thinking however completely ignores the investment role of marketing communications and the potential impact that it can have on increasing the sales. It also makes it more difficult to plan the budget in the long run. Other methods in establishing the marketing communications budget are percentage-of-sales method and the competitive parity method, just to mention a few. Advantages of choosing the percentage-of-sales method are only spending what the company can afford and forcing the managers to see the relationship between the cost, selling price and profit. Thirdly it encourages stability, as the competing companies would spend the same percentage of their sales to marketing communications. However, this method views marketing as determined by the sales rather than acknowledging it as the factor that results in the amount of sales. It also does not factor in the market opportunities, which is what the marketing budget should be based on in order to implement marketing communications successfully. Competitive parity method is not a method that marketers should be utilizing either, as it relies on the competitors knowing better how much should be budgeted for the marketing communications. Even in the same industry all companies differ so much from each other that trusting information from competitors should not be used as the base of any business decisions. (Kotler et al. 2012, 793-794.)

Kotler et al. (2012, 800) describe measuring results for marketing communications investments to be what the managers usually want, for the purpose of seeing the outcomes and revenues of the marketing communications. Many times only outputs are calculated and expenses counted. What measures the outcomes of effective marketing communications the best is the behaviour change. Its impact must be measured on the target group by for example asking if the recognition of the brand has gotten any better. Also obvious measures such as how many people bought the product should be researched as well as other behavioural changes such as how many people like the product.

3.4 Multichannel marketing strategy

When combinations of digital and traditional marketing channels are used in order to support the customer communications and product distribution of one or more products multichannel marketing is what is in question. However, a distinction between multichannel marketing strategy and multiple channels strategy must be made. Multichannel marketing strategy has cross-channel advantages through managing marketing of multiple channels. Multiple channel strategy on the other hand refers to simply providing multiple different distribution channels for the consumer to choose from when making a purchase. (Chaffey 2011, 24; Kotler et al. 2012, 719.)

Digital marketing is at its most effective when it is integrated with other communications channels instead of being isolated from them. Most companies in today's market environment adapt multichannel marketing. An integrated marketing channel system occurs when selling strategy for one channel reflects the strategies of selling through other channels. Utilizing more than one channel gives three advantages, which are increased market coverage, lower channel cost and more customized selling. Additionally multichannel customers can be more profitable than single-channel customers. However, there is a risk of conflict and problems with control and co-operation when it comes to multichannel marketing, as two or more channels might end up competing of the same customers. (Chaffey 2011, 24; Kotler et al. 2012, 718-719.)

To answer the question 'what separates traditional media marketing and digital media marketing?' some benefits of digital marketing should be looked into. According to Chaffey (2011, 415) it is important to recognize the differences between traditional and new media in order to create successful outcomes in channel satisfaction. The six I's of e-marketing describe the biggest benefits of the Internet media in comparison to the traditional media channels. The six I's of e-marketing are interactivity, intelligence, individualization, integration, industry restructuring and independence of location. Kotler et al. (2012, 131) on the other hand describe digital marketing to be an essential part of companies' overall marketing efforts. However, digital marketing should not dominate but rather complement and be integrated with other marketing activities (Kotler et al. 2012, 140).

4 Digital marketing communications planning

The terms digital marketing, e-marketing and Internet- or web-marketing all refer to the same field of applying technologies that form online marketing communications channels such as e-mail to a complete marketing plan. The six key types of digital media channels are search engine marketing (SEM), online PR, online partnerships, interactive advertising, opt-in e-mail marketing and social media marketing. The six online communications techniques as well as ten offline communications modes are presented in the figure below (Figure 7). (Chaffey 2011, 17.)

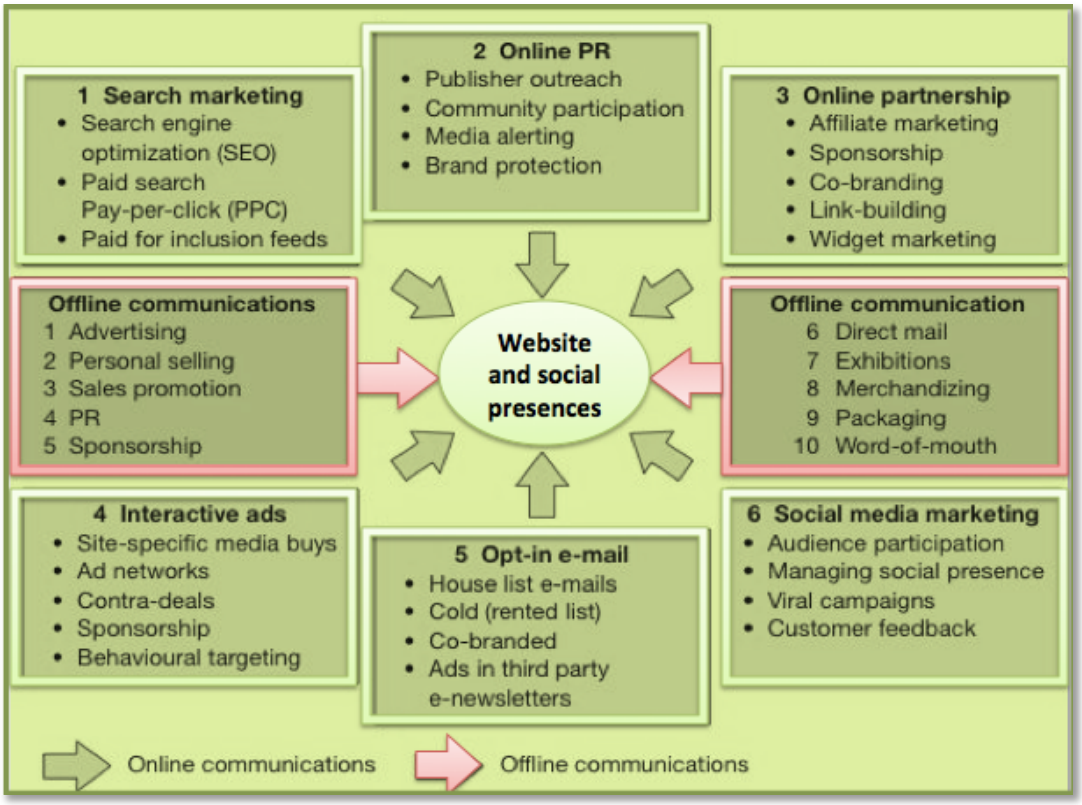

Figure 7. Online & offline communications techniques for e-commerce (Chaffey 2011, 18.)

The succinct definition of e-marketing is that it refers to achieving marketing goals through using electronic communications technology. The term Internet marketing on the other hand focuses on achieving marketing objectives through the use specific of Internet in conjunction with traditional media. The scope for e-marketing is wider and it has both an external and an internal perspective and it is also more consistent with the concept of e-business. (Chaffey 2011, 388.)

In addition to an overall e-business strategy, there needs to be an e-marketing plan established for detailing how the sell-side objectives of an e-business strategy will be met. However, the e-marketing plan should also always be integrated with the existing overall marketing plans. Having a distinct e-marketing plan will help to ensure the avoidance of many problems that may occur without a proper plan. In case there are no vast resources for implementing the plan, a compact summary of the objectives and outline of the strategies may suffice. In the figure (Figure 8) below the overall context for an e-marketing plan is presented. (Chaffey 2011, 388-390.)

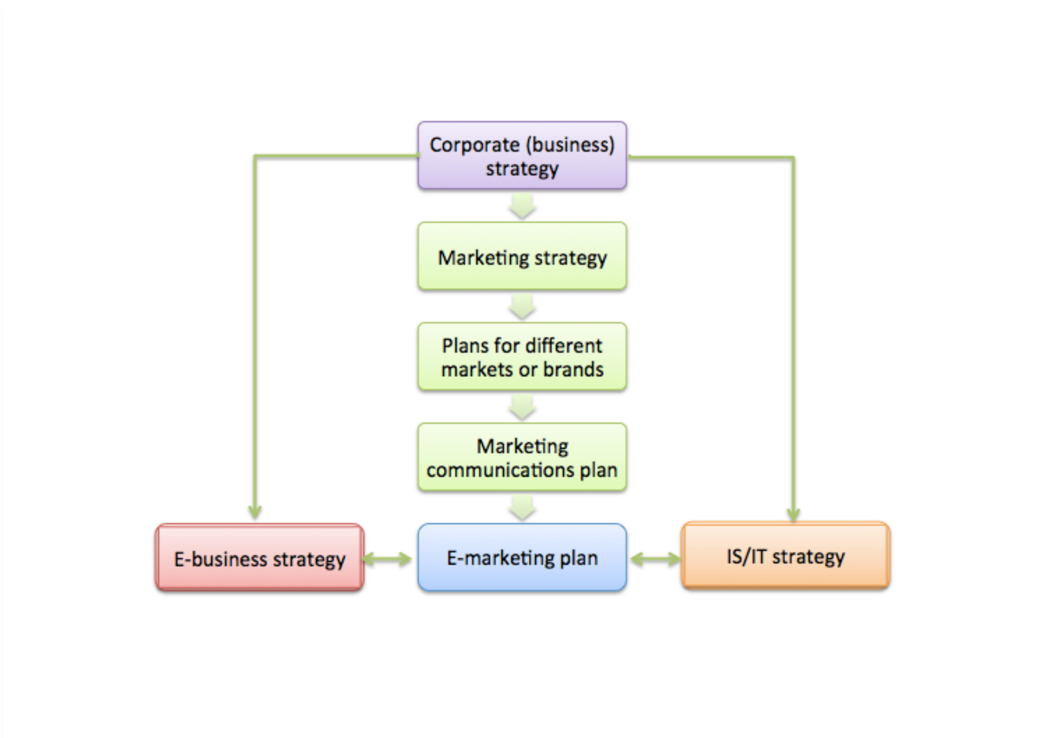

Figure 8. E-marketing plan in the context of other plans and overall strategies (Chaffey 2011, 384).

Clearly formed objectives are the key aspect of every successful e-marketing plan. They will inform the strategies to all stakeholders as well as communicate the tactics to the workforce. Strategies are most effective when they are supporting specific business objectives. (Chaffey 2011, 399.)

The impact of social media networks' emergence for the past ten years has been staggeringly big on marketing disciplines such as advertising and public relations, both theoretically and in practice (Kotler et al. 2012, 144; Scott 2010, 5-6). Social media has created such a real-time and two-way demand on marketing communications of companies that the traditional well in advance developed marketing programs are beginning to seem obsolete and impractical. The new types of marketing strategies are engaging publics and adapting changes according to conversations of users. What is important is who you are connected with and where and not so much about how many followers you have or how many Facebook likes organization has that matters. The people that build the network are what play the utmost importance. (Scott 2010, 16 & 23; Wang 2015, 110.)

Because social media can connect people in a unique way, it has become a very crucial part of marketers' tools for communicating to publics. It is allowing marketing practitioners to communicate with segmented groups in a way that is practically automated. Marketers can utilize their target groups' social media profiles as tools to learn about the lifestyles, interests and needs of their customers to deliver customized messages. This type of advertising on social media is a continuum to a trend to establish an intimate relationship with customers. (Wright et al. 2010, 75.)

Even as technological development has changed marketing throughout the history, it has never superseded those fundamental developments that came before, but instead altered the way businesses are able to communicate with their customers. Rather, the new groundbraking developments have offered more diversity for marketers in order to reach ever more consumers. The earliest forms of marketing and advertising are still well and alive even though the market environment is ruled by newer methods such as keyword optimizing and social networking. Digital marketing does not anymore refer to simply deciding whether to choose website or social media as the marketing communications channel to use. Rather common way to look at digital marketing nowadays is to understand that there is no single solution to it, however integration seems to be the key to success. Integrating between e-mail marketing, website design, search engine marketing and social media has become increasingly important. (Ryan & Jones 2012, 4 & 144.)

4.1 Implementing e-mail marketing successfully

E-mail has become essential for marketing since the era of the Web 2.0 started its emergence (Keehley & Abercrombie 2008, 142). It might seem to be on the verge of being replaced by younger forms of communication such as social media but nevertheless it still remains an important part of any integrated digital marketing strategies as long as it is conducted in an effective way. E-mail marketing is simple as a concept but in practice it requires some effort put into it in order to be successfully implemented. Even though e-mail is a form of direct marketing it is not equal to aimless mass marketing as it can be highly targeted at its best. (Miller 2011, 265 & 268; Ryan & Jones 2012, 148.)

According to Ryan and Jones (2012, 126) e-mail marketing can work as one of the most powerful elements in a digital marketing plan. The communication through e-mail with customers is easy and brings some personal feeling to the communication. However, anything that can be interpreted as mass spamming e-mail is not going to bring any success and will only destroy the senders' credibility. Therefore choosing the right approach is vitally important. With appropriate approach to e-mail marketing, it can work as a beneficial and effective marketing tool to deliver true value for both the customers and the company itself. The key to success is to make the e-mail messages relevant and interesting to the target customers so they can be confident every time they receive a message that it has something of value to them. (Ryan and Jones 2012, 126.)

As e-mail is an incredibly cost-effective channel for communications it offers a vast opportunity to deliver good return on investment (ROI), which makes e-mail marketing appealing to the financial decision makers in companies as well as the marketing staff. (Ryan & Jones 2012, 127.)

Building a list of e-mail subscribers

When starting to build a list of e-mail marketing recipients it is possible to start with simple tools such as Microsoft Excel without it being unmanageable. However, as the list of e-mail subscribers grow it is advisable to start using a paid customized e-mail marketing system that can be acquired online from various websites. Many of the systems offer professional e-mail templates, spam testing tools, tracking tools and tools for personalizing the content to fit the business image. In case a minimum amount of timely effort is wanted to be used for the e-mail marketing for reasons such as small amount of staff, it can be worth the monetary investment to start with an e-mail marketing tool right from the beginning. (Ryan & Jones 2012, 128.)

It is important to build a list that is highly targeted and that consists of only people who want to receive messages from the business. Building the list can be a rather lengthy process, but in the end the effort put in the building process will pay off. As the result there are only people on the list that will not regard the messages as spam and they are the prospects that are most likely to use the products or services offered by the company. The best way to start building the list is to encourage people to subscribe e-mails in every possible situation. The most natural place for that is the business' website and the other digital marketing channels of the business. A great call-to-action for followers on social media is to encourage them to introduce the e-mail subscription link to their followers and possibly use a small give-away as an incentive to maximize the potential amount of shares. Only imagination is the limit in using social media as a channel for collecting e-mail addresses for the list of subscribers. Another effective way is to make e-mail subscription a default choice whenever someone makes a registration on the website. This refers to a typical e-business action of 'soft opt-in' or 'soft lock-in', meaning that the target group members are in a position where there would be minor inconvenience of not subscribing. It is also a necessity to offer the possibility to unsubscribe in all e-mails sent for the purpose of not keeping people on the list unless they want to receive messages. (Ryan & Jones 2012, 129-130.)

Segmentation is fundamentally important in order to ensure that the e-mail messages are being sent to the most targeted audience. Dividing the list of subscribers into categories allows more thorough and focused messages, which leads to more personalized e-mail communication. Ultimately the response rate will be positively higher. (Ryan & Jones 2012, 145.)

The formatting of the e-mail messages

When it comes to the content of a marketing e-mail, it needs to be kept short and focusing the most important part of the message on the top left section of the e-mail called ‘above the fold’, which means the first couple of lines. This will ensure that also mobile users are taken into consideration, which is important because a majority of people reads e-mails from a mobile device these days. The subject line being the first thing that the receivers see needs to be always in a form that makes it catchy and descriptive but also compelling. It needs to always instantly communicate the value proposition of the message. To keep the interest and attention of the readers, the main point of the message needs to be issued in the very beginning. (Miller 2011, 299 & 304; Ryan & Jones 2012, 138 & 141.)

Attachments should never be a part of the e-mails as they might make the message seem like a possible virus-threat and additionally they take more space. Instead, whenever for example brochures or manuals are to be delivered to subscribers electronically, a simple link in the message will suffice. Also part of keeping the content simple is to not use any form of rich media in e-mail communication, such as video, flash or audio content. It would take the attention away from the actual message and the receivers’ computer might not show rich media in the form that the sender has intended. (Ryan & Jones 2012, 140.)

For making e-mails more appealing, it is advisable to use HTML as the format. It means that the e-mail can look like a website with all including media such as images in it. When the format is HTML the images and links are opened through the web server as the e-mail is viewed. It can offer a great continuity to the company brand image as then the e-mails are exactly like the landing page. One way to ensure that the recipient can in all situations open the message correctly is to offer subscribers the option of receiving the e-mails in either HTML or plain-text format (Miller 2011, 303). However it should be ensured that the message of the e-mail works also without images as some e-mail services take images as a security threat. The value proposition and the call-to-action should therefore not be presented in the images but instead in the text. (Ryan & Jones 2012, 133.)

Creating valuable content for e-mail marketing messages

E-mail marketing can be used roughly in two different ways, which are promoting something specific or sending out e-mail newsletters regularly even when there is nothing specific to promote. The latter option aims to help in building customer relationships through maintain-ing consumer engagement. E-mail newsletters are very popular as they offer an effective way to maintain brand image for a specifically targeted list of prospects on a regular basis. A good example of an effective weekly newsletter is offering the readers interesting industry news and web links to longer articles. (Ryan & Jones 2012, 127.)

All of the aspects of a digital marketing campaign should work seamlessly together and therefore also the e-mail messages need to be designed to work towards the digital brand continuity. However, even more important than the design is the content of the e-mail messages. The template design should not compete of attention with the content but rather complement it. The e-mail should always be constructed in a way that maximizes the response rate. This means putting effort into all parts of the message. The first thing to focus on is the subject line, which is very important, as it is the first thing the receiver sees. The best type of subject line tells the recipients right away how they can benefit from opening the message instead of just briefly summarizing the content. (Miller 2011, 298-299; Ryan & Jones, 134.)

Whether to include images or not is a rather complicated decision to make. However, the main rule of thumb is never including the value proposition or call-to-action to the pictures and the main message of the e-mail should be clear even if the receiver cannot see the pictures. If the reader reads the e-mail for example offline then it will not open up and including images also makes the e-mail slower to open. Best compromise is to use an appropriate mix of small-sized images and enough text to cover the main message even without the images showing properly. (Miller 2011, 302-303.)

Frequency and tracking e-mail performance

The appropriate frequency of sending marketing e-mails is not always easy to establish. Sending e-mails too often to customers might be irritating whereas sending them too infrequently results in losing readers' interest completely. Tracking and analyzing are the key tools for establishing how often and how many marketing e-mails should be sent to the target group. Keeping close eye on the data that occurs after each time there is a change made in the e-mail marketing efforts will help to clarify what type of behaviour makes receivers unsubscribe or not reciprocate to any call-to-actions. It is not in any case advisable to be fixated on a specific frequency unless there really is something of value to say. In case there is no interesting content to send then it is better to not send any message at all than sharing bad content. (Miller 2011, 307; Ryan & Jones 2012, 134, 137.)

E-mail tracking metrics	Characteristics	How to measure/calculate
Delivery rate	Not measurable except for the bounce rate (how many e-mails bounce right back). Estimation says around 20% of e-mails get caught on spam filters.	The total estimation of the delivery rate is: (The amount of e-mails sent – bounce rate)*0,8
Open rate	The percentage of, how many recipients actually open the e-mails. Can be measured from HTML formatted e-mails that include images.	The server tracks the openings of HTML e-mails with images.
Click-through rate	The amount of clicks on the links included in the e-mails. Total clicks or unique clicks can be measured, however unique clicks are more useful to measure.	CTR can be calculated i.e. by comparing unique clicks versus e-mails delivered tracking site visits from the e-mail inks.
Conversion rate	The percentage of recipients who not only click the link to your website but also takes some action on the site that you specified in the call-to-action of the e-mail.	Can be calculated by dividing total conversions by the number of e-mails successfully delivered.
ROI (return on investment)	E-mail marketing typically has higher ROI than other forms of marketing.	Dividing the profit by the money that has been spent on the e-mail marketing (campaign).
Unsubscribe data (%)	The percentage of people who are removing their names on the e-mail list.	Attention needs to be paid if the amount starts to increase.

Table 2. Common metrics for tracking e-mail marketing effectiveness (Miller 2011, 309-312.)

Tracking performance rates is always important in all business actions. The benefit of e-mail marketing performance tracking is that it gives a variety of direct metrics to track. Six common metrics for tracking how effective the e-mail marketing is are presented in the table above (Table 2). (Miller 2011, 309.)

4.2 Using Twitter as the main social media channel

Twitter is said to be the most effective micro blogging tool and it can be considered as a necessary part of many online marketing campaigns these days. Micro blog refers to a service that broadcasts short blog posts to a group of subscribers that in Twitter are referred to as followers. Both individuals and organizations, private and public broadly use Twitter. The power of Twitter lies in its simplicity and ability to create immediate feedback on truly timely matters. As an example, public organizations are informing citizens about updated instructions of how to act in cases of emergencies in USA. Another reason for Twitter's success is how it works as a two-way communication tool, enabling for example customers to ask specialized questions and receiving answers possibly within the matter of minutes. Finally, one of the biggest strengths of Twitter is that many experts from various fields are using it. It is full of people with deep knowledge of a particular topic and those people are willing to share their knowledge and discuss about it with other users. The important thing to do is to find the experts in the field and create a connection with them. The true value of micro blogging is not so much in single posts but more in the collective assembly of multiple mini posts that is more valuable as a whole, than the parts are on their own. (Comm & Taylor 2015, 19-23 & 90; Miller 2011, 364; Ryan & Jones 2012, 166.)

Twitter has true value as a micro blogging tool. The total understanding of a company that the followers get leads to strong connections with them. The key to success is to be forthcoming and answering questions, providing interesting information to followers that they want to read and directing them to accurate and useful blog posts and articles. Ultimately, it means it is most important to be communicating with people. (Comm & Taylor 2015, 20.)

Twitter in comparison to other social media platforms has a more professional feel, as it is not so much used in entertainment purposes as opposed to for example Facebook is. As opposed to Facebook, Twitter is also very open as a community (Comm & Taylor 2015, 125). These are some of the reasons that make Twitter very suitable for WeLive's marketing communications.

Creating a targeted list of followers on Twitter

Creating a suitable list of followers is one of the most important tasks to do in Twitter. The process of building a list of followers is challenged with a decision of what type of followers to reach for. Whether to have a large but general audience or aim for a targeted niche audience, or perhaps a combination of both, is the tough question to start with. Using Twitter is all about following, reading, replying to others' tweets, creating own content in the form of short tweets and tracking down people worth knowing. The process of becoming an established Twitter user takes quite a lot of time and will not happen overnight. (Comm & Taylor 2015, 113.)

Followers are valuable because the more followers there is the more people a message can reach. However, establishing a group of loyal followers can take a lot of time. The golden rule in making the process rather faster is to always only create and publish content that is valuable to the aspired and specifically targeted followers. One strategy to gain enough followers is to follow as many users as possible and hope for them to follow back as a courtesy. This strategy however is not the most effective and might end up being a bad choice of strategy in the long run according to Comm and Taylor (2015, 87). An experiment of Stefan Tanase has showed that by following 50 000 users, only 8000 users followed in return, meaning that the follow-back rate was only 17 percent. Therefore one reason for not using this strategy is that it takes more time than is worth using when taking into account the slim results. Also, building the follower base this way means that only a few if any, followers will actually be interested in the tweets. From the marketing point of view this will lead to having a less targeted group of followers and the conversion rate from followers to users of the company's products or services would anyhow be low in the end. (Comm & Taylor 2015, 85 & 87-88.)

The decision about whether to have a large mass of homogenous followers or smaller more targeted group of followers is not always easy to make. According to Comm and Taylor (2015, 89) one way to select the type of follower group is to assess the broadness of the topic's appeal pragmatically. If the topic is very popular, it is best to aim for large group and if the topic appeals only to a small crowd, then it is better to do some narrowing down. In the case of WeLive it would therefore be advisable to narrow the group of followers to specifically people who might have interest in the topic of developing public services through utilizing open data. Unfortunately there is no scientific formula for creating a follower base on Twitter and many times the decision is based rather on intuition than hard data. However, a valuable network on Twitter is always built from experts of the field, no matter how slim or large the follower base is. (Comm & Taylor 2015, 89-90.)

It is most efficient to identify key Twitter users on a topic and create such a relationship with them that gets them to follow back out of interest. This type of follower search is based on the idea of influencers and leaders that have the most power in social media. Gaining a reputation as one of the influencers on the chosen field will make it easy to persuade followers to use the offered product or service as well, which is the ultimate goal of any marketing communications. (Comm & Taylor 2015, 93.)

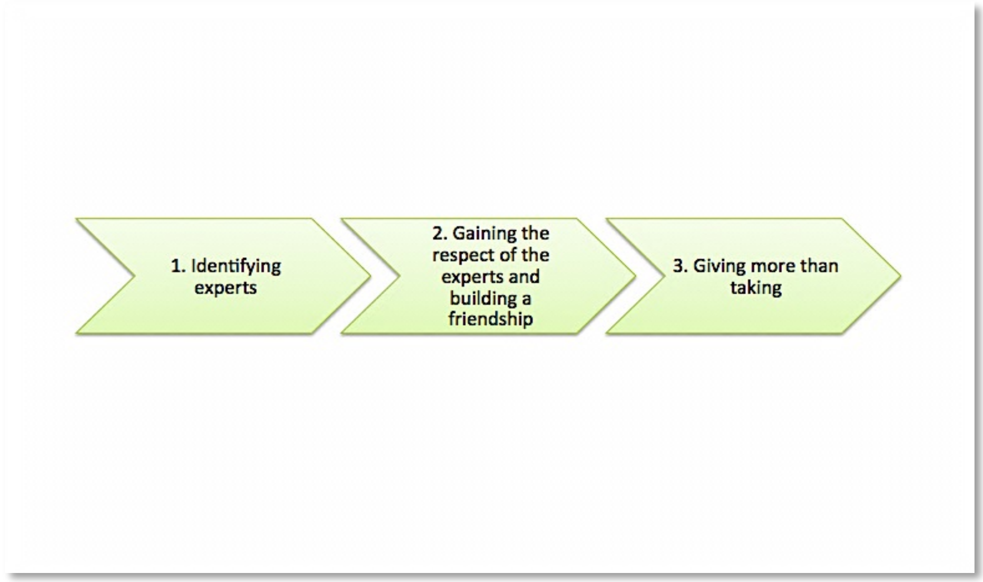

Figure 9. Three simple steps in establishing reputable follower list on Twitter (Comm & Taylor 2015, 96).

One of Twitter's biggest assets is that people are willing to share valuable knowledge for a large amount of people for free. Sharing only valuable information is therefore a necessity in terms of standing out from the crowd and eventually gaining respect even from other experts. This means that there is a need to share information that the readers do not already know. Doing this will eventually lead to a situation where the number of followers will start to grow and will consist of users that are truly interested. (Comm & Taylor 2015, 97-98.)

When followers become enthusiasts of the topic they will want to contribute. Having followers wanting to have an influence on the products or services a company offers is a great asset. One way of making followers feel like part of an exclusive club is to show them a piece of something that is yet to be published anywhere else. Followers can be a great source of information for a company to identify problems or areas of improvement before publishing the product or service. Also making changes according to customer feedback will make the followers share and promote the business and products or services as if they owned it. Also offering a free download, free gift or a free online course can work as a motivator for the followers to tweet about the business. To keep the attention of the followers it is necessary to keep constantly repeating the message. Starting a Twitter campaign and then quitting to publish new tweets can be a mistake for a business as the momentum is lost and the audience will most likely disappear. (Comm & Taylor 2015, 152-153, 155 & 198-199.)

Creating valuable content on Twitter

The secret to success on Twitter as well as elsewhere on social media is to create valuable content. On Twitter the limit for the content is 140 characters, which can be seen both as a threat or an opportunity. In-depth how-to articles for example are out of options on Twitter but by following a few simple rules it is possible to create good content that is short enough to fit Twitter's length requirements. Spamming as a form of promoting a business is never a good strategy, no more on Twitter than anywhere else. Spamming on Twitter can mean for example constantly promoting something, such as "Sign up for our e-mail list through this link". Also adding popular hashtags to the tweets when they actually have nothing to do with the content is spamming and should be avoided at all times. (Comm & Taylor 2015, 116-117.)

A jackpot for a marketer on social media is going viral, which means that something catches the attention of a large amount of people in a short period of time and spreads through the Internet. On Twitter going viral happens through re-tweeting and by doing this in a way that the credit of the original tweet goes whoever tweeted it first. Joining conversations on Twitter should always be done by adding something new and valuable to the conversation. If you have valuable information to share in the conversation then usually others are also available to share their knowledge in a very communal and open way. Asking questions from followers is an easy way to transform them from readers into contributors. The questions can be simple requests for information or discussion starters such as asking for an opinion. This will both help keeping the Twitter account active by followers and also make your followers feel appreciated for asking their opinion. (Comm & Taylor 2015, 119, 125 & 141.)

The most successful Twitter users do not simply make announcements of their products but instead spark and join conversations actively. Conversations being public to all Twitter users make them even more valuable, as users outside one's own follower base also see the tweets. People will need to feel there is information that is worth reading and therefore it is advisable to only comment strictly on the topic the company is known for. (Comm & Taylor 2015, 107-108.)

Characteristics of Twitter success

Some characteristics of a successful Twitter account are briefly described in this chapter. To mention a few, for example tweeting by named individuals instead of through a stiff corporate account gives more personal and approachable feeling of the company. Having real conversation with customers instead of simply broadcasting advertisements to customers is the key to success on Twitter. And finally, following a lot of Twitter users to demonstrate listening to customers as well as talking to them is an important to remember when building success on Twitter. (Comm & Taylor 2015, 185.)

Including a photo to the tweets is an effective way to attract more attention to the content. Using spontaneity might be a powerful tool on Twitter too because Twitter is based on real-time use. For example having a spontaneous contest for only those of the followers who happen to be online at a particular moment can create feeling of missing an opportunity for those who missed it and read about it later on. Afterwards those users would follow the account more intensively to not miss any opportunities in the future. (Comm & Taylor 2015, 142 & 149.)

Hashtags are particularly helpful in showing the audience of being knowledgeable about the industry and in demonstrating that the company is the leader when it comes to source of information. A hashtag refers to a keyword that is marked with #-symbol. Hashtags are meant for making it easy to find discussions about a particular topic regardless of which accounts are followed. Hashtags are especially useful for breaking news stories such as storm warnings. They are most powerful when used in real-time chat sessions called TweetChats. They allow the participants to get together in a conference-like way and trade information. The users can either be simply guest participants or host their own chat. (Comm & Taylor 2015, 201-202.)

With right tweets it is possible to persuade followers to take action to achieve business goals such as increase the amount of people to visit the company website. Another good call-to-action for Twitter is persuading followers to subscribe for an e-mail newsletter. Unfortunately Twitter does not tell any detailed statistics that could be used as metrics to evaluate success. The only numerical data Twitter offers are the amount of followers and the users followed and the amount of tweets posted. (Comm & Taylor 2015, 218 & 220.)

4.3 Partially automated supportive social media channels

Social media defined by Chaffey (2011, 6-7) refers to a media category that specifically focuses on participation and peer-to-peer communication that happens between individuals. This happens through sites that provide capabilities of developing user-generated content. Messaging and commenting are also big part of social media. Managing content on social media has been a topical issue in many businesses in the recent years as they are seeking to engage with customers online. There is a debate whether managing social media is even possible. It is a necessary priority for many companies today to monitor and respond to comments of social media network users as a way to determine how to engage with the customers online. Social media creates a vast amount of new opportunities for businesses and it should be harnessed in both e-businesses and traditional businesses. Social media networks are popular because they enable an easy way to connect with a large amount of people without a need of individual interaction with each person and that saves a lot of time especially in the business context. The connectivity is also the biggest single reason why social media is important for marketers. (Chaffey 2011, 6-7; Miller 2011, 362 & 368.)

Social media is not at all about running campaigns like the traditional marketing many times is. Instead, social media marketing should be targeted towards building a channel for engagement with customers that is continuous and meaningful. This is in contrary to the traditional one-way marketing where campaigns are meant to tell something from the company's perspective to the customers and reciprocating is not so easy. The power of social media lies in this meaningful engagement to customers, existing and new potential ones too. The best use of social media is integrating it and its benefits through the whole organization instead of it being just another task for the marketing department. Even though campaigns should not be all there is to social media usage they still hold value for the organizations' marketing efforts. What successful social media campaigns can do is arouse attention and raise awareness of the company. But what really makes a social media campaign a success is the conversation that follows it. Social media is still in its infancy and paradoxically at the same time people are already evolving out of it. (Agresta & Bough 2011, 9-10.)

Keeping track of what is happening in all of the social media platforms of a business has become easier than it was years ago when social media had just emerged. In today's digital era there are integration tools called social media dashboards to use for monitoring multiple social media accounts all at once. There are various forms of dashboard software to use. As an example, one of the most well-known dashboard service is called HootSuite. Hootsuite enables for example track mentions of a brand and cross-posting messages to many social media channels simultaneously. Using a dashboard may require a small financial on-going investment, but it offers convenience and saving time as it helps with making updates on social media accounts partially automated. Also a big benefit of using a dashboard service is how it makes it easier to follow social media statistics without any extra effort. (Miller 2011, 412; Ryan & Jones 2012,168.)

Using videos and online workshops as a part of the digital marketing efforts is smart for any business these days. Online video advertising is a massive and still growing sector with many underlying opportunities for businesses to benefit from (Ryan & Jones 2012, 256). YouTube videos have a great opportunity to start living a life of their own which makes it a beneficial tool in generating traffic from a large quantity of users. The videos on YouTube can be viewed and shared by thousands of users. And not only is it an affordable tool for companies to create and share their ads, but it already reaches bigger audience than expensive and restricted television ads. Only costs in utilizing YouTube videos are shooting and editing costs, which can be kept very low if necessary. Success on YouTube requires creating the correct type of content that both current and potential customers want to watch. (Miller 2011, 477-478.)

According to Miller (2011, 481), successful YouTube videos fall into three categories, which are classified as informative, educational or entertaining. A video that attracts viewers must therefore offer something of value to its target audience. The channel page should also be paid attention to in order to gain benefit from using YouTube as a part of a marketing communications plan. It is the page that offers YouTube users the opportunity to find more information about the business through a link to the company website. (Miller 2011, 493.)

To make YouTube videos visible it is always necessary to promote them upon publishing on all other social media channels. Getting all cross-media with videos to gain more and more shares is crucial in order to get more viewers and eventually customers. Cross promoting through many social media accounts is always powerful (Comm & Taylor 2015, 109). Including YouTube videos on the company website as well is beneficial. A complete video page on the website where people can watch the videos without leaving the site, including an archive of older videos as well can be an easy and effective way to add value to the website in the eyes of customers. (Miller 2011, 499.)

5 Multiple methods research for the marketing communications of WeLive

According to Collis and Hussey (2009, 3) the concept of research has no concise definition in the literature despite its central role in both business and academic activities. The general agreement offers three common attributes for anything that can be described as research. It is a process of investigation and it also is methodical and systematic. Finally, it has a view to increasing knowledge. The nature of research shows that appropriate methods for collecting and analyzing data are needed, and they need to be precisely applied. The purpose of a research is investigating a research question with the objective of creating new knowledge. There are many differentiating ways to classify research, but the process of thorough classification will lead to better understanding of different ways to conduct research. Some possible ways to classify research are for example according to its purpose, the research process, the logic or the outcome of the research. (Collis & Hussey 2009, 3-4.)

The guiding research question for the research of this thesis is ‘What type of marketing communications actions need to be taken to maximize the awareness in the target group of WeLive open innovation platform during and following its piloting campaign?’ Sub-questions that were set for the research for this thesis were: ‘Which modes of the Kotler’s marketing communications mix should the pilot campaign be implemented with?’ ‘Through which channels should the marketing communications of the WeLive platform be implemented?’ And finally: ‘How to ensure achieving the marketing communications objectives for WeLive with low marketing budget?’

Research philosophy and paradigms

Research philosophy as a term relates to development of knowledge and the nature of it. It is important to be aware of what type of research philosophy is chosen as it reflects the way the world is being viewed and it will have an affect on the decision about research strategy and methods as well. Collis and Hussey (2009, 56) are claiming the main two research paradigms to be positivism and interpretivism. When identifying the research paradigm according to the methodological assumption the research paradigm of this thesis would be interpretivist. The characteristics of an interpretivist methodological assumption that concerns the research process are a small size of the sample, using a number of research methods to obtain various perceptions of the phenomena and seeking to understand what is happening in a given situation. (Collis & Hussey 2009, 55-56, 60; Saunders et al. 2009, 107-109.)

Research approach and method

The research approach for addressing specific research questions can be classified as either qualitative or quantitative. A simple distinction between the two can be made, by stating that quantitative approach refers to a data collection technique or data analysis procedure that generates or utilizes numerical data. Qualitative approach on the other hand means a data collection technique or data analysis procedure that generates or utilizes non-numerical data. However, in practice the separation of the two approaches is not quite so straightforward. Elements of both approaches can be incorporated into the same study for complementing the total understanding of the studied topic. Therefore the classification of the research approach to either quantitative or qualitative can be misleading. The term method refers to a technique of collecting and analyzing data. When a single research study uses a mix of qualitative and quantitative tools and procedures as well as both primary and secondary data in combination, the research can be referred to as multiple methods research. (Collis & Hussey 2009, 7 & 67; Saunders et al. 2009, 151.)

In-depth knowledge is required to understand the topic well enough for making concluding generalizations from the research of this thesis. Therefore the research approach in this thesis is qualitative rather than quantitative. The specific research choice for the research conducted for this thesis is a multiple methods research that is furthermore specified as mixed-model research choice. The mixed methods approach refers generally to a study that uses both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques and analysis procedures. Furthermore mixed-model research refers to combining the two, but even more profoundly than any other research choice. The combining of qualitative and quantitative techniques is extended to all phases of the research. For example the data might be collected quantitatively and yet analyzed qualitatively by qualifying numerical data into a narrative text. Also qualitative data can be quantified by converting narrative into numerical codes for statistical analysis. (Saunders et al. 2009, 152-153.)

Data gathering

Data gathering sources are classified as either primary or secondary data sources according to the purpose of the research. Gathering primary data refers to data that is gathered from an original source such as for example own surveys or interviews. Whereas gathering secondary data refers to the type of data that is gathered from already existing sources that are based on someone else's previous research. Secondary data resources can be for example databases or publications. (Collis & Hussey 2009, 73.)

Secondary data can be utilized beneficially to work as indispensable ground survey for gathering primary data and additionally it can work as validation for own primary data, which is also the case in this thesis. Therefore both primary and secondary data were gathered for the purposes of this thesis. Because the thesis is product-oriented, a quantitative research was conducted only as a minor part of the complete research, as the orientation was more on the end-product development rather than on creating widely generalizable quantitative data. More specific information of how data was gathered and analyzed for the two parts of the research of this thesis is described in the benchmarking and e-survey chapters below.

5.1 Benchmarking for an e-organization's marketing communications

In the case of WeLive a mix of benchmarking methods have been chosen to best suit the e-organization's somewhat unique characteristics. Trial benchmarking and solution-driven benchmarking have been chosen as the ruling methods in the benchmarking study for WeLive as well as also an e-marketplace specific benchmarking scorecard criteria is used. Traditional benchmarking theory is also described briefly to give a broader sense of what benchmarking is like as a research tool. Two similar and well performing, and thus successful organizations were chosen as the target of the benchmarking process for establishing comparison of best practices for WeLive's marketing communications.

Benchmarking methods

Kotler et al. (2012, 338) describe benchmarking to be a tool used by companies and organizations to learn from their best performing counterparts. The tasks that require improvement are listed and well-performing companies are used as a target of comparison. The traditional and most commonly used benchmarking process consists of seven steps. However, the broader description of benchmarking is not straightforward. It can be either seen as a one-off process or as a continuous, everlasting process of measuring benchmarking data or metrics. Usually the comparison is made against either the toughest competitors or as in the case of WeLive, the industry leaders to gain awareness of the highest performance levels possible achieving.

Also the amount of required steps for a successful benchmarking study varies. Stapenhurst (2009, 3) summarizes the most common aspects in benchmarking studies to be comparison of performance levels to see which organizations are performing better and identification, improvement and adoption of the practices that lead to superior levels of performance. There is no consensus on one particular method of benchmarking to be seen superior to others. To achieve organization-specific objectives it is a great asset that there is no single specific method to force-fit all benchmarking studies into. Also multiple methods can be mixed to meet specific objectives as has been done with the benchmarking study of WeLive's marketing communications. (Kotler et al. 2012, 338; Stapenhurst 2009, 3-5 & 18-19.)

Competitor benchmarking is especially important in the e-marketplace because of its dynamic and ever-changing characteristics as a medium. It enables monitoring competitors in a more fast way than using print communications and the benefit is that plenty of online sources to find information about the competitors exist for the purpose. E-business-specific scorecard criteria have been partially utilized in the benchmarking study for WeLive to evaluate the marketing communications effectiveness of the websites of the target organizations. The scorecard criteria were chosen because the metrics reflect the research questions. By evaluating the scorecard criteria of the target organizations' websites some answers for the research questions were found. (Chaffey 2011, 283 & 396-397; Miller 2011, 61.)

Trial benchmarking as a benchmarking method is an on-going process of comparison to monitor competition and gain new ideas. It suits best for improving websites by making comparison to best performing organizations' websites such as in the case of this thesis. Specific attributes of trial benchmarking studies are always dependent on the scope and objectives of the study and therefore cannot be generalized entirely. (Stapenhurst 2009, 37-39.) In the WeLive case trial benchmarking is used for the purpose of identifying areas of high performance in the target organizations and further on to conduct marketing communications efforts according to those areas of strength. Implementing benchmarking through a process that strongly relies on intuition is referred to as solution-driven benchmarking. The intuitive search for solutions or best practices is not quite the traditional way to implement benchmarking. As opposed to traditional benchmarking process in solution-driven benchmarking process the problem is not so much defined through numerical data based measures. (Keehley & Abercrombie 2008, 133-134.)

Benchmarking metrics

The question of what to measure with benchmarking is not an easy question to answer to but nevertheless is crucially important step in the process. Most important thing that needs to be established for all metrics is to make sure they fit the scope and objectives of what is being studied. A common difficulty in establishing the metrics for a benchmarking study is choosing how many metrics to measure and unfortunately there is no straightforward answer to that. Too many metrics will result in complications in all aspects of the benchmarking study. However, if there are too few metrics chosen there is a risk of not meeting the objectives of the study. A lot of organizations tend to focus on hard data as a metric as opposed to focusing on so-called soft metrics. Hard data refers to numerical metrics such as costs, sales and profits where as soft metrics can refer to things like marketing and research and employee satisfaction. Soft metrics are much more difficult to measure which might be one of the reasons they are often given less importance even though they are just as important to measure and benchmark than the hard metrics. In many cases the soft factors are indicators of future hard metrics as paying attention to them often results in better profits later on. (Stapenhurst 2009, 139-141 & 175 & 177.)

The benchmarking study for WeLive

The benchmarking study for WeLive was conducted to measure and compare the marketing communications efforts of two high performing organizations that are operating in the same field of open data platform services. The benchmarking study was conducted in November 2015. Three high performing organizations similar to WeLive were originally chosen as the targets. However, as the benchmarking process evolved the targets were narrowed down to two organizations due to saturation of the results. The excluded organization turned out to be very similar but lower in performing, as OpenIDEO and therefore the data collected did not provide any added value. The final two target organizations are OpenIDEO and Challenge.gov. The commissioner initially suggested both of these organizations for the benchmarking study and that is the most important reason for choosing specifically them.

The objective for the qualitative benchmarking study in this thesis was to gain valuable knowledge and richness of data rather than creating quantifiable data. As often is the case in research that is conducted under an interpretive paradigm, the scope of the research needed to be limited, to be able to focus more thoroughly on the data that was collected. The width of the study for this thesis was limited by reducing the amount of qualitative data collected so that it would fit the requirements of a Bachelor's degree thesis.

The target organizations

OpenIDEO is a global community that draws to innovation, ideas, optimism and opinions for solving public issues for the collective social good. It works in a collaborative manner and working together is what it relies on. To describe it more tangibly it is an online tool with four distinctive steps utilized for going through the creative problem solving process. The steps are inspiring, concepting, evaluating and collaborating. OpenIDEO's OI engine is a similar platform to WeLive in a bigger scale. It has acquired success by many measuring metrics and therefore as the highest performer is the best target organization for the benchmarking study for WeLive. OpenIDEO offers inspiration and recognition for the dynamic and global community of its users. It is based on strongly believing in the mind-set that by sharing, co-creating and innovating together with people from different backgrounds best results will be accomplished. Design and innovation company IDEO, which OpenIDEO is a part of, uses an approach that is human-centered and collaborative. The objective is to solve multifaceted issues. This kind of methodology is what design thinking is all about. (OpenIDEO 2015.)

The challenges that are being issued by OpenIDEO community for collaborate solving have gathered as much as 100 000 people to participate by the end of the year 2015. The challenges have been ranging widely by their topics from mobile technology development projects to fighting Ebola. The challenges are sparking engaged discussion, collaborations, and innovative ideas as well as new initiatives. (OpenIDEO 2015.)

The majority of the OpenIDEO website's visitors come from two countries, USA and India, as the overall percentage of the visitors that come from these countries is 53,3% (18.11.2015). Further demographics of OpenIDEO website visitors according to Alexa.com indicate most users to be female in comparison to the Internet average gender division and they are fairly well educated with a graduate school or college degree. The most popular browsing location is either school or work. It needs to be noted that the information gathered from Alexa.com is subject to change and is only presented as rough guideline of the demographics in the moment of collecting the data (18.11.2015). (Alexa/OpenIDEO 2015.)

Figure 10. The building blocks of OpenIDEO's mission statement presented on the website

OpenIDEO has user accounts on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, but it is not active on Facebook regardless of having a user account for some selected content sharing. Instagram is also used infrequently. The main digital marketing communications channels for OpenIDEO are Twitter and e-mail. Comparison of Twitter and Facebook activity reveals Twitter to be the main social media channel. The layout of the website is based on pictures and is easy to use. OpenIDEO's mission statement 'Working together to design solutions for the world's biggest challenges' plays an important role on the website and is concisely present on their digital channels.

The second target organization Challenge.gov is a hub for federal incentive competitions that lists challenges and prize competitions for federal government agencies. It has been operating for five years (by year 2015) in the field of open innovation in government. The government seeks innovative solutions from the public through Challenge.gov. More than 250 000 users from around the globe have participated in solving public issues through its platform. It offers benefits of stimulating the markets; driving collaborative innovation and powering ideas into reality, just to mention a few aspects. Registering to Challenge.gov is free and anyone who is interested can sign up. (Challenge.gov 2015.)

Most of the Challenge.gov website's visitors come from USA as the overall percentage of the visitors that come from there is 50,3% (18.11.2015). Further demographics of Challenge.gov website visitors according to Alexa.com indicate most users to be female in comparison to the Internet average gender division and most have finished graduate school. The most popular browsing location is work place. Most of Challenge.gov users visit google.com (24%) before entering the site but also Facebook and YouTube are popular sites before using Challenge.gov. The information gathered from Alexa.com is subject to change and is only presented as rough guideline of the demographics in the moment of data collecting (18.11.2015). (Alexa/Challenge.gov 2015.)

Figure 11. Challenge.gov user instructions (Challenge.gov 2015)

The main marketing communications channels for Challenge.gov are Twitter, Facebook and e-mail. Buttons that lead to these channels are presented on the website both on the header as well as the footer. The call-to-action to Twitter is highlighted on the footer with the use of a larger font. Also comparison of Twitter and Facebook activity reveals Twitter to be the main social media channel for Challenge.gov. The layout of the website is simple and effortless to use. The logo plays an important part and there are no other objects to distract the attention of the site visitors. The mission statement of Challenge.gov is ‘Government challenges, your solutions’ as presented on the logo. It is clearly and concisely presented across the social platforms as well as on the website itself.

Scorecard criteria for the websites:

Chaffey’s (2011, 283) scorecard criteria for rating e-businesses were partially used in the benchmarking of the websites of the two target organizations to evaluate the marketing effectiveness of the websites. The complete scorecard criteria were narrowed down to three most important metrics to focus on. The three chosen scorecard criteria metrics are ease of use, customer confidence and relationship services. The description of each criterion is presented in the table below (Table 3) as well as OpenIDEO and Challenge.gov specific summarized results. A written analysis of the results follows after the table.

Scorecard category	Scorecard criteria description	OpenIDEO	Challenge.gov
Ease of use	**1. Demonstrations of functionality** **2. Consistency of navigation and design**	1. Most important links in the header, easy e-mail subscribing 2. Links are coherent, highly visual consistent design	1. Simple formatting, social media buttons, Twitter feed 2. All links are similar and design is concisely simple
Customer confidence	**3. Availability of customer service** **4. Privacy policies, service user terms, fees**	3. Contact link in the footer opens e-mail automatically 4. Easy to find, long and heavy formatting	3. Contact sheet: easy to find 4. Easy to find: only one click & no complicated links
Relationship services	**5. Online help, tutorials, glossary, FAQ** **6. Personalization of data**	5. Clear instructions in picture format, FAQ in the footer 6. Data is personalized for the target audience	5. Simple instructions of use in picture format & written user guide 6. Generic data

Table 3. Scorecard benchmarking criteria and implementation in the target organizations

Consistency in functionality, navigation and design is on a high level on the websites of both organizations. Differences are in using pictures for visualization and in the social media buttons, as OpenIDEO's website is built on pictures whereas Challenge.gov has clear social media buttons on the website. Contact sheets are easy to find on both websites as well as privacy policies, terms and information about fees (which there are none). Instructions for use are clear on both websites as well, simple picture format with the process visualized makes it easy for anyone to understand the use of the services. That is important as both services are targeted for regular people that do not necessarily have expert level information about the field of open sharing. OpenIDEO's website is however more appealing to a specific target group that appreciates highly visual content whereas Challenge.gov aims for more generic and simple appeal.

Twitter use in the target organizations

Both target organizations joined Twitter in 2010; OpenIDEO in March and Challenge.gov in July meaning that there is only four months difference in how long both organizations have used Twitter. The similarity makes the comparison more simple and accurate when it comes to overall activity. In the table below (Table 4) the most important aspects of the Twitter use of the two target organizations are briefly described.

Data from: 2.11. -15.11.2015	OpenIDEO	Challenge.gov
Amount of tweets (as a metric for activity)	• Overall: 8000+ • Weekly: 14 • Max per day: 7	• Overall: 3000+ • Weekly: 2 • Max per day: 2
Followers & following ratio	77 000/612	12 000/467
Cover photo	• Appeals as easy to approach • People generating ideas by brainstorm-ing (post-its) • Collaboration • Smiling faces • Showing the value proposition instead of clearly written mis-sion statement	• Generic • Multiplied logo with mission statement written
Special content	• Videos: One video share • Webinars: Periscope • Ads for e-mail sub-scriptions	• Webinars: 2 webinar links

Table 4. Twitter use of the benchmarking target organizations 2.11. -15.11.2015

OpenIDEO’s Twitter account has vast follower base possibly due to the active and engaged use. OpenIDEO tweets every day, often multiple times a day, most active day to tweet being Wednesday. The Twitter account shows strong user engagement and concise message of cre-ating social good. Call-to-actions to take part in the OpenIDEO challenges are clear and also concise. Pictures and video content has been used to visually engage users that appreciate visual content. E-mail newsletters and webinars are also advertised through Twitter with links and call-to-action incentives.

Figure 12. OpenIDEO's cover picture on Twitter, which represents the mission statement

Challenge.gov also has fairly active Twitter account. They are not as user engaged as OpenIDEO but they do clearly state the mission statement, which explains the meaning for their operation in a simple form. Challenge.gov tweets roughly only once a week on Tuesdays. The content utilizes some rich media such as videos and also call-to-actions to other sites, such as webinar platforms are clear.

Summary of the results and conclusions

Both services show emphasis on e-mail and Twitter as the main digital marketing channels. E-mail subscriptions are aggressively offered by buttons and distinguishable sign-up fields, as well as by call-to-action links actively shared on social media channels. Twitter buttons are most visibly distinguishing on the websites and it also is the most active social media channel for both organizations. Visuality plays an important role in both explaining and simplifying the rather complicated functions of the services as well as in showing the value proposition in the form of mission statements. Websites' functionality, easiness of navigation and concise design are the basis for all digital marketing efforts for both organizations, as it is clear they have been paid attention to with the needs of the target audience on mind.

Active engagement on Twitter with other Twitter users has lead to vast follower base and thus larger visibility for OpenIDEO and visual content such as pictures and videos have created better user engagement. To send out an idea about a welcoming and easily approachable organization the cover picture on Twitter should be paid attention to and OpenIDEO has succeeded in the task. Webinars and online tutorials are part of both organizations' digital marketing communications and they are also actively advertised through social media.

As a final conclusion the attributes that have lead to the wide visibility and popularity of these two services can be utilized for improving the digital marketing communications of similar organizations. As there are no equal comparison counterparts for WeLive in Finland and as the WeLive platform is only starting to operate in Finland, these attributes should be utilized as the starting point for the digital marketing communications efforts rather than improvement metrics. Further data of whether the conclusions are applicable for WeLive's target segments are being researched with the e-survey described in the following chapter.

5.2 E-survey of suitable marketing channels

A structured survey or questionnaire refers to a list of repeatable questions that are asked from a specific group of people. To address the research questions the group is asked for example what they think, do or feel about specific phenomena. In an online survey the filling-of-the survey form is solely conducted by the respondents themselves, which can be the most time-effective and also the cheapest way to conduct a survey. A suitable sample for a survey varies in size and level of expertise, but nevertheless it always needs to be carefully planned before conducting the survey. (Collis & Hussey 2009, 192.)

When a survey is used as a part of qualitative study, as is the case in this thesis, the aim is not so much on collecting as large sample as possible. Instead the objective is to gain more in-depth insights of the chosen sample cases. This is due to not aiming for generalization of the whole population, which would be the case in surveys that are forming a purely quantitative study. (Collis & Hussey 2009, 77.)

When conducting an online survey there are some limitations that naturally occur. One limitation being that it is impossible to reach all potential customers with the survey, as the online survey can only be participated by those people who find the link to it either from the website or through a direct e-mail. Those who are not on the e-mailing list or who do not know the website will be automatically left out of the group of respondents. Also what limits the amount of respondents even further more is that only a selected amount of people that come across the survey link will opt to answer it. Therefore an online survey should never be mistakenly thought to cover the whole of the possible representative research sample of the total customer base. However, useful information can be obtained through online surveys, taken that the limitations are understood for the analyzing of the results not being indicative of what everyone thinks. (Miller 2011, 59.)

The process of the e-survey for WeLive's marketing communications

A structured online survey was conducted as a part of the research for WeLive's marketing communications on 8.11. -7.12.2015. The survey was implemented through an online survey tool called SurveyMonkey (surveymonkey.com). As the limit of respondents on SurveyMonkey is 100 for the non-paid version, the goal was set to getting the total maximum of 100 answers, which was achieved within the set timeframe. The link to the survey was distributed through open data online communities as well as via e-mail messages to targeted group of Laurea's it-students. The objective for the survey was to establish whether or not the hypotheses made through collecting primary data from the benchmarking study as well as the secondary data gained through the theoretical research were applicable for the specific target segments of WeLive. These hypotheses are that consistency in functionality, navigation and design on the website needs to be on a high level and the use of visual content depends on the preferences of the target audience. Social media buttons are an effective way to guide users to all digital channels of the organization, Twitter having the biggest emphasis as it appeals best to the target group. E-mail subscriptions are also emphasized on the websites and an e-mail newsletter is sent to subscribers regularly. As the guiding research question for this thesis is concentrating on the marketing communications channels that would be suitable for WeLive, the focus on the survey is on the two main channels of the benchmarking target organizations, Twitter and e-mail.

The process for the online survey study for this thesis started with designing the questions, meaning the type of questions, the wording, the order of the questions and in this case also the language of conducting the survey. The SurveyMonkey template limited the amount of questions to be 10, which resulted in a need of very thorough planning of how to set the questions in a way that would result in sufficient data collection. As the survey was aimed for a Finnish target group, the language of the survey was Finnish despite the thesis language being English. The original question design changed multiple times before finding its final form through brainstorming with the commissioner and instructors. Brainstorming with a group of people is an effective way to design the final questionnaire form, whereas working solely alone many times results in not considering some important details.

Next step was to write an accompanying letter to work as an introduction to possible respondents for what the survey was aiming to account for. Carefully planning the introduction is important especially in this case, as the target group was specific. Answers from people that are not part of the target group would have limited the amount of usable answers. Also informing people about what is the meaning of the survey works as an incentive for answering. Also showing gratitude by thanking for answers makes the respondents feel their effort is being appreciated.

Testing the survey questions' understandability was done by a small group of people. They were asked to undergo taking the survey's testing version and express any inconveniences they experienced. The mentioned inconveniences were then addressed accordingly. The sample of the e-survey was set to cover citizen developers and they were reached out for through e-mail (Laurea's e-mail listing) and through a few chosen online open data communities such as avoindata.net.

Analysis of the results

As SurveyMonkey sets a limit of 100 respondents for the limited version of the service, the objective for the amount of answers was set to be the maximum amount. The goal was achieved by 7.12.2015 as total of 100 answers were received. Whereas the limitation of the amount of possible answers may be seen as a weakness it also offers an opportunity to make more in-depth analysis of the results. The complete list of questions and answering options can be found as an appendix (Appendix 1). The analysis of the results focuses mainly on five questions that gave the most valuable information for the research questions.

The first two questions about the respondents' area of living had the objective of finding out whether it would be beneficial to conduct marketing communications efforts on specific living areas. The commissioner gave an example of the area of Kalasatama in Helsinki to be a so-called active suburb that might have especially large amount of citizen developers living there. Kalasatama as an active suburb was the starting point for finding out through the online survey whether the so-called active suburbs would be good targets for the marketing communications efforts. The survey showed that a majority of the respondents were not aware of any citizen activities to be held on their living areas. All respondents answered they live somewhere in the nearby Helsinki and Uusimaa regions.

Questions three, four and five were aimed to answer questions about the interests of the respondents for the purpose of first of all confiding the respondents to be part of the survey's target group. Secondly the purpose of those three questions was to collect data about how much information the target group members have about open data development projects and lastly what are the places or platforms the respondents' socialize on. Concluding the answers, interest was good towards open data development projects. Within the respondents by the scale of Osgood (1-5, where 1=no interest, 5=high interest) the weighted average was 3,75. More than half (51%) had heard about open data earlier. The target group socializes mostly online and in school. Those who answered they have participated in a public development project through the use of open data provided three specific descriptions about how they have participated. Most popular answer was broadly stating online, but a few answers had specified open data online communities and the third most popular answer was through school. The distribution channels of the survey explain these answers to some extent. Roughly dividing the distribution was made through online open data communities and Laurea's school units.

Question number six collected answers that seemed to be conflicting with the previous question's answers as it was in a form that predicated the respondents to have participated in open data based public development projects. However, it seems the formatting of the question misguided the respondent's to interpret it wrong. Therefore the data collected through that question is highly unreliable and left out of the analysis. The last four questions are the final main questions to answer the research questions. The bar charts below present the percentage distribution of the respondents' answers. After each chart a brief written description of the question specific analysis follows.

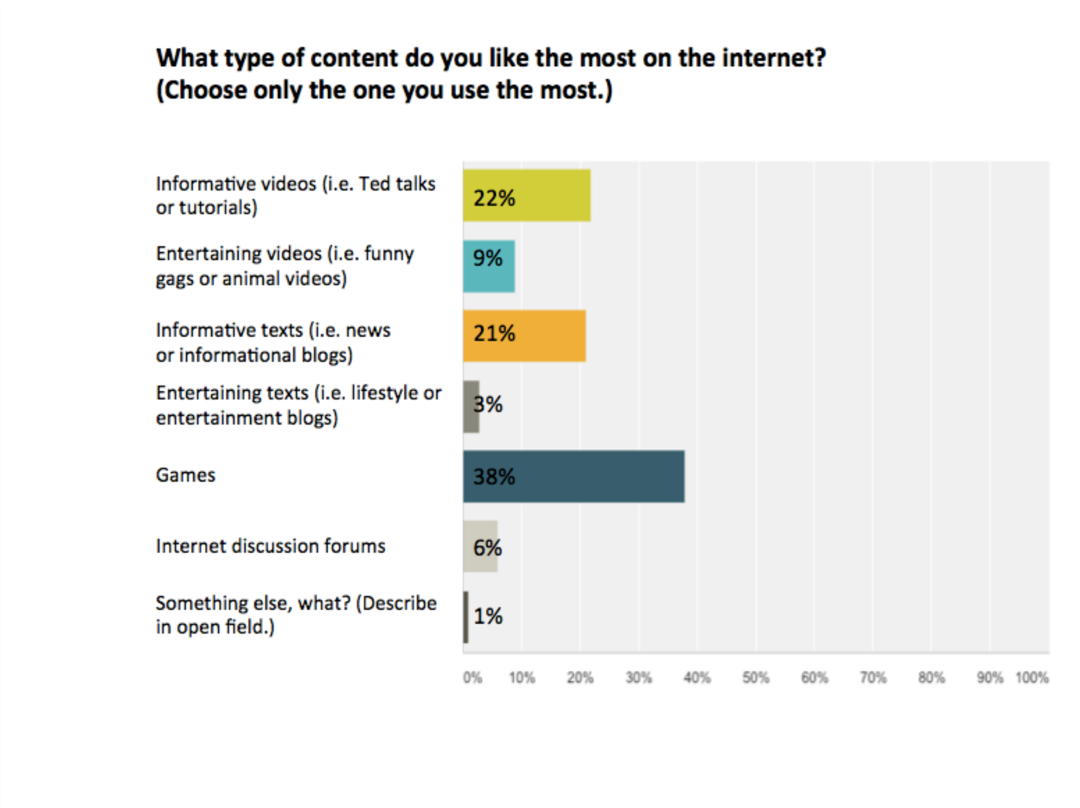

Figure 13. The percentage distribution of the most popular online content

As can be seen from the figure above (Figure 13) the three most popular forms of Internet content are games, informative videos and informative texts. This means that marketing communications efforts of WeLive should be utilizing sites and social network groups that mostly fall under these categories.

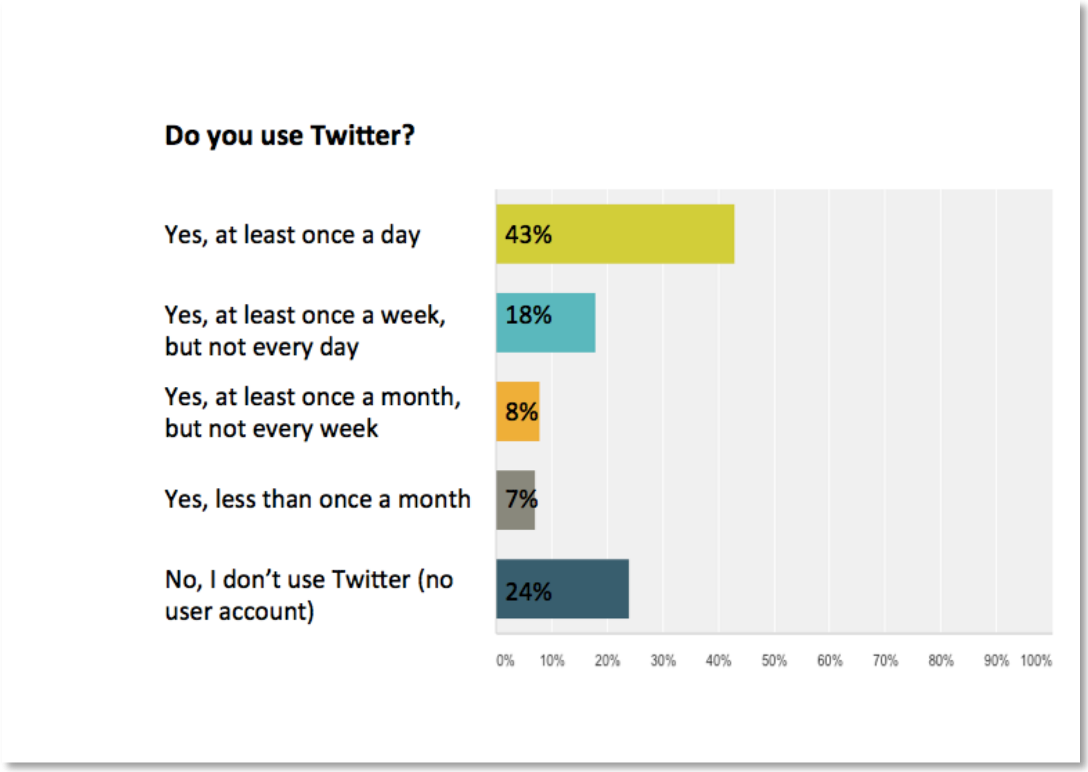

Figure 14. The frequency of Twitter use among the respondents

The target group respondents are fairly active Twitter users according to data collected from this question number eight of the survey. As the figure of the bar chart (Figure 14) above shows, 43% of respondents use Twitter actively every day whereas only 24% are not Twitter users at all. The weekly but not quite daily users' group consists of 18% of the respondents. For answering the research question of which marketing communications channels would work best for WeLive's target group this survey data shows that Twitter as marketing communications channel reaches a vast majority of the target group.

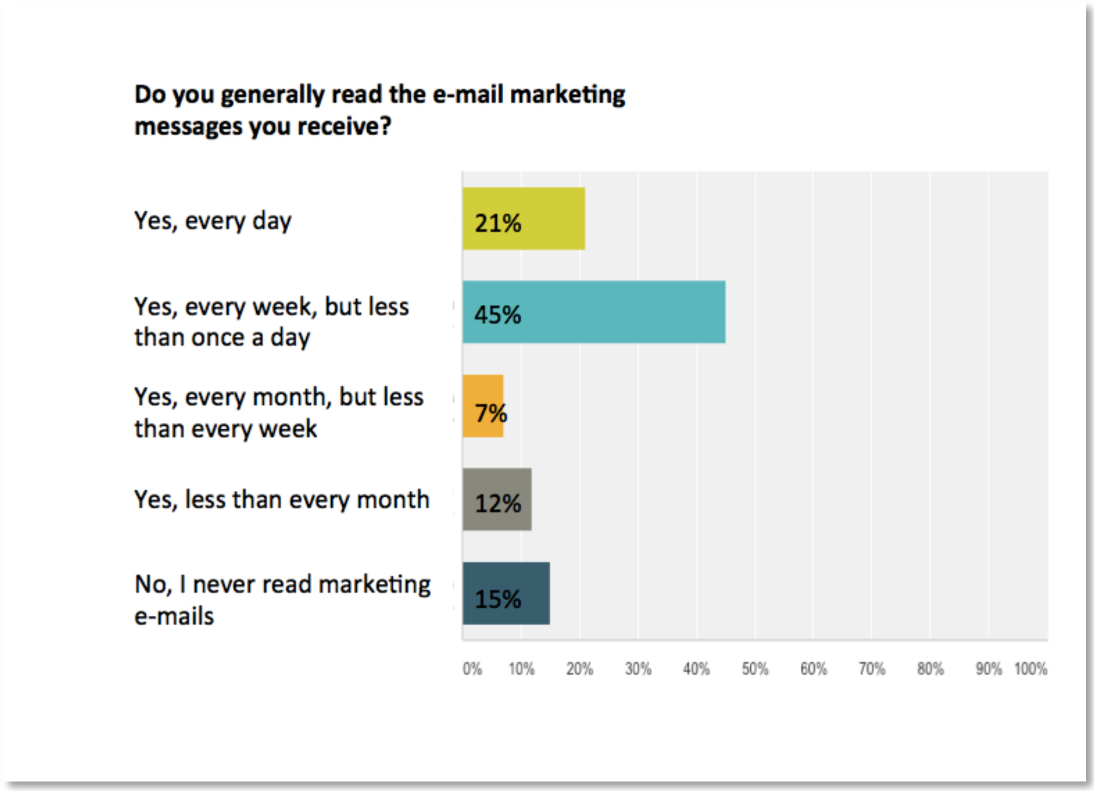

Figure 15. E-mail marketing effectiveness for the target group

E-mail marketing messages are read at least weekly by 66% of the respondents which of 21% answered they read marketing e-mails every day, as the bar chart above shows (Figure 15). On the contrary the amount of respondents who do not read marketing e-mails at all is only 15%. It can be argued whether the respondents would simply answer they read marketing e-mails without actually doing it as often as they say or whether reading of the marketing e-mails is very concentrated or if they rather simply skim the e-mails through. Nevertheless, conclusions that marketing e-mails are read in the target group can be made through the data collected from this question.

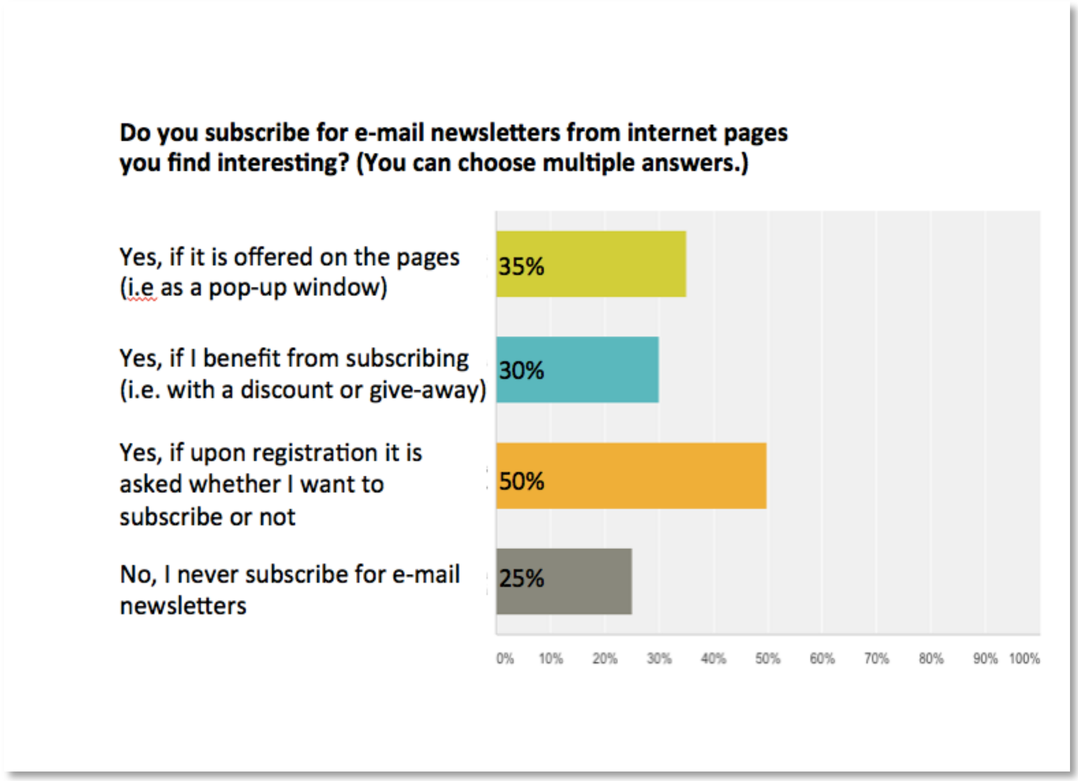

Figure 16. E-mail subscription tendency among the respondents

E-mail newsletters are subscribed mostly when a subscription is offered upon registration, as the bar chart above shows (Figure 16). Also simple pop-up window offering the subscription of an e-mail newsletter might increase the amount of subscribers according to the data collected through this final survey question. Subscribing e-mail newsletters is popular, since 75% of the respondents have answered yes to whether or not they subscribe newsletters from interesting Internet pages.

Summary of the results and conclusions

To summarize the findings of the e-survey the key findings are briefly presented here. The most popular places for networking and socializing for the target group are Internet and school environments, which means that those are the environments where most marketing communications efforts should be aimed to. In this thesis the focus is on the Internet environment for the marketing communications efforts of WeLive mainly for budgeting purposes. Content-wise games and informative content are what appeal to the target group, which can be utilized by offering games-related contents as well as using informative texts and videos for marketing communications purposes.

Twitter appeals to vast amount of the respondents, which is well in line with the benchmarking results and clearly indicate that Twitter should be utilized as a marketing communications channel for WeLive. E-mail advertising and newsletters are surprisingly much read in the target group, which indicates that e-mail is an excellent channel for informing interested users about topical matters. Another e-mail related result is that banners or pop-up windows for offering e-mail subscription should be utilized as part of the digital marketing communications action plan.

The overall conclusion of the online survey results is that roughly speaking the benchmarking findings can be applied to WeLive’s target segments as they are. The e-survey results are not highly generalizable but as the group of respondents consisted mostly of Laurea’s information technology students as well as open data communities’ users that fit the target segments of WeLive, the primary data collected can be utilized for the segments.

5.3 Validity and reliability

Simply described the term validity refers to the extent to which findings of a research accurately reflect the phenomena that is being studied (Collis & Hussey 2009, 143). Things that could possibly undermine the validity of a study are for example poor samples or faulty research procedures. Qualitative data collected through an interpretivist study creates generally results with high degree of validity. (Collis & Hussey 2009, 65 & 143.) When it comes to the first part of the research in this thesis, which is the benchmarking study the validity is good. However, since there are no existing benchmarking target organizations that would be similar to WeLive in the same operational microenvironment, some limitations for the validity arise from the target organizations being American and therefore operating in a different environment. For the part of the online survey certain aspects of the validity should be taken into account. Some limitations for the validity come form using online survey as the tool and these limitations are more broadly described in the previous e-survey chapter.

Reliability means that if the research was repeated there would not be differences in the results (Collis & Hussey 2009, 143). Reliability lacks in importance when the study is conducted under interpretivist paradigm, which is the case here. Another option is that the reliability is simply interpreted in a different way. A way to overcome the lack of authenticity through reliability is to instead create protocols and procedures for the findings. The reliability of results is usually high in researches that are collecting quantitative data. (Collis & Hussey 2009, 64 & 143.) When it comes to the reliability of this thesis research, there are some limitations to it. Partially the reliability can be seen as good. This is especially the case of the online survey, should it be conducted similarly to a similar target group. However, the benchmarking study that concentrates on creating qualitative data as the result lacks in reliability in comparison to the survey.

6 Creating the thesis product: digital marketing communications action plan

It is evidently important to establish a plan for the digital marketing efforts before starting to implement them. According to Miller (2011, 65) the plan should include rationale for what the company is planning to do online, why it is considering of doing those things online and lastly what kind of goals it is looking for to achieve online. The digital marketing plan is similar to a traditional marketing plan with the exception of the digital marketing plan being focused solely on web-based activities. Goals for web-based activities can be such as increasing traffic to a new website, as is the case with the WeLive platform that is launched in March 2016.

The action plan for the digital marketing communications of WeLive is only one section of a more thorough marketing plan and does not cover all of the elements of a complete marketing plan. The scope of this thesis was limited to only cover the marketing communications action plan. However, most of the other necessary elements of a complete marketing plan for WeLive are more or less covered in the earlier chapters of this thesis. In this chapter, the necessary elements of a complete web-based marketing plan are briefly explained and references to details specific to the case of WeLive are given (Table 5).

6.1 Action plan in the framework of a complete digital marketing plan

The role of an effective plan for a company's digital marketing efforts is to work as a map for the staff to execute only relevant activities with common goals on their minds. A digital marketing plan describes which tools should be utilized for reaching the goals. It also works as an internal tool for supporting and reasoning the use of necessary resources. Lastly, it can be used as a measuring tool for quantifiable goals, more specifically how well the company has accomplished them. The quantifiable goals can be financial or market-oriented, but nevertheless they need to be clearly defined in the digital marketing plan. (Miller 2011, 65.)

Elements of a marketing plan:	Thesis chapter for WeLive specific details:
Mission	Chapter 6.1
Situational analysis	Chapter 2
Goals and Objectives	Chapters 2.1 & 6.1
Action Plan	Chapter 6.2 & Appendix 2
Budget	Chapter 6.2 & Appendix 2

Table 5. Vital elements of a marketing plan & WeLive details (Miller 2011, 66)

The mission section of the marketing plan provides general rationale for the planned marketing activities explaining *why* a certain activity is planned for implementation. The mission is usually expressed in a short form of a mission statement. However, it can be a longer explanation of the plan as well according to Miller (2011, 67). It should nevertheless not be more than one paragraph long. In a digital marketing plan the mission has to address the online activities specifically. The ideal mission section meets criteria of defining clear direction for the marketing activities, defining specific parameters for the marketing activities, is achievable and it must be measurable in general terms. (Miller 2011, 67.)

Mission statement and the situational analysis

Mission statement for WeLive's digital marketing communications is: WeLive initiates e-mail marketing campaign for Laurea's prospective students and establishes area specific social media channels on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Instagram as well as making minor improvements on their website to support the use of the new social media channels. E-mail and Twitter are the main channels and the others support them through automated activities. The goal is to establish 500 e-mail subscribers and 500 Twitter followers by the last day of March 2016.

The situational analysis consists of description of what is the current situation in and around the business. It analyses environmental, market-related, competition and customer base, products, and distribution. It should be a mix of hard data and qualitative analysis and done with utilizing both internal data and external market research. (Miller 2011, 68.)

Goals and objectives

Setting objectives for a specific business action usually starts with establishing what are the key issues to be addressed to. For this thesis the key issue is how WeLive should implement its marketing communications to gain most visibility among its target group and more specifically the three specific segments that are presented in chapter 2.3 (Figure 3). After establishing the key issues the next step is to set quantifiable measures as the objective for the actions. Internal goals can mean things such as certain number of website visitors or a specific level of sales. External objectives on the other hand refer to things like market share or search ranking on Google. In order to be measurable the objectives need to be numeric and set for a specific time frame. The most common time frame for setting objectives would be six months or a year. Also good thing to remember when setting goals is to keep them achievable. (Miller 2011, 69.)

WeLive's digital marketing communications objectives are market-oriented and do not include any direct financial specifics. Furthermore they can be classified as internal objectives. The main objective for WeLive's digital marketing communications for January and February

2016 is to inform all prospects (those whose e-mail addresses are available) of Laurea's it- and business students about the WeLive-project and platform. Secondary objectives are to establish a list of newsletter subscribers and to drive traffic to the WeLive platform through cross promoting in all used digital marketing communications channels. Measurable objective is having 500 newsletter subscribers and 500 Twitter followers by the last day of March 2016.

6.2 The action plan with budget for the piloting of the WeLive platform

The action plan includes detailed and specific information of the online marketing activities. The action plan for WeLive can be found as an appendix (Appendix 2). It is the most detailed section of the whole digital marketing plan as a step-by-step instruction guide that can be handed to any member of the staff for guideline. Individual subsections for all different activities are included in the action plan. As an example of subsections there could be website activities, e-mail marketing and social networking activities as their own detailed sections. All subsections need to include a timeline, description of each event and estimation of costs. (Miller 2011, 71.)

The budget for the marketing communications efforts for the first pilot of the WeLive platform in the Helsinki region is set to be 1500€. The amount is fairly low when considering how much some traditional marketing communications modes such as advertising on television would cost. However, using creative thinking and collaboration as the base for the planning of the marketing communications for the pilot, it is an achievable goal to not spend more money than that. Work labour costs are not calculated in the budget as per the wish of the commissioner, but utilizing student work and enthusiastic volunteers' work it would not be a problem. Also planning the marketing communications efforts to be as effective as possible, some of them being automated and some of them produced by the users themselves, reduces the time required for work labour to be used. Choosing the channels accordingly to be internet-based also helps keeping the costs low.

The main marketing communications channels chosen for the action plan for WeLive are Twitter, e-mail and YouTube for the occasional video contents. The central channel to combine all other digital channels is the WeLive.eu website. The other social media channels, Facebook and Instagram are included in the plan to work as tool to get wider visibility for WeLive. Facebook is necessary to be included in the digital marketing plan as most of the target group members are likely to be Facebook users and being present where the prospective users are, is fundamentally important. Instagram was chosen as the second channel due to its appearance in the benchmarking research as one of the tools for the successful OpenIDEO platform. However, Instagram does not reach such a large amount of people from the target group that it would make sense to use big amount of effort into posting content on it. Facebook and Instagram are therefore only part of the plan as supportive channels for the marketing communications in the main channels and are mainly used through automated posting only. Also Periscope has been chosen due to its simplicity of use to work as a platform for webinars implemented for WeLive's audiences on occasional points of time.

6.3 Further suggestions for WeLive's future marketing communications

Further actions need to be taken after the piloting campaign to utilize the full potential of the started digital marketing communications efforts in the long run. The most effective way to do so is to simply continue building the brand image and awareness in the target group on the same established channels with slightly different, far-reaching objectives. For WeLive's future digital marketing communications an on-going content publication and syndication process is presented in the figure below (Figure 17).

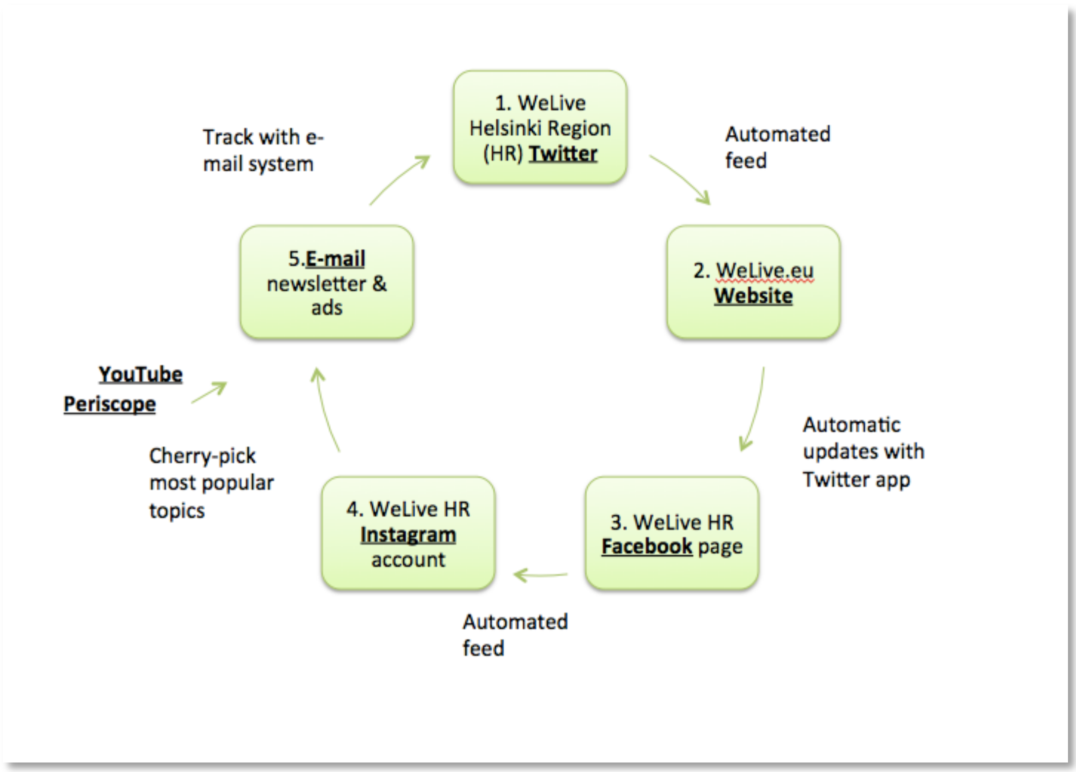

Figure 17. On-going content publication and syndication process for WeLive's digital marketing channels

The publication and syndication process has roughly five on-going steps with an occasional sixth addition from video and webinar content publishing. Twitter is the first and most actively used step of publishing content with completely automated feed to the WeLive.eu website's banner following. Own Twitter posts will be selectively but still automatically also published on Facebook and Instagram. Selectively means that not every single Twitter post should be automatically also published but instead some automation filters are used to publish specific content on Facebook and even more specifically filtered picture-form content on Instagram. For e-mail marketing communications purposes special news and events will be cherry picked from the previous steps and e-mail subscribers are informed of them either in the regular newsletter or in more special, rare and focused e-mail marketing ads. In case there are new YouTube videos or upcoming webinars to be promoted, they will be introduced through e-mail and soon also Twitter and the other marketing communications content publication channels. E-mail tracking is also a regular part of the process as the amount of subscribers grows over time.

7 Conclusions

The findings of the primary research together with the literature review indicate that the best way to conduct marketing communications efforts for an e-organization offering open data services is to utilize a mix of traditional marketing theories together with newer more Internet-based disciplines and tools. In both the benchmarking study as well as the e-survey conducted for this thesis specific information about the type of marketing communications modes and channels that work best in the industry have been observed and surveyed.

The conclusion of the benchmarking study and e-survey was that most suitable marketing communications modes are direct, interactive and word-of-mouth marketing from Kotler's marketing communications mix. The best suitable channels for engaging the segmented audience turned out to be digital marketing communications channels and more specifically e-mail and Twitter. The conclusions can be generalized to a certain point for other similar e-organizations as WeLive too.

To summarize the findings of the benchmarking study and the e-survey the key findings are briefly presented here. Active engagement on Twitter with other Twitter users leads to a large follower base. However, having a large follower base is not what solely leads to success and therefore other aspects of Twitter marketing need to also be taken into account. Visual content such as pictures and videos create better user engagement as well as paying attention to the cover picture does too. Social media buttons on the website are effective way to drive traffic to social media pages. The most popular places for networking and socializing for the target group are Internet and school environments, which means that those are the environments where most marketing communications efforts should be aimed to. Twitter appeals to WeLive's target group, which is well in line with the benchmarking results and clearly indicate that Twitter is a good choice of channel for WeLive and similar e-organizations. E-mail advertising and newsletters are fairly often read in the target group, which indicates that e-mail is an excellent channel for informing interested users about topical matters. When it comes to building a list of e-mail subscribers, offering the subscription actively through pop-up windows, banners and upon registration on the company website are noteworthy ways to grow the amount of e-mail recipients.

The bottom line in implementing modern marketing communications successfully is that the rapidly changing operating environment for marketers forces developing new ways to implement marketing communications planning. There no longer exists a single all-encompassing chart or model to give a broad guideline for how all e-organizations should implement modern marketing communications. Instead, each situation needs to be distinctively evaluated to find out the most suitable mix of marketing communications modes and channels. Traditional marketing might be on the verge of disruption, but it can nevertheless still work well when mixed together with more modern, highly networked ways of conducting marketing communications.

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Figures

Tables

Appendixes

Appendix 1: E-survey about suitable marketing communications channels and modes for citizen developers (in Finnish)

Kysely kehittäjäkansalaisille sopivista markkinointikanavista ja -keinoista

Olen viimeisen vuoden opiskelija Laurea-ammattikorkeakoulun Leppävaaran yksiköstä ja teen opinnäytetyötä liittyen EU-rahoitteisen WeLive-projektin käyttöalustan pilotoinnin markkinointiviestintään. Alustan pilotti on alkuvuodesta 2016 ja opinnäytetyöni tavoitteena on luoda markkinointiviestintäsuunnitelma pilotille.

Kyselyn tavoitteena on kartoittaa mitkä ovat kohderyhmälle parhaiten sopivia markkinointikanavia ja markkinoinnin keinoja toteuttaa WeLive-alustan pilotin markkinointiviestintää.

Tuloksia käytetään vain projektin tutkimustarkoituksiin eikä tietoja luovuteta ulkopuolisille. Kyselyyn vastaaminen on täysin anonyymiä eikä vastausten antajia voida jäljittää. Kyselyyn vastaamiseen kuluu aikaa alle viisi minuuttia ja kysely on auki maanantaihin 7.12.2015 asti.

Mahdolliset kysymykset ja kommentit kyselyyn liittyen voi lähettää sähköpostilla osoitteeseen juliana.kauppinen@student.laurea.fi.

Kiitän Teitä ajastanne ja mielenkiinnostanne!

Ystävällisin terveisin

Juliana Kauppinen

Taustakysymykset

1. Mikä on asuinalueesi?
    - Avoin vastauskenttä

2. Järjestetäänkö asuinalueellasi aktiivista kaupunkilaistoimintaa?
    a. kyllä, olen osallistunut toimintaan ja roolini oli (avoin)
    b. kyllä järjestetään, mutta en ole osallistunut toimintaan
    c. en tiedä järjestetäänkö
    d. ei järjestetä
    e. ei järjestetä, mutta haluaisin osallistua toimintaan

Mielenkiinto/kokemus

3. Oletko kiinnostunut kehittämään digitaalisia palveluita julkisiin ongelmiin?
    En ollenkaan 1 2 3 4 5 Erittäin paljon (Osgoodin asteikko)

4. Oletko ollut tekemisissä avoimen datan kanssa? Avoimella datalla tarkoitetaan julkishallinnolle, organisaatioille, yrityksille tai yksityishenkilöille kertynyttä tietoa, joka on avattu organisaation ulkopuolisillekin vapaasti ja maksutta hyödynnettäväksi. Kansalaiset ja yritykset voivat käyttää tietoja omiin tarkoituksiinsa tasavertaisesti julkisen hallinnon kanssa. (Lähde: Helsinki Region Infoshare, http://www.hri.fi/fi/mita-on-avoin-data/)
   a. Kyllä, kuvaile miten (avoin kenttä)
   b. En ole ollut tekemisissä avoimen datan kanssa
   c. En ole ollut tekemisissä avoimen datan kanssa, mutta olen kuullut siitä

5. Kasvatatko verkostoasi aktiivisesti muiden samanhenkisten ihmisten kanssa? (Voit valita useamman vaihtoehdon.)
   a. Kyllä, internetissä
   b. Kyllä, start-up tapahtumissa
   c. Kyllä, opintojen kautta
   d. Kyllä, työpaikalla
   e. Kyllä, muulla tavoin, miten? (avoin vastauskenttä)
   f. En kasvata verkostoani aktiivisesti

Markkinointikanavat ja markkinointiviestinnän keinot

6. Jos olet osallistunut julkisiin kehittämishankkeisiin, mistä saat niihin liittyvää tietoa? Kehittämishanke voi olla esimerkiksi julkisiin palveluihin liittyvän kehitysidean esittäminen tai aloitteeseen osallistuminen jonkin julkisen asian kehittämiseksi. (Voit valita useamman vaihtoehdon)
   a. ystäviltä
   b. sähköpostitse
   c. sosiaalisesta mediasta
   d. googlettamalla
   e. mainosjulisteista
   f. koulusta
   g. työpaikalta
   h. Muualta internetistä (esimerkiksi avoimen datan yhteisöistä)
   i. Muualta, mistä? (avoin vastauskenttä)
   j. En ole ollut osallisena julkisiin kehittämishankkeisiin

7. Minkälainen sisältö vetoaa sinuun internetissä parhaiten? (Valitse vain yksi eniten kuluttamasi sisältömuoto.)
   a. informatiiviset videot (esimerkiksi Ted talks -videot tai tutoriaalivideot)
   b. viihteelliset videot (esimerkiksi hauskat videot, musiikki-/eläinvideot)
   c. asiapitoinen tekstisisältö (esimerkiksi uutiset tai informatiiviset blogipostaukset)
   d. viihteellinen tekstisisältö (esimerkiksi lifestyle-/muoti-/kauneus-/ viihdeblogit
   e. pelit
   f. keskustelupalstat
   g. Muu, mikä? (avoin kenttä)

8. Käytätkö Twitteriä?
   a. Käytän sitä vähintään kerran päivässä
   b. Käytän sitä vähintään kerran viikossa, mutta en joka päivä
   c. Käytän sitä vähintään kerran kuussa, mutta en joka viikko
   d. Käytän sitä harvemmin kuin kerran kuussa
   e. En käytä sitä, koska minulla ei ole Twitter-tiliä

9. Tilaatko sähköpostitse lähetettäviä uutiskirjeitä sinua kiinnostavilta internetsivuilta?

a. Tilaan jos kiinnostavalla sivulla tarjotaan uutiskirjeen tilausta (esimerkiksi ponnahdusikkunan kautta kun sivun avaa)
b. Tilaan jos uutiskirjeen tilaamalla saan jonkin edun (esimerkiksi arvontaan osallistuminen tai alennus)
c. Tilaan jos rekisteröitymisen yhteydessä kysytään haluanko uutiskirjeen
d. En tilaa uutiskirjeitä

10. Luetko sähköpostiisi saapuvia mainoskirjeitä?
a. Luen joka päivä
b. Luen vähintään kerran viikossa, mutta en joka päivä
c. Luen vähintään kerran kuussa, mutta en joka viikko
d. Luen harvemmin kuin kuukausittain
e. En lue mainossähköposteja

Linkki kyselyyn internetissä: https://fi.surveymonkey.com/r/DLJKSZK

Appendix 2: Digital marketing communications action plan for the WeLive pilot

The action plan for the digital marketing communications efforts for the WeLive platform's pilot in the Helsinki region is described in this section. The plan includes the specific details of what should be done on each digital marketing channel and when it should be done. The time span for the marketing efforts for the WeLive pilot in the Helsinki region is January and February 2016 as the pilot is set to start in the area in the beginning of March 2016.

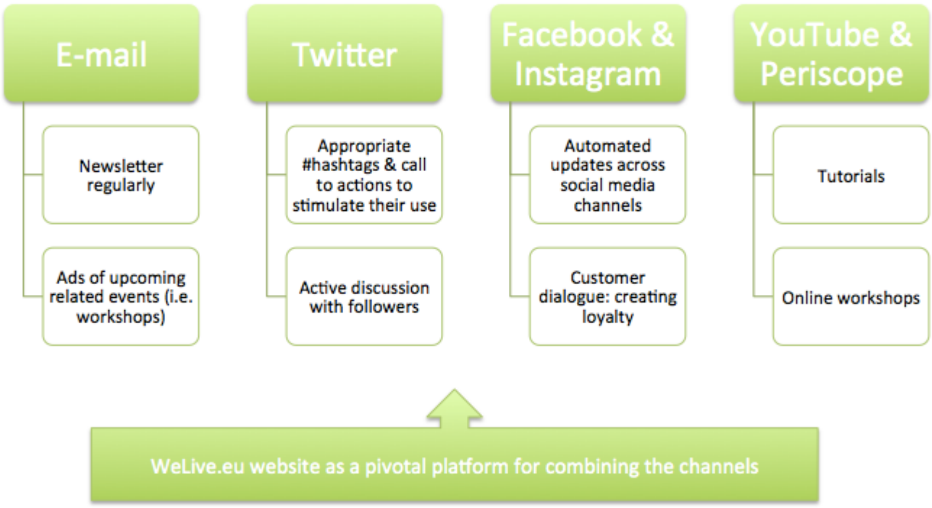
The 1500€ budget is used for tools that help in lowering the amount of time that is necessary to use in order to get all planned efforts implemented by automating the actions through different channels. As example of possible partially paid social media dashboards are Tweetdeck (tweetdeck.com), Hootsuite (hootsuite.com) and RiteTag (ritetag.com). RiteTag is chosen for WeLive to start with.

When calculated as working hours required to execute each marketing communications effort in this action plan, the total amount of working hours is approximately 31 hours. However, when spread for a time span of two months, the average amount of working hours each week is less than 4 hours (3,44 hours to be exact). The workload is planned to be spread as evenly as possible throughout the weeks. However inevitably some weeks require more time usage than others and as the table below shows, weeks 3, 5 and 8 are the heaviest with workload. On the contrary weeks 4 and 6 only require one hour of time spent on the marketing communication efforts and as the situation allows the work from the heavier weeks can be moved to those weeks.

Overall working time required for each week										
Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total
Hours	3 h	4 h	5 h	1 h	6 h	1 h	3 h	5 h	4 h	31 h

After thorough research of all possible marketing communications channels that could be used in the pilot of the WeLive-platform in the Helsinki region, four digital main channels and three supporting social media channels were chosen. The research consisted of literature review, benchmarking research and a targeted online survey. The decisions are based on the research as a whole, but with a consideration of the limited resources of the project such as the fairly low budget.

The chosen digital marketing communications channels



The best suitable main marketing communications channels for the project are the WeLive.eu-website, E-mail, Twitter and YouTube for occasional video contents. The supportive social media channels for creating more targeted traffic to the main channels are Facebook, Instagram and Periscope.

WeLive.eu website

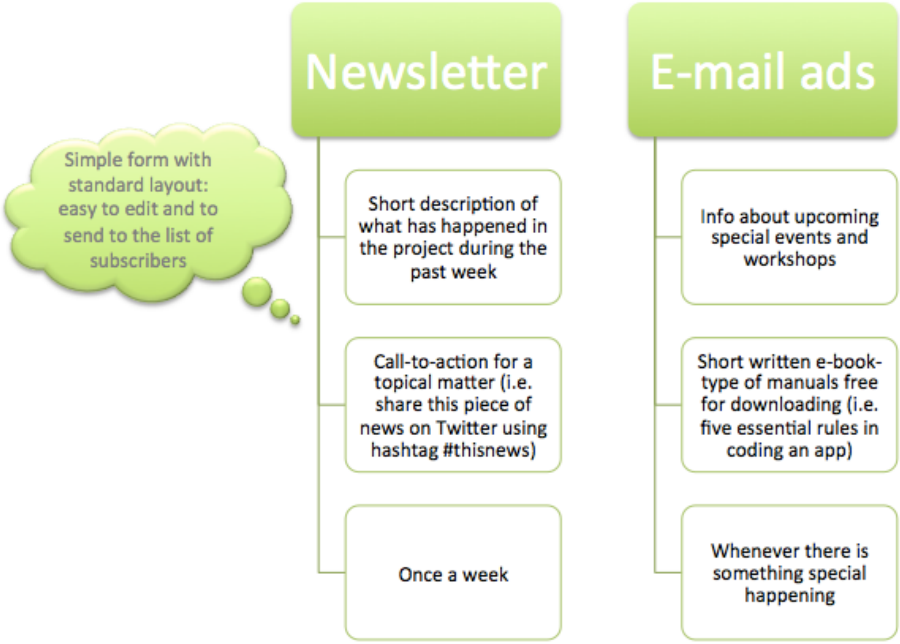
WeLive.eu website works as the center for all of the digital marketing communications. To make the most out of the digital marketing communications efforts, some additions to the website need to be done to drive more traffic to the other channels and vice versa. Basic social media badges already exist there, but for the overall WeLive-project only and not for WeLive Helsinki region.

Specific page for the pilot area of Helsinki region should be further improved with additions of social media badges that lead to the area-specific social media pages. Also a banner showing the Twitter activity works as an increasing factor for driving traffic to Twitter. As there is no organizational blog for WeLive, a banner on the side of the Helsinki region area page showing tweets works also as a micro blog tool. For extended web presence for the e-mail marketing efforts to encourage sign-ups of e-mail subscriptions, a pop-up banner will be added to the Helsinki region specific page. The pop-up banner comes up every time the page is opened.

Scheduled plan for making the necessary changes to the website			
Phase	When?	Time required?	Additional information
Creating a pop-up banner for e-mail subscription	Week 3	1 hour	• To encourage site visitors to subscribe for e-mails
Adding social media badges to Helsinki area specific page	Week 3	1 hour	• Including Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram
Adding banner showing tweets of the Helsinki region WeLive-channel	Week 3	1 hour	
			Total time required to implement these activities: 3 hours

E-mail newsletter and ads

E-mail works as a direct marketing channel between WeLive and its target audience. It is aimed to be keeping interested people regularly updated on what is going on in the WeLive project. To get started with building the database of e-mail subscribers Laurea's own e-mail lists of students is a good tool to be utilized. Before starting to implement the e-mail marketing the first step is therefore to apply for the Laurea's research permit and the list of e-mails of both it-students and business students. Altogether three e-mail ads are sent to Laurea's students during January and February 2016 and the newsletter will start on week 9 and it will be sent to those who have requested to subscribe it.



The e-mail ads are only sent to those who want to receive them, meaning people that are part of the segmented target groups and have requested to receive e-mails from WeLive. Slightly differentiated versions are sent to all three smaller segments of the target group for personalization purposes. This will be done easily by each time changing the most important parts of the e-mail message, which are the subject line and the first lines of the content. Greeting each group with a suitable designation will immediately make the receivers know they are part of the target of the message and it will entice them to open and read it.

A standard amount of basic information about what has happened in the WeLive project in the past week works as the contents for the weekly e-mail newsletters. At its simplest it is just a collection of the tweets done in the past week about topical issues. The format for all WeLive's e-mail messages will be HTML as it enables the e-mail to be formatted similarly to the webpages. The newsletter is sent out to all subscribers every week during the pilot. Once a week however is not the necessary pace for the newsletter in the long run, but regularity is a must in the beginning to build rapport and relationship with the customers.

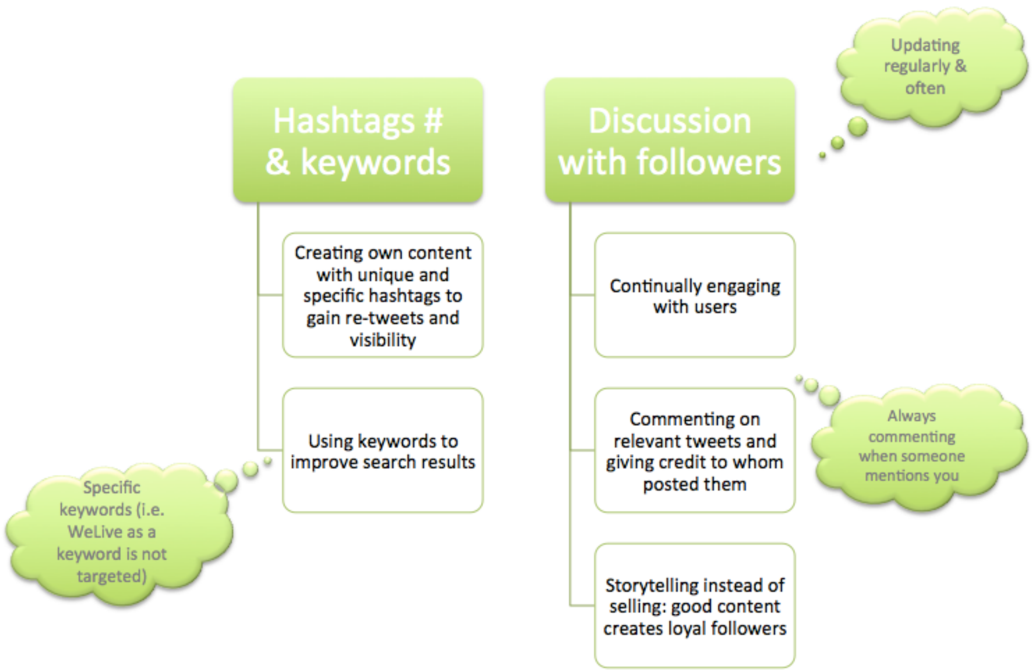
Tracking, measuring and analyzing are executed regularly to establish the best e-mail marketing habits for the target group. However as building an optimal e-mailing list can take quite amount of time, in the first three months conclusions are not yet made about any changes in the WeLive's e-mail subscribers' list. As the list of subscribers exceeds a large amount of recipients (1000), a paid online e-mailing tool is taken into use to keep the e-mail marketing efforts efficient.

Scheduled plan for starting the e-mail marketing efforts			
Phase	When?	Time re-quired	Additional information
Applying for Laurea's research permit for marketing of the WeLive pilot	Week 1 (appli-cation) Week 2 (ex-pected time of being granted the permit)	1 hour	• Asking for e-mail addresses of all it-students and business students • Permission needed for 3 separate advertising messages
Creating an e-mail ac-count for "WeLive Hel-sinki region"	Week 2	1 hour	
Designing the layout of the e-mail ads	Week 2	2 hours	• Simple, no rich media • In the same design as WeLive.eu website • HTML
Writing & sending the first e-mail ad	Week 3	1 hour	• Introducing the pilot and the new social media channels • Asking for responses from those who wish to receive the newslet-ter and ads in the future
Writing & sending the second e-mail ad	Week 5	1 hour	• Advertising the YouTube video published on week 5 • Asking for responses from those who wish to receive the newslet-ter and ads in the future
Writing & sending the third e-mail ad	Week 8	1 hour	• Advertising the Periscope work-shop being held on week 9 • Asking for responses from those who wish to receive the newslet-ter and ads in the future
Creating the database of e-mail addresses of sub-scribers	Week 8	2 hours	• Simple MS Excel-sheet or MS Ac-cess document with all newsletter subscribers listed • Own sheet for each three target

			segments
Designing the layout of the newsletter	Week 8	1 hour	• Simple, no rich media • In the same design as WeLive.eu website • HTML
Starting the newsletter (writing and sending the first one)	Week 9	1 hour	• Introducing the newsletter: content, how often
			Total time required to implement these activities: 11 hours

Twitter and supportive social media channels

Twitter was chosen as the main social media channel according to the results of the research in both the benchmarking and the online survey. Twitter fits the target audience segments as it is used more as an informative platform than for example Facebook that mostly is used for entertainment purposes.



The Twitter account for WeLive Helsinki region is used for engaged discussion with followers. Also it is the channel for sharing ideas, WeLive's news and other topics on a regular basis. WeLive will post own content multiple times a week as well as concentrate on building an appropriate follower base by interacting with people that fit the target audience attributes.

An online tool called Ritetag is used for automated and scheduled posting across all social media channels. Not only it saves time but also reaffirms that the content is consistent through all used channels to promote the brand image that is representing WeLive's value proposition. The channels for automated posting are Facebook and Instagram.

Scheduled plan for the social media marketing efforts			
Phase	When?	Time re-quired?	Additional information
Creating social media accounts for WeLive in Helsinki region	Week 1	1 hour	• Twitter, Facebook, Instagram
Posting an introduction post	Week 2	Less than an hour	• Picture, short text and accurate hashtags posted on all three channels
Tweeting, re-tweeting & sharing tweets on other social media channels	Weeks 3-5	Approx. total an hour a week	• Discussion with followers • Short updates & automated shar-ing • At least 3 times a week
Sharing links of the first video on YouTube	Week 5	Less than an hour	• Twitter, Facebook, Instagram
Tweeting, re-tweeting & sharing tweets on other social media channels	Weeks 6-8	Approx. total an hour a week	• Discussion with followers • Short updates & automated shar-ing • At least 3 times a week
Actively promoting the workshop on Periscope on week 9	Weeks 8 & 9	1 hour	Twitter, Facebook, Instagram
			Total time required to implement these activities: 8 hours

YouTube and Periscope (as a webinar platform)

Because successful YouTube business videos are informative, educational or entertaining to offer the viewers value the first YouTube video for WeLive is going to be an online brochure in the form of a product demonstration for the WeLive platform. It includes explanation for what the WeLive platform is, what it does and how it is used. It will be created using the most simple tools in order to keep the costs near non-existing. PowerPoint will be used to create an animated explanatory video with a voiceover and low-volume background music. This way there is no need for a video camera and only tools needed are a computer with Microsoft PowerPoint and a microphone. For better sound quality an external microphone will be used.

Link to the WeLive website is presented in the body of the video throughout it on the background as YouTube does not allow live links to third party websites directly. The URL is clearly and noticeably presented on the video and it is vocally requested to visit the page. Also a request (call-to-action) to subscribe the YouTube channel is on the video.

Scheduled plan for YouTube and Periscope			
Phase	When?	Time re-quired?	Additional information
Creating user accounts on YouTube and Peri-scope	Week 1	1 hour	• Using the Twitter account for Per-iscope
Customizing the chan-nel page of YouTube	Week 2	1 hour	• The page needs to fit WeLive's overall image
Creating and publishing the (first) video on Youtube	Week 5	4 hours	• Explaining how the WeLive-platform works • Including call-to-action: link to WeLive website and request to subscribing the channel
Planning the (first) Peri-scope workshop	Week 7	2 hours	• Developing an app for WeLive by using simple existing tools
First workshop on Peri-scope	Week 9	2 hours	• Developing an app for WeLive by using simple existing tools
Total time required to implement these activities: 10 hours			