

# Employee Engagement in Social Media

## Case: itim International

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<p>This thesis investigates the utilization of employee engagement as a tool in social media marketing environment. The commissioning company for this research is itim International, and all the information presented in this research is adjusted to their needs.</p> <p>The object of this research was formed from itim's wish to find out how to engage its employees more in social media, and how to tie the leverage of engagement to marketing in social media. This is a research-based thesis, and the outcome of this research is analysed survey data gathered from the employees and license holders, and a set of recommendations made for itim for improving its performance in social media.</p> <p>The study draws theory from social media marketing, employee engagement, and how to utilize an HR practice in marketing. It focuses on the impact employee engagement might have on social media marketing.</p> <p>The main research material consists of a questionnaire that was conducted as a qualitative study. The respondents were itim's employees and the license holders abroad. The results of the questionnaire were analysed by using the theoretical framework and qualitative research guideline material to ensure a true and proper analysis of the results.</p> <p>The findings of this research indicated that employee engagement generates contradictory feelings, and can be difficult to administer and difficult to approach. The results also indicate different motives for actions in social media, and perhaps contemplating these methods would be essential in finding new ways of generating engagement in the social media environment.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> Social media marketing, employee engagement, employee advocacy, personal branding, corporate branding, community management	

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# 1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to tell the reader what this study is done for and help the reader to process the information they are provided in this document. The chapter also provides background information needed to understand the aim of this study from the case company's point of view, and what the author is trying to clear out.

## 1.1 Background

The struggle to get your employees sharing company content in their own social media channels is not uncommon amongst companies. How to get employees from thinking it is 'lame', awkward or silly to share company content to your own chosen group of people in your own personal channel into thinking: "I want to share this, it is going to benefit me when I am building a brand for myself, while promoting and spreading awareness of the awesome company I work for?"

There must be a way for a company to reach this point. The answer might be in constantly and persistently having to market the content, and coming up with easy ways for the employees to get access to it. In addition to this the company also has to make it fun and beneficial for the employees to share the company posts and news. Or perhaps there is another trick nobody knows about.

The commissioning company for this thesis is itim International. The company wants to find out how it can get its employees to share more of the provided company content in its personal social media channels. At the moment the management feels like their employees are not especially thrilled of sharing the news and content in their personal channels, and the company wants to change the employees' views toward the attempts of enforcing employee engagement. Only first the company has to find out the employees' opinions about the current state of the platforms and content used, in order to develop it. This is the quintessential reason why this study is executed.

The author's personal interest to this topic is in the internal marketing and communication in a company. Through this research it is desired to learn and study how a company markets itself and communicates to its employees, and how a company is able to develop its strategy. This is something that the author has a personal interest to, and might be a field that would be pursued to study more and possibly work in in the future.

## 1.2 Case Company Introduction

itim International is a franchisee organization based in Helsinki that provides consulting services, software and training focusing on making culture a strength within organisations, and aligning it with their corporate strategies. The consulting services focus on Intercultural Management and Organisational Culture, which are supported by the trainings and workshops the company provides.

“We offer a framework of thinking which allows you to independently recognize, understand and deal with intercultural situations.”

(itim International 2016.)

itim International was originally founded in Maastricht, the Netherlands, in 1985 by Bob Waisfisz. Waisfisz received help in founding the company from Doctor Geert Hofstede, on whose ground-breaking work in social psychology the intercultural management model is based. The company was bought in 2012 by FeedbackDialog, a Finnish HR software company, and in 2014 the two companies were integrated to itim Feedback. Itim International currently has a total of 75 licence holders in 32 countries, and 14 employees who stay at the Helsinki office. Currently the turnover of the company is around 1 000 000 euros a year.

itim International provides training and accreditation services for new consultants who wish to join the global network, and as such functions as the consulting side of the organisation. In addition, itim International also functions as the mother company to The Hofstede Centre. The Hofstede Centre retains the Hofstede name and brand and hosts online cultural tools as well as functioning as the academic side of the organisation.

(Itim International 2016.)

The company’s Social Media Director wishes to find out if the company is employing the right strategy by engaging the employees, and see if it is possible to involve them more in the company’s social media marketing, or if the company should consider another approach.

The director wants to hear the employees’ honest opinions of the strengths and weaknesses in the way they are executing social media marketing in the company.

Previously itim International was present in the three major channels (Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn) but were not particularly active in these channels. Now they are trying to build a more visible presence and capitalize on the potential opportunities within social media. For this to be profitable they need the employees help and feedback to develop the content and the actions that are taken.

### **1.3 Research Question**

This thesis is aiming to a result that would provide a clear conclusion and possible recommendations for the commissioning company. The main goal is to help it to develop and improve the way it communicates about the shareable company content and the content itself, and to gain it more involvement in terms of the employee shares in social media.

The research question is defined as follows:

*How can itim International develop the employee engagement in their social media marketing?*

The investigative questions to answer the main research question are:

IQ 1. How do the employees view the importance of employee engagement in social media marketing?

IQ 2. What are the employees' opinions and experiences of the current content provided?

IQ 3. What are the employees' suggestions for improving the company content?

IQ 4. How can itim improve their social media marketing content to make it more appealing to the employees?

Table 1 presents the theoretical framework, research methods and results chapters for each investigative question.

Table 1. Overlay matrix

Investigative Question	Theoretical Framework	Research Methods	Results (chapter)
IQ 1. How do the employees view the importance of employee engagement in social media marketing?	Social media marketing, employee engagement	Survey for the employees	4.1, 4.2, 5.1
IQ 2. What are the employees' opinions and experiences of the current content provided?	Employee engagement	Survey for the employees	4.1, 4.2, 5.1
IQ 3. What are the employees' suggestions for improving the company content?	Employee engagement, social media marketing	Survey for the employees	4.1, 4.2, 5.1
IQ 4. How can itim improve their social media marketing content to make it more appealing to the employees?	Social media marketing, personal brand	Survey for the employees, desktop study	4.1, 4.2, 5.1

#### 1.4 Key Concepts

**Social media marketing** is when a company implements a strategy to approach a specific target group through social media channels. Social media offers many opportunities to promote content with different tactics and strategies. It also allows companies to define the target group more detailed, for example by excluding certain geographic areas or personal information. (Investopedia 2016.)

**Employee engagement** happens when an employee is emotionally committed to the company and their work. When committed, the employee cares for the company's goals and the company itself. According to researches executed by Towers Perrin and Kenexa, a company that has engaged employees have higher net profit margins and shareholder returns in a five-year period. (Forbes 2012.)

**Employee advocacy** means that the employee shows their support for the brand, products or services their employing company has in their personal social media channels.

The goal of the company is to keep the employees informed and trained, and this way extend the company's social media strategy to its employees, letting them act as advocates for the company in social media. (Dynamic Signal 2016.)

**Personal branding** is the image you create over your professional career or your name. You use this image to show a specific set of skills, values or personality that you possess. It helps you to build a reputation for yourself, and connect you with people who might have a use for the traits you have. (About.com 2016.)

**“Corporate branding** is the development, positioning, and management of a brand for a company.” (Brandleague 2016).

Branding a company is a process that consists of various steps. In order for a company to differentiate itself from competitors, the unique elements it possesses must be highlighted for the public. (Brandleague 2016).

**Community management** definition often varies regarding of the type of a business it is carried out in, but the basic elements stay more or less the same. The goal is to build rapport within the community, create value for those who participate in it, and to act as an intermediary between the company and the community in it. (The Community Manager 2014.)

## **1.5 Demarcation**

This study will focus on the company's internal communication of its social media marketing content, from the employee point of view. The aim of the study is to find out the employees' thoughts and experiences about the company content that is provided to them for sharing, and the platforms they are encouraged to use. Improvement ideas are collected from the employees' for the author to make recommendations for the future of itim International's social media marketing content and platforms.

The management's point of view is looked into as a background information, but is demarcated theory wise. This is demarcated for the reason that the management and the Social Media Director of this company have a clear view of what it would like the employees to share and how, but is not able to get the engagement of the employees on the level



they desire. Figure 1 shows the area this study is focusing on. The area focused on is circled with the red line.

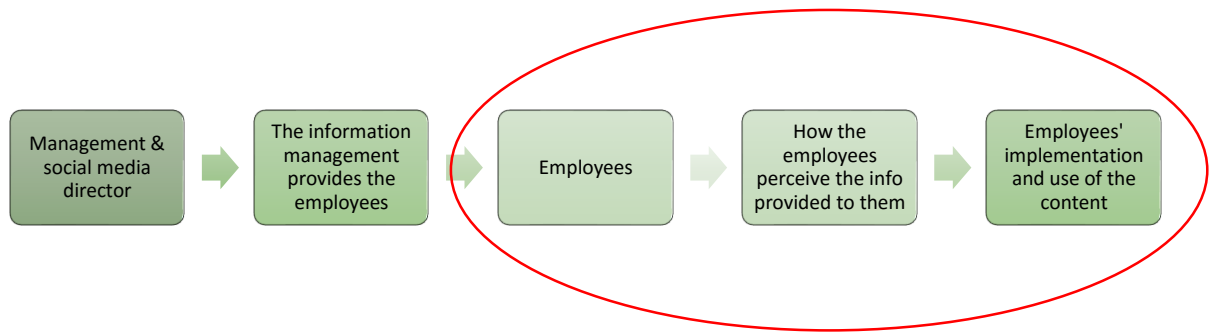


Figure 1. Demarcation (Malmén 2016).

## 1.6 International Aspect

itim International has several licence holders operating around the globe in 32 different countries. To fulfil the international aspect this thesis requires, surveys to all of the license holders were sent. With this solution the author will determine, if the views of the licence holders and the office staff differs, and to which extent. From the received answers a comparison between the answers of the license holders and the office employees here in Helsinki is executed, and presented in chapter 4.3, Insights from the Differences Between the Two Groups.

## 1.7 Benefits

The party that benefits the most out of this thesis is the commissioning company, itim International. The Social Media Director and the managers get to hear an honest and a more impartial opinion of the actions they have been taking, when a person outside the company itself executes a study like this. If the company would have tried to look into the issue itself, the employees might have had said positive and friendly things to people they work with every day and the problems would not have been found out properly.

This thesis helps the company and its Social Media Director to determine if it is worth doing social media marketing in the way they are doing it right now. The goal of this research is to improve the tools used in the company's employee engagement endeavours. This also shows the employees that the company tries to develop its working ways and im-

prove its efforts, so the employees' views toward the content and engagement efforts might change to a more positive direction. The company hopes to learn new ways to engage and execute engaging activities amongst the employees in their office, and with the license holders.

The other benefitting party for this thesis is the company employees. They will have it cleared out what the managers hope them to do, and learn how to execute the plan the company has for the social media marketing through employee engagement. The employees have the opportunity to express their opinions about the information and training they are given, and in turn provide suggestions for improvement. This enabled them to influence on the way the engagement is executed, and the way they are going to be using social media in their work in the future. When they learn to share the company content in the channels that they use, they also start to build and invest in their own personal brand online.

For the author this research is majorly interesting. Social media usage as a marketing tool is becoming more and more important in business (The Content Factory 2016)., so this thesis gives the author a good look into social media marketing, and developing it in the real world. The internal communication and internal marketing of an engagement program in a company is also very interesting, and something that the author looked forward to hearing and following, and to learn about more. The possible business connections thinking about the future are a personal interest also.

## **2 Employee Engagement as a Marketing Tool**

The following chapter presents the reader the different theories that are studied and interpreted while doing this research. The chapter contains different approaches and views to the main theories that are used to analyse and portray the results.

### **2.1 History and Definitions of Employee Engagement**

According to the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) the theory of employee engagement has some obvious overlaps with the more studied theories of organizational citizenship and commitment. These theories also have differences, particularly employee engagement working two-ways. In employee engagement the organization has to see a bit of trouble to actually engage the employee, whereas the employee can make a decision of their own of the level of engagement they are ready to give to the organization. The IES is defining employee engagement as the employee having a positive attitude towards the employing company and its values, and is working towards improving and bettering the performance of the company. (Robinson, Perryman & Hayday 2003, ix.)

As IES stated employee satisfaction is not the same than employee engagement. Employee engagement is the emotional commitment one has to the company they are working for, and to the goals of that company. Further, it means that the employee is willing to go the extra mile for the company to achieve the target that they set. (Kruse, 2015.)

Although employee engagement can be seen as a fairly new theory, the term can actually be found in an academic journal that was published in the year 1990. Before this the attention was on the satisfaction of the employees which, however, has no connection to business performance like engagement does. (HRZONE 2013.)

In 1990 an article written by William a. Kahn for Academy of management Journal was looking into employee engagement and disengagement. This study connected the employees' commitment and support to the company for the first time. In the 2000's organizations started paying more attention on the relationship they had with their employees, and how it affected their marketing efforts. Organizations had to analyse what differentiates them from their competitors, and what is the factor that makes them successful over

time. This led to companies having to understand what advanced their relationship to be better with their employees and how to nurture it. With the year 2012 coming to an end, a group called Engage for Success published their report of a case study that proved employee engagement having benefits over the company's overall performance as well as wellbeing at work and several other factors. (GaggleAMP 2016.)

### **2.1.1 Human Resources View**

In 1990 IES published an article that demonstrated how sales performance and customer retention could possibly be improved by the attitudes and demeanor of the employees. A broad study of the subject, and the link IES had found between company performance and the engagement of the employees aided in founding the importance of engagement to human resources, as well as to business performance. (HRZONE 2013.)

Employee engagement contributes to individual and organizational performance, well-being at work and productivity, this way increasing the businesses chances to success. When employee engagement is properly executed it can reduce the employees' sick absences and fewer conflicts in the working community may occur, fewer leaves amongst the employees can be taken and the company productivity can increase. The engagement of employees depends on the company's actions, that should be aligned with the values the company has presented its employees. A company should be able to stand behind their words, and show the employees that they go by the mutual rules. (Engage for Success, 2016.)

In Resource-based View of the Firm (Wernerfelt, 1984). the competitive edge of a company is seen to ascend from the different capitals of the company, one of which is human capital. In this view the employees are seen specifically as a resource for the company, so examining employee engagement from this point of view, it can be seen as a managerial action from the company.

### **2.1.2 Marketing View**

A positive influence employee engagement had for example on turnover, profitability and sales got companies noticing the potential affect this theory could have on the whole busi-

ness. Employees who are engaged to their job and the company they are working for have pride in their work, and are more likely to recommend the company services, products and the company itself to their peers. (HRZONE 2013.)

Employee engagement can also be seen as the managed version of Word of Mouth, traditionally defined as an oral or written endorsement from a consumer to another. After all, Word of Mouth is said to be the most powerful form of promotion (Business Dictionary 2016.) and maybe that could also be applied in the case of employee engagement. Employee engagement constitutes an effort to harness the potential possessed by each employee to act as a brand ambassador. Examined critically, employee engagement is a form of managerial control that aims to regain some of the lost control of employees Word of Mouth on social media. (Kirkham, 2006).

Meyerson (2010, 29.) reminds in his chapter of the book *Success Secrets of the Social Media Marketing Superstars* that every contact you make with the public belongs to the company's marketing process, and no matter how big or small the details might be they can turn out to be extremely important. He goes on stating that marketing is a continuous progress that is applied with every contact you make with the target market that has been set.

## **2.2 The Role of Social Media in Marketing**

Social media offers companies various opportunities to use. Different social platforms, blogs, and companies' community sites allow companies to interact with the existing customers, or market themselves to potential customers. This communication is also quick, easy and without receiving a massive fee every month in order to continue marketing. All these channels allow the consumer to contact the company itself, or the employees of the company. (Meyerson 2010, 29; Handley 2010, 47.)

Briefly, social media is a platform where the users are able to share information, network more effectively than before and constantly be in touch with each other. The channel is evolving and growing, and is beginning to be one of the most powerful marketing tools there is. (Boyd, 2009; Kaplan, Haenlein 2010.) The usage of social media in marketing is also becoming more and more common, and using it as a marketing channel is becoming

almost as a must-have for companies, no matter what size the company or the area its business is in. (He, Wang & Zha 2014).

Social media marketing obviously happens in social media channels, and ties the power of these channels to the company marketing, helping it to achieve the set goals like better brand recognition or increased traffic in the company's websites. Out of the platforms to choose from Facebook is the world's largest social network with the most users. Twitter comes next, followed by LinkedIn. (Creative Guerilla Marketing, 2015.)

**Facebook** has more than 1,55 billion users that are active in the platform. Not only is Facebook the biggest, but it is also the most adaptable to different situations. Facebook is a great place to have a company site in, whatever business field the company operates in. It can also be seen as a more low-maintenance site time and effort wise. (Business News Daily, 2016.)

In **Twitter** the users share short messages consisting of maximum 140 characters. It is easy to use in interactions between two or more users. There are more than 320 million active users in Twitter. Twitter is an effective channel for handling connections with customers and market businesses. It is important to pay attention on the shared content in Twitter; when only sharing the content of one's business, the followers lose interest. Retweeting and sharing interesting and relevant content also from other users keep the interest of the account's audience up. (Business News Daily, 2016.)

**LinkedIn** is the largest and most popular professional platform with more than 313 million users. In LinkedIn the network is created much like Facebook. In LinkedIn the recruiters have a possibility to find a suitable candidate for a job, and job seekers have a possibility to find an opening to apply to. LinkedIn is also an impressive tool for businesses to use. They can reach the media through LinkedIn, create partnerships and find clients. (Chansamooth, 2014.)

As emphasized by Meyerson (2010, 29), "Social media marketing is not about quantity; it's about quality. It is not about transactions or orders. It is not about long lists of "followers". Rather, it begins with a sincere desire to grow and nourish genuine relationships and with doing whatever it takes to ensure they happen".

### **2.3 Employee Engagement in Social Media Context**

Social media has liberated employees in what they can say, and where and to whom. Handley (2010, 47) claims that nowadays with social media, everyone can act as the media, and everyone can act as a publisher, since technology has made it possible to implement connections we did not have before. This enables the content to reach a remarkably versatile audience, and spread the message far beyond the original source.

Traditionally, organizations are keen to remain in control of the reputation and employees, including what is said about the company in social media. Inappropriate social media postings are becoming an ever-growing reason for a company to lay employees off. (The Wall Street Journal 2014.)

Social media makes it possible and very painless for everybody to share great content. (Stelzner 2010, 145). Consumers have learned to use social networks to link gaps between personal and physical contacts with contacts taking place online. (Brogan 2010, 85). This should also be seen as an opportunity, that would be hard to pass without exploiting by companies since it is possible the business would be missing out on something, and actually harming the performance by not taking advantage of the networks that are available.

A company called Smarp is a good example of how employee engagement and advocacy have turned into business. The company offers solutions and a program for organizations who want to execute employee advocacy and engage their employees. Smarp also tells in their website how important it is, for the company, and the employees themselves, to get employees sharing job openings and spread the employer brand online. (Smarp, 2016). Employee engagement has become a product itself, and this in turn refers to how jobs are changing, and the job description of employees is expanding. A job does not only require fulfilling the core tasks of the position, but the employees are also expected to participate in the company's marketing and communication actions. (Shattuck, 2014).

### **2.4 Employee Engagement in itim International's Social Media Marketing**

The employee engagement program in itim International was launched in the fall of 2015. When the program was introduced it was specifically targeted to Social Media. The mean-

ing of this program was to increase visibility and reputation of itim International, and to be more involved in the digital marketing field than what the company had been before.

The company tries to execute their social media marketing strategy through its employees and consultants abroad. The employee engagement program is also intended to increase the sense of community within the global itim network, and encourage consultants actively share not only content provided by itim International but also each other's proprietary content. The main channels for itim International's social media marketing efforts are Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, that are all introduced in chapter 2.2, The Role of Social Media in Marketing.

As the Social Media Director in itim is acting as the Community Manager as well in the company, he has the responsibility of the duties belonging to the role also. As already mentioned above, one of the tasks is to try and build a sense of community amongst the employees and the consultants. All of the employees know each other, but since they are spread all over the world they rarely see one another. They have a group in Facebook they use to communicate with each other. That group is a place where the employees are able to freely share interesting things about social media, marketing, culture and anything else they feel is relevant. The employees are also encouraged to share each other's content from the Facebook group. All in all, the Community Manager helps the employees to function more efficiently in social media. He trains them what to do there, and how to do it. He teaches them the best practices and keeps them informed of the latest updates in the world of social media, and answers any questions the employees' might have about the subject.

To have an active Community Manager in the company is also a way to ensure the community created is thriving. A job of a community manager is not one that someone can take on with their left hand, so to speak. What itim is trying to reach with the active Community Managing, is an important part of reaching the company customers. (Brogan 2010, 85.)



### **3 Research Methods**

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the reader to the design of the research, and the methods used when executing the study. The chapter will also explain why the specific methods were chosen, and the justification of their use.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The research for this thesis was survey based, supported with an interview with itim's Social Media Director to gain background information. A substantial part of information was also obtained from books discussing different theories and approaches to the phenomena which are dealt with in this research. The questionnaire and the recommendations are made based on the theory presented in the previous chapter 2, Employee Engagement as a Marketing Tool. The analysis of the questionnaire results is interpretative, adapting to the end goals and targets of the research.

Figure 2. illustrates the process of the theories that were used in this research. In the figure the main elements of the theory are broken into smaller parts. Reading the figure from top to bottom, the smaller parts can be seen building up to form a bigger picture. The level in the end of the figure is formed in a way that a proper conclusion, and a functional recommendation for further actions for itim International can be done in the end of this research.

In the first level of Figure 2. the two main phenomena are introduced. The second level demonstrates what channels the company wishes to use, which channels and how does it use the channels to distribute the company content to the employees. On the same level is also the company content, that is provided to the employees. The final level is the desired result that is found out with this research, presented as the ways the company can encourage the employees to share the company content in the future.

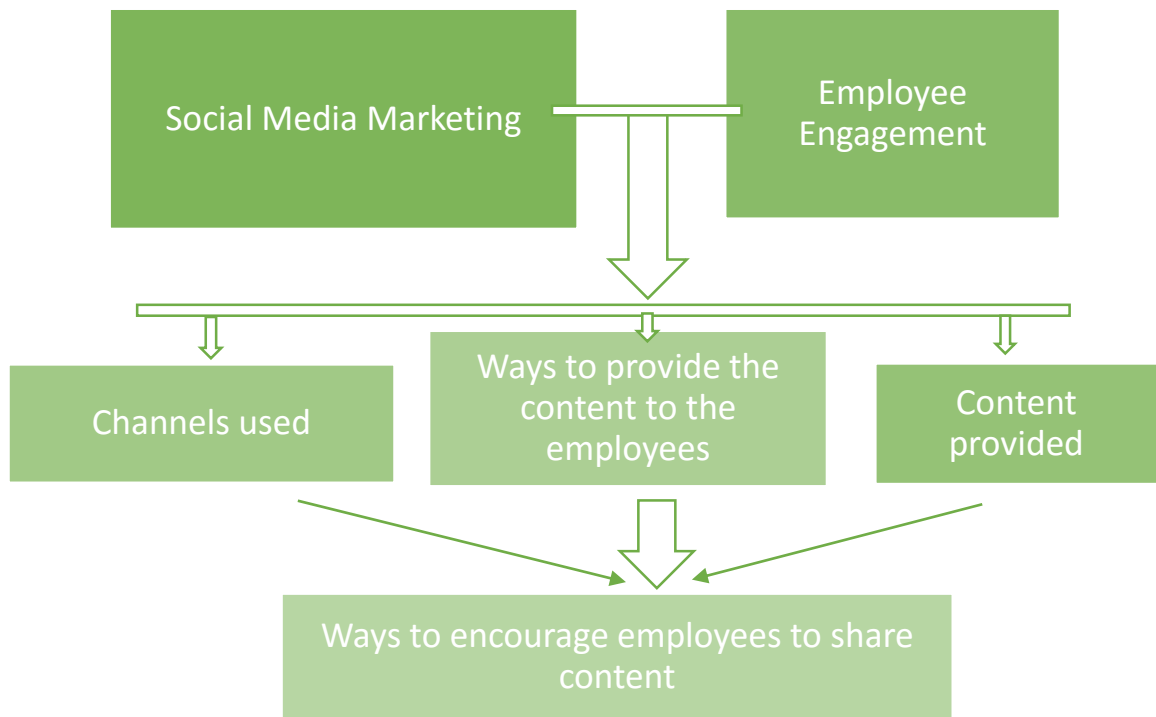


Figure 2. Theory research design (Malmén 2016).

### 3.2 Methods

The methods chosen to execute this study were the following; background interview with the Social Media Director of the company, desktop study on the subjects processed in this research, and a questionnaire implemented for the company employees and consultants abroad to acquire the information that is crucial for itim to obtain.

The background interviews with the Social Media Director were an important part of the process in the beginning. The interview helped to identify the problems and the needs the company had regarding the topic of this research. Based on the interview, recurring themes were selected for further analysis. These topics were then analysed by way of examining different theories and how these are used in practice.

On the basis of these two methods questions for the final questionnaire were formed. Most of the questions were open ended so the results of the survey would reflect more on the thoughts of the employees. It was important for itim to hear the employees' opinions in their own words, rather than having a multiple choice survey. A quantitative survey was

considered but was later determined to provide too little information that was also too inaccurate for the purpose of the study. For the final qualitative survey, the answers were guided into certain themes with carefully constructed questions. This was done in order to obtain results that would satisfy the needs of itim International and to keep the focus of the answers in the chosen target area.

In the beginning of the process the primary method chosen was interviewing the consultants and the employees. This method, however, was discarded due to its inconveniency and problems that emerged with the authors personal timeline for this research, and the international consultants like scheduling, time differences, traveling and poor technical connections.

The research methods and the actions taken while doing this research are explained in Figure 3. The research of the theories conducted from books and journal articles is not included in the figure. In the figure it is possible to see the correlation between the investigative questions, and the way they all effect on the end result of this thesis.

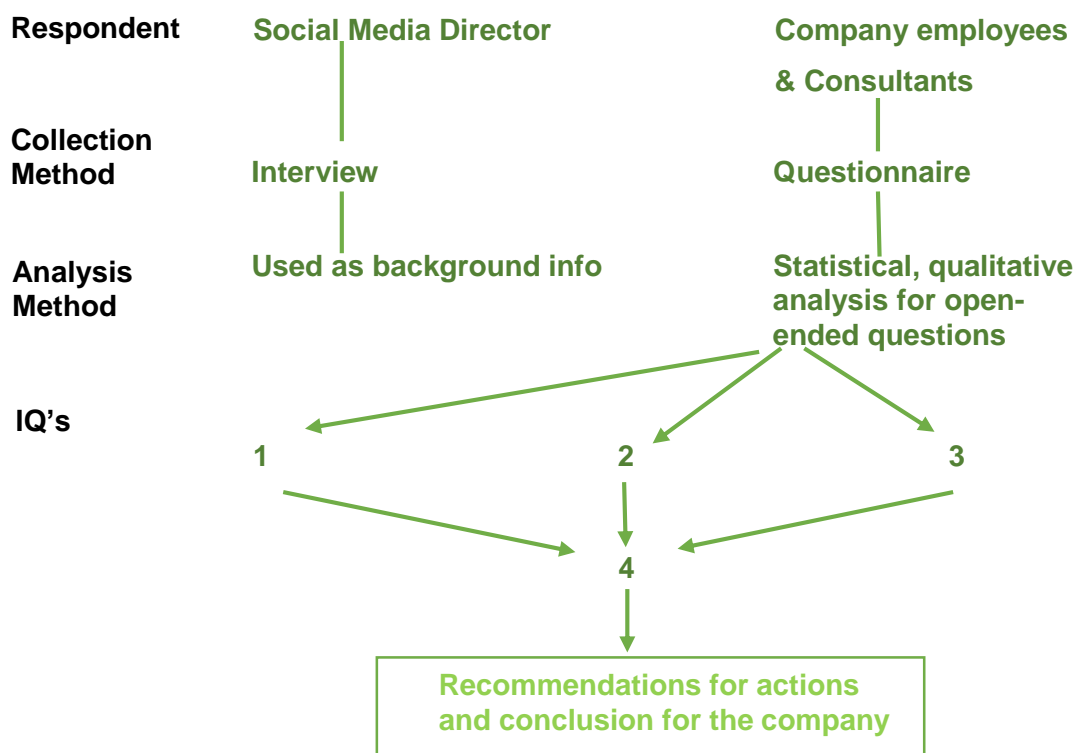


Figure 3. Research methods used and their relation to the investigative questions and the result (Malmén 2016).

### **3.2.1 Interview**

The interview of itim International's Social Media Director Robert Brooks was conducted at a place chosen by the interviewee; this makes the interview situation relaxed as the interviewee can feel comfortable. This, in turn, is beneficial regarding the outcome, and the willingness to discuss the topics of the interview. The interview took place in Raasepori, Finland, 17.03.2016 at 15.30. The qualitative interview of Robert Brooks lasted one and a half hours, and ended at 17.00. The interview was conducted and analysed in a narrative way. (Silverman, 2005).

The interview did not consist of strict questions that were set in advance, but rather happened in a form of an open discussion of the topic at hand. The method of this interview was interpretative and the situation was more casual. The interviewee was free to express their opinions on the topic and guide the conversation to a direction they thought of as interesting, and what they wished for the author to focus on while doing the research. At times more specific questions were asked in order to get a deeper insight to the problem, and to keep the discussion on the desired subject. This method provided more information for the author to interpret rather than having an interview in a survey form.

The interview was not audiotaped, so there is no transcription of the situation. The author took personal field notes while the interview was ongoing, and these notes act as the material that is used and interpreted in this research as background information. (Silverman, 2005).

### **3.2.2 Questionnaire**

The questionnaire for this research was a qualitative survey, as mentioned in the earlier in chapter 3.2. The structure of the survey was kept very clear, and as simple as possible. The number of questions in the survey was limited to eleven, and one additional question in the end that the respondents could fill in if wanted. All of the questions were kept non-mandatory, but the response rate to each question was good despite of this matter.

The goal was to acquire as much information of the personal opinions and perceptions of the employees and consultants as possible, so six of the questions were styled open ended. The questionnaire also included three scale matrixes for the respondents to fill out,

and one multiple choice question. As the only background question, age was asked in the beginning of the survey to see if the age distribution of the employees had a correlation with their social media skills. Other background questions were found irrelevant in terms of the results.

The questionnaire was executed through a survey tool called Webropol. Results of the questionnaire were also mainly analyzed through the program, for it is offering a good selection of different analyzing tools after the responses for the survey have been submitted. The questionnaire was sent out in the afternoon of Thursday, 14.04.2016. Time to complete the survey was set to end on Thursday, 21.04.2016. One reminder of the completion was sent out on Wednesday, 20.04.2016, and in addition to this, itim International's Social Media Director reminded the employees and the consultants of the survey. The results of the survey are further presented and analyzed in the next chapter 4, Results and Analysis. A copy of the final questionnaire form can also be found attached in the end of this research, Appendix 1.

## 4 Results and Analysis

This chapter provides the final results and analysis of the conducted survey and research it holds. The chapter is divided into three subchapters, two of which are viewing the results of the two targeted groups separately. The final part of this chapter focuses on the differences that might have occurred in the two groups results while analyzing the responses. The questionnaire was sent to ninety-nine (N= 99) respondents, out of which thirty-six (N=36) answered the questionnaire. Since the style of the questions was held non- mandatory, the N of each question varies a bit, but not significantly in any question. The analysis and interpretation of the results in this chapter has been done based on the theoretical framework, and guidelines presented by David Silverman in his book “Doing Qualitative Research”, published in 2005.

### 4.1 Results of the Employees in the Helsinki Office

Out of the fourteen employees working in the itim International’s Helsinki office, the response rate for the questionnaire was 50%. For the surveys only background question about the respondents age, six employees out of seven answered. Based on this sample group the average age of respondents was 28,5 years.

2. The second question requested the respondents to clear out their social media usage, and the channels they had in use. The results of the questions can be seen from the next charts about the usage of Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn

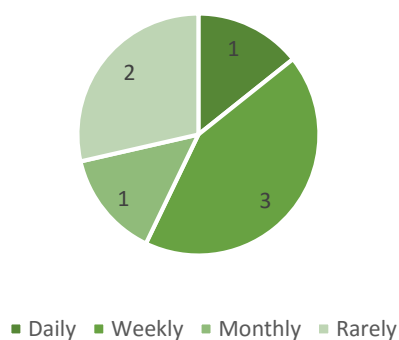


Figure 4A. Use of Twitter

Amongst the employees working in the Helsinki office, Twitter as a channel was not the most popular one. The employees stated they were not active there, and have not much experience, even if they have an existing account in the platform., as can be seen from Figure4A.

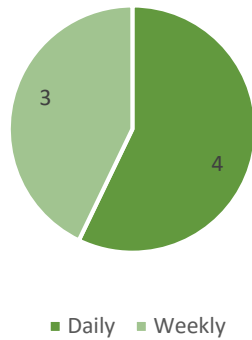


Figure 5A. Use of Facebook

The employees were active in Facebook as seen in Figure 5A. However, they also felt that Facebook is more of a private channel for them, and they do not feel like they could share a lot of work related material there.

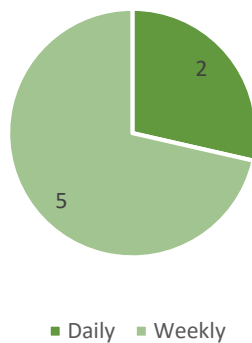


Figure 6A. Use of LinkedIn

The employees were fairly active in LinkedIn also, hence Figure 6A. They named this channel to be the more professional one, and to use in a more work related postings and sharing.

From these figures it is able to draw the conclusion, that while the employees are the most active in Facebook, they also see it more as a personal channel. That being said, from their comments to other questions Facebook can still be perceived as the most popular one. LinkedIn was declared to be for professional use, and as they are active there, it is still used less than Facebook. Twitter was the trickiest one, as many of the employees do not have experience from Twitter, and see it as a difficult platform to use. Those who do have a Twitter account did not express their willingness to share there either.

3. In the third question the respondents were asked to tell about their perceptions of sharing company content in their social media channels. The responses showed mainly a positive attitude towards sharing company content, but there were a couple of doubts mostly regarding spamming the audience with work related things, and content being too heavy. In this case the word heavy meant that the language and topics would be too pro-

fessional. Also, one respondent experienced the content that itim provides to be too much of direct promoting- style of the company products or services.

“I think it is great to share the company content. Both because the company produces a lot of interesting content and also it gives my personal network a better understanding of my job.”

“I have good experiences and I think that it is really important to share company content, but it needs to focus on topics which are interesting in our field, not on promoting our services and products directly.”

From the answers received from the employees an image of the desired postings and the style of them can be seen. The content should not be purely promoting itim, its products or services. Should be cleared out a bit, so it would be easier to understand to those who are not in the field of culture. Employees have to be able to relate to the content, in order to want to share it. Liking in Facebook was named to be more comfortable than sharing posts in there, hence the personal perception and the audience of the platform. There was willingness to share posts in LinkedIn, but the respondent was unsure if it was worth sharing something somebody else had share a couple of days, or a week ago already. From this we can see that all of the employees are not necessarily sure how to act in social media, when it comes to sharing company posts, or know the meaning why they are supposed to share the posts in the first place.

4. Question number four asked about the challenges the employees might have faced when sharing company content. Some of the challenges the employees named were for example social pressure to share company posts, not having the right audience for professional posts and lack of response from the personal network. Other problems were lack of time, too much promoting, and the quality of the content.

Having social pressure to share posts is not necessarily a bad thing, but what is the ultimate reason for the unwillingness to share. Maybe changing the channel in where they share posts would help, and the feeling of pressure could be turned into a good thing, instead of a negative one. Maybe by changing and becoming more active on another channel would also solve the problem of having the wrong audience and receiving responses from the network. The employees could also suggest and be themselves in-



involved in creating content for the company, and they would be able to create content they would be happy to share, with their own interests and visions included

5. When asked about their opinion about the content that itim provides for them, the respondents felt the content was relevant for them, and the field of their work, but not necessarily relevant to their audience. The employees felt that the visual side of the content was improving but more resources would be needed on order to create even better content. The content was also experienced as interesting and the quality of it was said to be generally on a high level.

Having the wrong audience for sharing company posts seems to be a recurring topic throughout the responses. Going back to the question and the problems that were dressed above, changing the primary channel could be a solution for the problem. If the employees are not willing to change channels maybe they lack knowledge of the new options and are reluctant to change channels because of that. For this problem an easy solution would be to offer more thorough training and introduction to the new channels, especially Twitter.

6. Number six of the questionnaire asked the respondents to name the strengths and weaknesses of the content itim provides. the answers are presented below, starting with the strengths:

- + Content is creative
- + Content is created and provided for the employees over all
- + A selection of content where you can choose what to post
- + Interesting content
- +Content is well written
- +Visual posts

The respondents found the weaknesses of the content to be the following points:

- The content is not interactive
- The content comes from external sources
- Content can be outdated
- Wrong audience for the content

-Articles are too long for people who are not in the field

Overall the employees seem to be rather pleased with the content that itim is providing. Again it is possible to see a theme in the points considered as weaknesses; wrong audience can be seen brought up in two of the five points. Participating in creating company's content could also solve the problem of the current content not being interactive, and coming from a source outside of itim. That way it would also be possible to make sure content would be up-to-date and relevant in current situation and with current trends.

7. The next question continued on the same topic as the last one, scouting the improvement ideas the employees might have regarding itim's content. Some of the ideas the employees had are the following; adding interactivity, more resources for creating the content, involve the consultants in creating the content, create our own content, increase the visualization of the content.

“We could add the amount of content that is friendly for the persons who hear about topic of national cultures and organizational cultures for the first time. Some content relating to 360-feedback solutions and importance of measuring employee satisfaction could be added.”

8. Question eight of the survey inquired what would promote the willingness of the employees to share itim's content, continuing to collect the improvement ideas of the employees. The answers remained on the same line than those of the previous question. Employees thought that making a competition within the company about sharing posts would definitely not be a good idea, and that would not motivate one to share more. A popular answer was to make the content easier to understand for the people who are not working in the field, and have the content to be more relatable in order to be able to react to it during a conversation. Another thing that was also mentioned again was that the content should be more visual, and info graphs were suggested to use.

The employees did not want a competitive setting in the work place, as that would not motivate them. Maybe the answer would be in encouraging each other, and having conversations about the possible topics to share. That would also give them more material and a good starting position to react to conversations happening around a specific topic.

9. Question nine asked, who the employees felt that benefits from the sharing of the company post. As can be seen from Figure 7A., the employees were a bit unsure, but still positive of the benefits for their own personal brand, if they shared the company's posts. The respondents were more convinced that itim as a company benefits from the employees sharing the company posts.

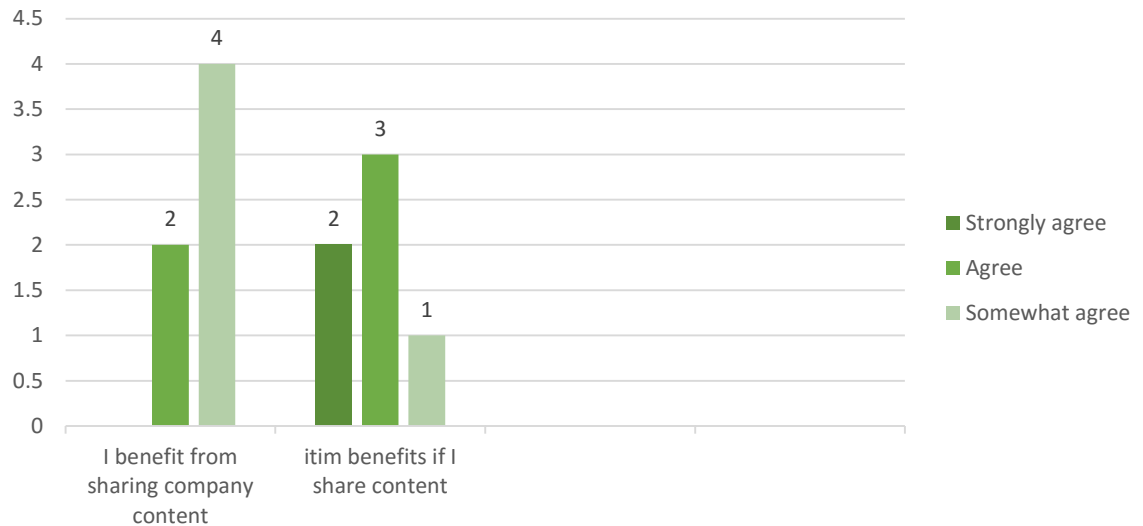


Figure 7A. Employee perceptions about the benefiting party

This question raised a question of the employees' awareness of their personal brand, and how to create and maintain it. Maybe a training would help, to clear up the term, and help them to see the positive effect it might have. The employees saw more clearly that itim benefits from them sharing the company posts, but as addition, do they understand why would it be important on both parties' sake to engage in sharing.

10. The next question was about the company's social media marketing, and how the employees thought it could be improved. This was a question where the employees could choose multiple options, to get a better insight of their thoughts. In addition to the option seen in Figure 8A., another option was offered, where it was possible to write their own suggestion. Two respondents took the opportunity, and mentioned adding interactivity, and increase visualization to the answers.

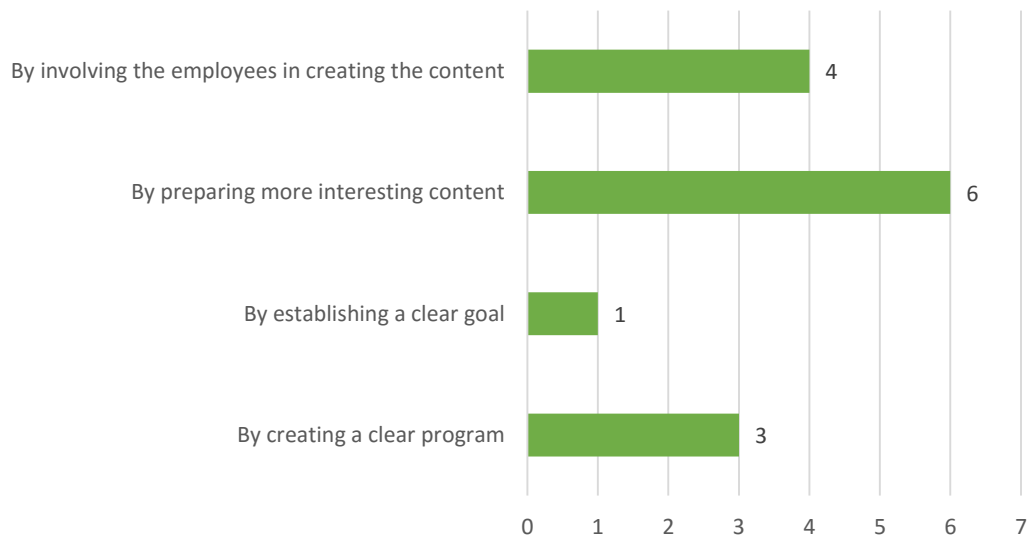


Figure 8A. Opinions on improvement possibilities for itim's Social media marketing

From the figure it is clear to see, that employees of itim International want to see the content being developed to a more interesting direction. A clear goal was not seen as a necessity by all but one. Involving the employees seems to be the second most popular option, so maybe that is an option the company management should really look into. Creating a clear program for social media marketing also got many responses, that could be a matter to look into also, as the employees seem to think it would help in executing marketing, and help them to have a clear program with what to go by.

11. Question eleven was the last proper question in the survey, and was about the training and support regarding the employees' social media usage, provided by itim. The questions asked separately about training and support, and whether or not the employees saw them as being sufficient, and if there was something to be developed. The answers are illustrated below in Figure 9A.

In the figure it is visible, that while the training and support that itim provides its employees is mostly seen to be adequate, there are several points that show they need to be developed. Support is in quite a good position, but training is definitely also experienced lacking in something. The training might be seen as good quality, but maybe the problem is in the frequency of it. A regular scheduled training, even the smallest one could make the employees feel more sure about their skills in social media, and especially with actions regarding company's content.

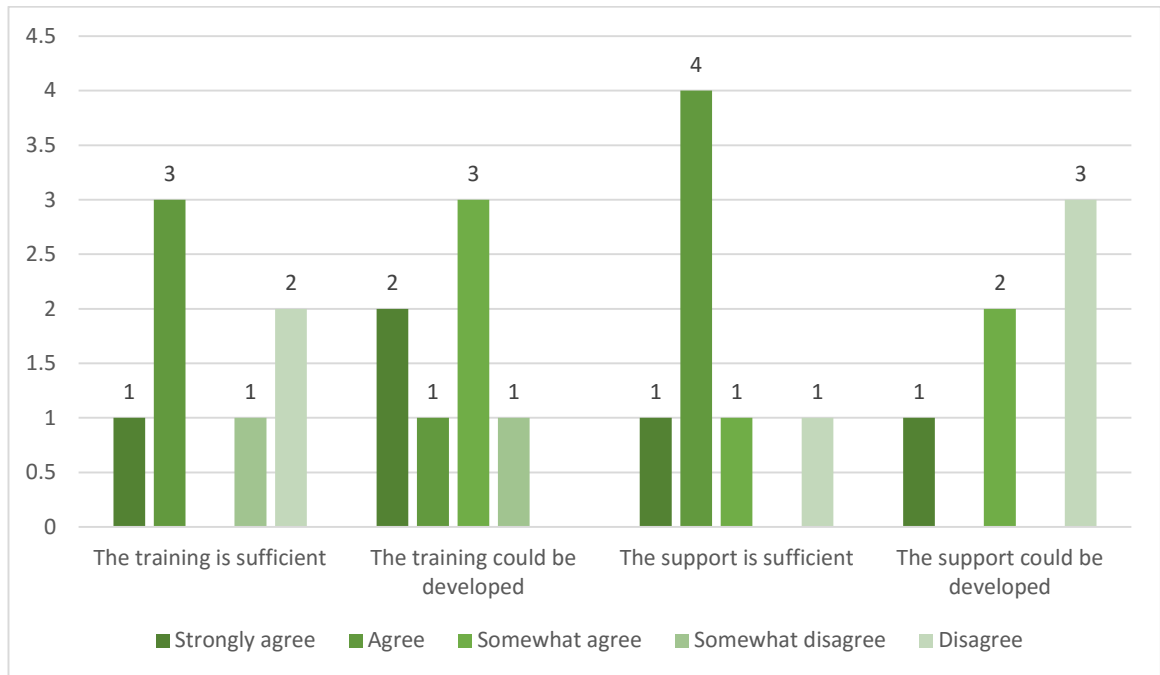


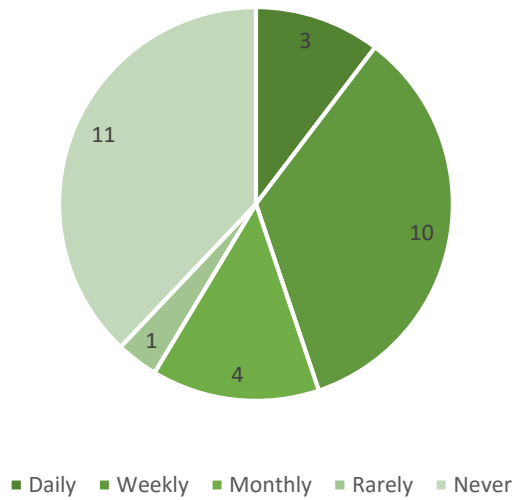
Figure 9A. Opinions on training and support offered by itim

12. There were no answers from this group to the optional last question, where it was possible to tell any extra comments about the topics of the questionnaire.

#### 4.2 Results of the License Holders

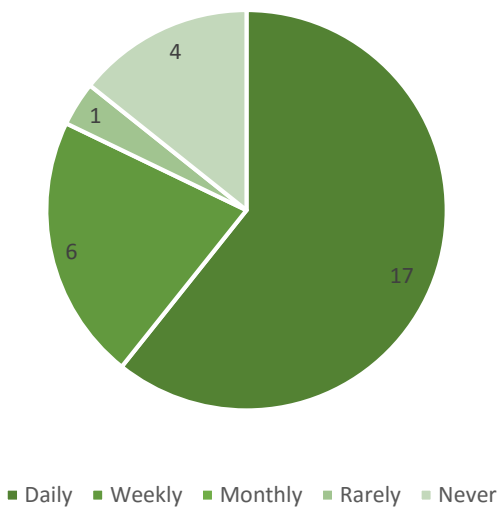
Originally eighty-five consultants received the survey in total. Out of the eighty-five, 34% of all the consultants responded to the questionnaire, making the final sample size twenty-nine consultants (N=29). Out of the twenty-nine, twenty-eight provided an answer in the background question about age. Counting from these employees the average age of the sample group is set in 51,02 years. Two of the consultants and one managerial level respondent did not cover the whole survey, but filled out the scale matrixes and multiple choice question due to not being active in social media, and not using it in their personal work. They are included in the sample group for the dissenting opinion and view.

2. The consultants received the exact same survey than the employees in Helsinki office. Next are presented the consultant social media usage in a chart similar to the ones in the previous chapter, 4.1.



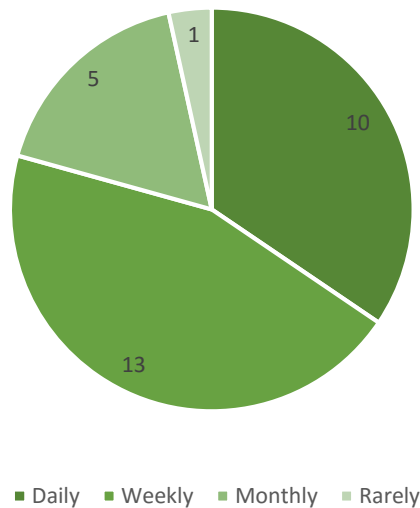
The consultants seem to be quite active in Twitter as seen in Figure 4B. Over a half of them use twitter at least once within a months' time. However, there are also those, who do not have an account at all in the platform.

Figure 4B. Use of Twitter



Majority of the consultants are clearly very active in Facebook. In Figure 5B, four of the consultants say they never use this platform, and one does so rarely. One consultant did not give an answer in this part, but was daily active in the other two channels. So the author is assuming he is active also in Facebook. This would increase the daily users to eighteen.

Figure 5B. Use of Facebook



LinkedIn seemed to be most active channel for the consultants. Only one person said they rarely use the platform according to Figure 6B. Well over a half, twenty-three of the consultants are active in LinkedIn at least once a week.

Figure 6B. use of LinkedIn

A majority of the consultants seem to be active on Facebook daily. As in the previous one, the consultants also viewed Facebook to be more of a private channel. Many of the consultants were also active daily in LinkedIn, and a bit more were active weekly in that platform. LinkedIn was again seen as the more suitable option for professional relations. Twitter was somewhat active amongst the consultants, but only a few actually used it daily. The weekly rate of Twitter users was actually almost half of the respondents in the group.

3. The consultants' perceptions of sharing itim International's posts in their social media channels varied. Many of the consultants thought the content that itim provides them is good. Like in the previous group, a statement of Facebooks privacy and the reluctance to use of it for work purposes came up repeatedly. LinkedIn was experiences as the more professional platform, where people were more willing to share posts from the company and their peers. Overall social media was seen as an effective tool for communication and conversations between fellow consultants, and an important channel to know what is going on in itim. One person felt that itim provides very little content for postings, and another stated that they share more of their peers' content than that of itim. Social media was also seen as a good opportunity to raise awareness and visibility for itim as a company, and themselves as a consultant, and the experiences of sharing were positive. A clear communication strategy was also longed after, while one consultant said that they were not even aware of the company's presence on Facebook or Twitter.

As a large group saw social media as a good way to promote and communicate, it was noticed that the consultants are more careful what they post. While they appreciated the content itim provides for them, they like to have options from which to choose from. That way they would be able to build the image they want to keep for their customers that they might deal with for example through another company. A few seemed to also favor not so much itim's posts, but the other consultants and peers' postings. A satisfaction towards the actions of the Social Media Director of itim was expressed, so the company is developing their social media marketing to a direction that is seen more positive.

3. Amongst the answers on the challenges faced, the use of Twitter seemed to come up multiple times. Also lack of time was mentioned several times. Other problems were that the content is too technical for the audience, a worry not to be perceived as spam by the audience, and no clear strategy on executing the postings from the company. Some said that they do not have a problem sharing, they just do not like doing it, or that some of the posts are not shareable. Personal channels were also mentioned in the answers.

"I think a general issue at itim lies in the fact that there is no clear strategy and / or different strategies for Itim and for the consultants individually. These might be thoughts of different people: If I want to be an independent consultant, I wouldn't share company content too often in order to be recognized as independent. If I fully engage with Itim, I'd do, however what is the incentive? It's time consuming and my assignments do develop from personal contacts rather than social media. The more work I have, the less I need to and have time to engage in social media."

"People are in social media more for fast content, but we should get balance between giving content that is easy to understand, not so long, not so short, attractive and based in solid concepts. We could produce more videos with the network in order to divulge concepts in an understandable way."

"Our biggest challenge is lack of time, we are all very busy creating our work content and that's why we don't post often. One biggest task is to make every Itim associate understand the importance of social media. If we all start creating content for social media, then we will be much stronger - we will have a lot of interesting content to share. This will make our visibility much better - everyone's visibility."



In this group also, the worry of having the wrong audience, or the content being too technical, might be solved with changing channels. If someone is not content with a new channel, a training and introduction to it could be offered, in order to make it more familiar.

4. The consultants' thoughts about the content itim provides for them are also varying between each consultant. The content was experienced as good when it was itim related, but when the content was about culture, the consultants felt that it needs improvement. Some wanted there to be more content and more often, and that the actual content needs to be easier to understand also for people who are not working with culture to understand it. A point of the content being bad for acquiring new customers was expressed, even if the content would be good in recruiting and sharing opinions. A stronger corporate identity was asked for, and the sharing and providing of the posts needs to be more systematic and frequent. Also a request of content that would relate to actual recent events of the society. Mostly however, the consultants were pleased with the content, and it was even mentioned to be keeping them active in social media.

itim could possibly develop a system that would enable the postings to be more frequent, and help the sharing to be more systematic throughout the whole network. This could also be a possible step towards creating a stronger corporate identity, that would also show in the social media posts they publish.

5. The strengths and weaknesses were reflected on the consultants answers throughout the questionnaire, and the themes of them became quite clear. The strengths that were mentioned are the following:

- +Pertinent to international culture
- +Thorough and well presented
- +Good articles
- +Easy to share
- +Brings added value to be connected with a big organization
- +Feels connected to the other consultants
- +Relative, up-to-date
- +Nicely prepared, nice pictures
- +Branding
- +Well written

The weaknesses mentioned by the consultants are the following:

- Not frequent enough
- No Organizational Culture topics
- Expert content
- Relatability to audience
- No business or client related information
- Hard to know if the content is Organizational Culture
- Too little of content
- Boring, too long
- Not itim's own content
- Mistakes in English language
- Use of English only
- No content in German
- Too academic

From the list of these weaknesses at least six out of the thirteen would be solved by involving the consultants in creating the content. That way there could be multiple different languages used, more content in general, more frequent posts and the content could be focused on Organizational Culture. This way the topics could be made as interesting as the contributing consultant would like. Relatability for audience could be solved by trying out publishing content in other channels than the one they are used to publish in.

7. The consultants' suggestions for improving the content echoed much on the topics of the previous question, and concentrated a lot on improving the weaknesses that were stated there. Requests that arose more than once were to have examples and cases from real life, posts in another language than English, and to have more posts from which to choose what to post. Also an idea of a focused topic per month was presented, and to execute what the company itself does and align the communication strategy with the company's culture. A desire for a more comprehensive communication strategy across the network, and a more of a goal driven content was expressed, along with a simpler line in general. Quotes were seen as successful posts.

"I think the content could be improved by including some success stories - perhaps focusing on what Itim is achieving - meaning content that describes ways in which Hofstede's framework has helped an organization (consulting engagement successes). We don't necessarily have to use client names, but could we describe the positive results? If other companies saw that, it might get them thinking about how their organization could be helped. I feel like the content is typically either general news or marketing conferences and such - it's good, but I don't know how "persuasive" that is."

"Develop a clear communication strategy which is also communicated across the network and have goal driven content."

In these responses the consultants expressed rather straightforwardly the actions they would like to see the company take. A solution could be to create a simpler communication strategy that would be executed throughout the network. When this would be done, a schedule for posts could be released at the same time, so everybody would know what posts to expect in which day, week or month. The themed weeks would be a nice addition to the program. This way the company would be able to concentrate on one topic at a time, and post smaller bits, that could build into a bigger whole in a certain time frame.

8. What the consultants experienced as promoting their willingness to share company content was for example trainings, peer encouragement and relevant discussions of the topics. A call for success stories and cases that would be analyzed in an intercultural way was repeated. Better availability and relatable posts came up again. Illustrations in articles, and concrete information supporting them for example in a form of a survey was brought up. A request of trainings from itim's side was made, in order to get everyone to understand the importance and possibilities of social media.

As in the previous one, in this question the consultants also pointed out the items they would like itim to concentrate on. It is clear to see the need for trainings of the social media topic, as it is addressed and brought up in many other ways too. itim could try and invest on more visual posts, as they seem to be deemed as good content and easy to understand, even for a person who is not an expert in Organizational Culture. Maybe regular discussions with the consultants about topics could be given a try. In that way they would also get some encouragement from their colleagues and feel more motivated to share posts.

9. In Figure 7B the perceptions of the benefitting party can be seen when sharing company's content. Even though the consultants are not strongly agreeing on the benefits for their personal brand, they seem to be quite in unison in their view, that sharing company's content is generally a positive thing for the company, and also them personally. The consultants do not seem to think sharing the content as being a negative thing, and only few are disagreeing with the hypotheses.

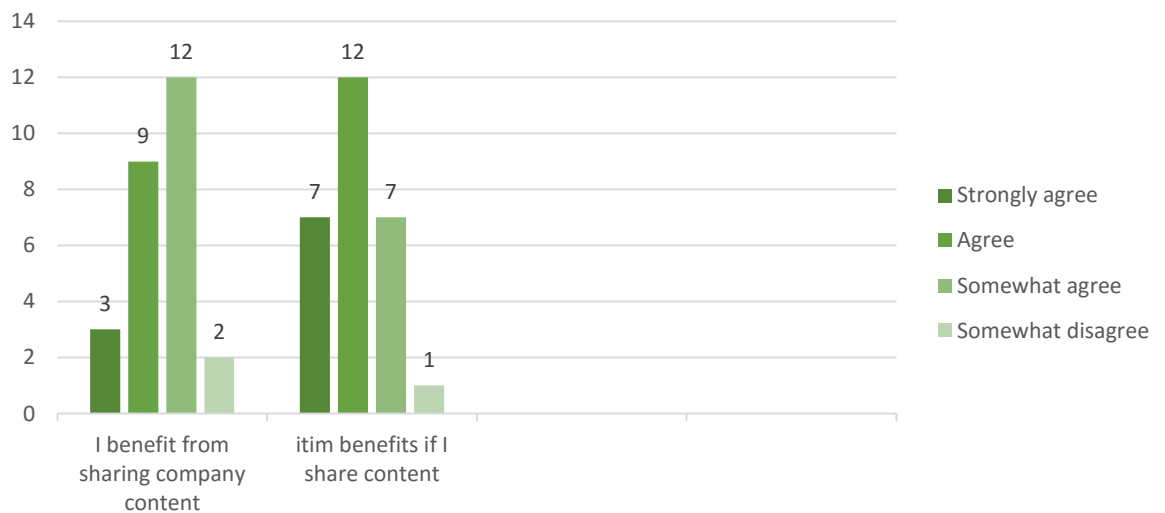


Figure 7B. Consultants perceptions about the benefitting party

This figure gives a picture that the consultants might be more aware of the concept of personal branding, and the possibilities of what it brings when maintained properly.

10. In addition to the options provided to choose from the consultants also added some of their own suggestions. In Figure 8B choices of the given options are seen, and after the figure some of the additional ideas are presented.

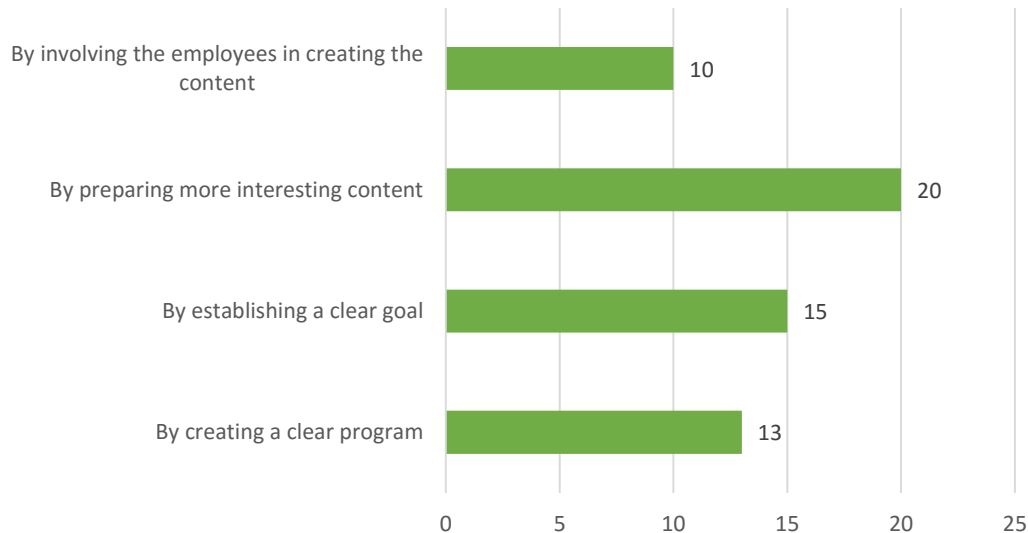


Figure 8B. Opinions on improvement possibilities for itim's Social media marketing

The additional ideas for improvement provided by the consultants were the following:

- Introduce a proper program for social media marketing
- Combine the social media marketing actions with the company website
- Involve the consultants in creating the content
- Involve the consultants in establishing the goal and the program of social media marketing
- Share consultants post, give feedback on them

Like the Figure 8A, this one also shows that the consultants think more interesting content would be good to have. To have a clear goal for the actions happening in social media, and to establish a program that can be followed by everyone seem to past involving the employees in the consultants' minds. Nevertheless, the consultants have also brought up involving employees quite often in other parts of this questionnaire, so it can be said that

they see it as equally important than the other points, despite lacking a bit from their response rates in the figure.

11. The consultants answers to the last actual question about training and support provided by itim are illustrated in Figure 9B.

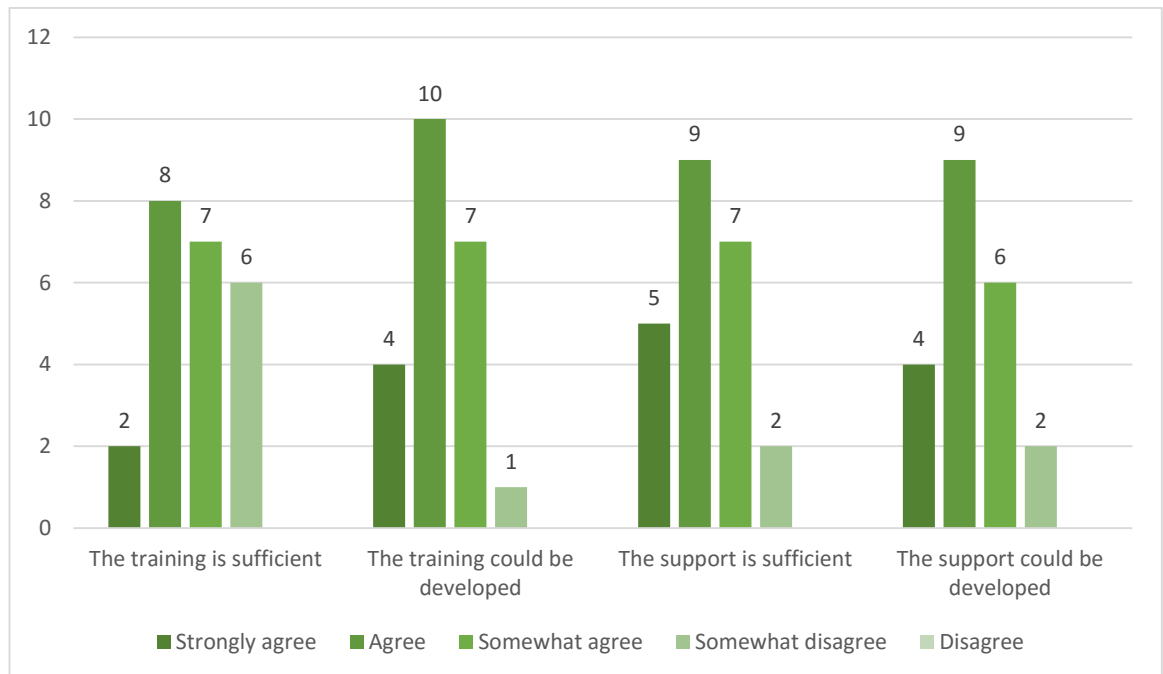


Figure 9B. Opinions on training and support offered by itim

Looking at Figure 9B it can be detected that the consultants feel the training they are provided does not necessarily cover the need for it. They also feel that the training itim does provide to them could be developed. Support is experienced a little more sufficient than training, but a strong endorsement for developing that too is given. The trainings might be hard to organize giving the fact that the consultants are spread all around the world, but the consultants feel there is a need for them, so it should be something to look into from itim's side to keep up the network it has, and to strengthen it.

12. The optional question in the end of the questionnaire received some suggestions on the topics from the consultants. Some of them are presented below with quotations.

“Social marketing should be measured against increase of turnover and profit. We are not a charity and we are not in a contest for followers. We need to find prospects

and convert these into (returning) customers. This should be the focus. Social marketing should not be a goal by itself and should be paid for by increased profit.”

“I think we need in short -term and long-term someone who is responsible for it like Rob now, and we are consistent with it in a longer term. we need a program of our own and clear objectives.”

“It is a continuous process. I appreciate a refresher and a new training from time to time.”

“Establish one to one relationships with each consultant that is interested in social networks and calibrate the balance between value and energy. At this point I personally don't expect that sales leads can come out from the SN and the energy invested is too big.”

The answers gave a picture that the consultants would like to see the effects of social media marketing. They are executing a strategy, and they want proof that the time and effort that is put into it is paying off. This could be done for example by examining the Return on Invest rate (ROI). A slight irritation was also possible to notice from some of the responses to this survey. The consultants are busy with their own businesses and companies, and do not necessarily feel they have the time to put into this. This is one problem that could be covered with a more comprehensive plan, that would be known to all, and be executed throughout the network.

### **4.3 Insights from the Differences Between the Two Groups**

The most notable difference when analyzing the results from the two groups was the opinions about the training and support. While the employees in Helsinki office were content with the situation, the consultants felt the need to develop the two, and add more training. This is probably due to the Social Media Director being located in Finland, where he is easily accessible to the employees at the office.

A second difference was that although the consultants are not working for itim, the requirements for organizational changes was a lot more straightforwardly expressed, than the employees did. The consultants brought up the concepts of a clear program and goal, and the need for more training like mentioned above.

Might be due to the consultants own image and their professional profile that they have as a consultant, they were also more concerned about the content and gave more variable suggestions and development ideas. It seemed like the consultants have recognized social media as a tool in their field of work, but the employees in Helsinki office are not quite there yet. The employees in Helsinki did give suggestions and ideas for development, but the themes seemed to be revolving around a few strongly recurring ones mainly.

The employees in Helsinki office seemed to be a bit shier about sharing content, and using different channels. They could follow how the consultants do it, and gain a little more confidence in doing so. The behavior of the employees present in the office could also mean that they feel like they do not necessarily need to participate in sharing the content actively since they are working for the company. For the consultants an association with a big organization, and especially Hofstede Centre is a good leverage in their business so they might be more keen on sharing the content and remaining tightly in the network. This way they keep the connection to a big name, and might gain more recognition through the relation.

## **5 Conclusion and Discussion**

This chapter is meant to capsulize the results and present them in a way that everything is brought together for the reader to grasp the most essential meaning of the results. The reliability and validity of the research results is also viewed and assessed. The final recommendation for actions to take for itim International is offered, as well as some of the future research and project suggestions introduced. In the end of the chapter the author is reflecting on her own learning during this project.

### **5.1 Key Results**

The main target of this research was to find out how itim International would be able to engage their employees and license holders more, and how would they be able to use the engagement as a tool in marketing in social media. While social media was generally seen as a positive thing to be working with, the results were quite clearly problem oriented. Next the key results are presented in larger groups with different themes. The recommendations for future actions for itim International are given in the next chapter, 5.2.



## **General usage of social media**

Majority of all the problems that were brought up start with the usage of social media in general. The platforms that itim International mainly uses are Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. All of the channels were mentioned to contain problems at some point. Facebook was considered the most effective for conversation, sharing information and keeping in touch over all. Facebook was also seen as the private channel, and people seemed to be keen on keeping it that way. They seemed to feel quite uncomfortable sharing work related content to their audience on Facebook commonly, fearing they would be perceived as spam, the audience not understanding the topic and content of the posts at all and not getting responses to the posts they might share. This creates a bit of a problem, since Facebook is perceived as the most effective, but people are not too keen on sharing content for their audience there. This would lead to changing the used platform, but there were indications of respondents being reluctant doing so either.

LinkedIn was perceived overwhelmingly the most professional platform, where people were willing to share, like and publish posts. The channel was seen convenient for keeping up to date with what goes on in itim International, and seeking up someone's background. Yet, while people appeared to be active in LinkedIn, it was more on a weekly level, than on a daily level. As one of the respondents put; in LinkedIn you have to stay active if you want the audience to notice you. Result of this, some were unsure if it would be profitable to react later than others to postings, and respondents worried not being able to react 'at the right time'.

Twitter was considered the least usable platform in general by the respondents. Some of the respondents were doing an effort of learning to use Twitter and to be active there. Putting together a good post was seen as difficult and consuming time- and effort wise, due to the limitation of the characters per post. Even if some respondents were active on the platform on a daily level, no one pitched for the use of Twitter in sharing work related posts and company's content. Some of the respondents also stated that they have no intention on learning to use Twitter.

Looking at all of what is contemplated above, the result for the problems regarding privacy and audience would be trying out a new platform and being active there. The reluctance to move to another platform could be due to not knowing how to use the platform, and this

could be solved with educating and training the respondents, and offering them support as they learn to use it.

## **Content**

The findings related to content varied a lot, and included some contradiction between each other from time to time. The biggest point that came across quite obviously analyzing the results was the desire for more interesting content over all from itim. Mostly the content was seen as high quality, but it was also described to be not suitable for sharing and outdated. The content itim provides was seen as relevant to business and the respondents themselves, but not relevant, and considered too unclear for the audience who exist for example on Facebook.

The adequacy of content was questioned, as many of the respondents longed for more posts of different styles, to be able to choose the one they feel they can relate the most to, and what fits their professional image. This was the majority of the statements considering the amount of content provided, though some did feel that the amount of content provided now was sufficient enough.

A lot of remarks also considered the visual side of the posts. Posts with pictures, quotes, videos and info graphs were experienced as successful and well-liked within the network and the audience reception to these was also said to be better. Long articles were dubbed as boring and heavy, containing too much expert language that was not understandable for those not involved in the field.

Another point that stood out was the eagerness from a vast majority of respondents to involve the employees and consultants in the content creation process. Involving the employees in the process on creating content could solve many of the presented problems and weaknesses. This way for example could be made sure the content is produced by itim or someone in the network, and it could also be ensured the content is matched to the audience of the targeted platform. Having the consultants create content would also make it possible to use multiple languages other than English, and the topic of the content could be a recent event or a term that is on surface right then.

In short, itim International should add more interesting content and add the quantity of posts for the employees and consultants to choose from. Third, employees and especially the consultants should be involved when creating content. Maybe a quest blog type of solution would be sufficient, or other content created by them, and then provided for the network for everybody to be able to share. According to Handley (2010, 47.) Social media marketing strategy starts with a content strategy. The process should be started by creating good content, that satisfies the requirements of your audience. When content creation is done right, the content you create makes you a source of information that is reliable.

### **Motivation**

Motivation can be seen as one of the key issues that is missing for a larger rate of sharing. This issue might be more depending on the managerial actions, and how sharing of company content is presented to the consultants and employees. Is the topic of sharing brought up and the employees are introduced to the benefits and encouraged to share for their own sake as well as the company's, or is it blurted out and stated in a way of what is expected to be done by the employee.

On several occasions in the survey a request of an understandable communication strategy was brought up. In addition to this there was a remark of a simpler line in general, and clear goals of what the company ultimately wants to achieve. If there is no goal, why would the employees share any content. If the employees and the consultants do not feel like they gain something out of the engagement they make for the company, are they going to be engaged anyway? There will not be too much sharing of the company content if at any point the employees or consultants feel they gain something out of the effort they gave.

It was also mentioned, that the actual impact on business of engagement and sharing company posts is left unclear. A mention of measuring marketing in social media against the increase of profitability and turnover was made. The people who share the content want to see the results it brings. Otherwise they will not have any personal proof for themselves about the viability of continuing to share company's content online.

The managers in itim International need to start communicating more effectively towards their employees, and establish a coherent plan for the execution of the social media mar-

keting strategy, as well as the goals itim wants to achieve with its social media actions. “Before beginning any new venture, it’s best to start with a clear vision of the outcome you intend.” (Meyerson 2010, 29).

It is also stated by Meyerson (2010, 29.), that before jumping into social media, you should take time to identify what you ultimately want to achieve with it, both personally and professionally. He continues by saying that by taking the time to write down the overall social media goals you have planned to accomplish, the things you have to do for them become much clearer. If you have an action-plan for the operations you intend, a kind of a road map to follow, it will make the journey from the beginning to the next stop a lot easier.

## **5.2 Reliability and Validity**

A general feature of a qualitative survey is a desire to broaden understanding of the topic that is being researched. The results of a qualitative survey are always an interpretation by the researcher of the topic that is being focused on. This being so, a qualitative survey can always offer only one view into the matter at hand. (Silverman, 2005.)

When doing qualitative research, it is important to remember to follow good research ethics and integrity, and rigorously use the methods to ensure the scientific validity. (Silverman, 2005.) This has been sought to accomplice by all means possible while conducting this research.

The limitation of this research is, that the size of the sample (N=36) is so small, that this research cannot be applied to everything. It is specifically adapted to itim international, and the company’s needs. From this research for example the correlation of age and culture can be applied in other researches.

## **5.3 Recommendations for Future Actions**

These recommendations are made by the author of this research for itim International. The recommendations are made on the basis of the survey that was conducted, and the interpretation of the key findings from the survey.

The first recommendation is to create a coherent program for engaging the employees in the company's social media marketing, that should be executed throughout the itim network. This program should include establishing the goals that itim wants to achieve, and a timeline for actions. Also, the management should strive to a better flow of information to the employees and consultants. This is a way of keeping everybody on the same page, and have it clear all the times what is to be done, how to do it and when to do it.

The second recommendation is to include the employees, and especially the consultants who can spare some time, more in the content creating actions. The consultants could create content in their own language. A quest blog could be created and the willing could take up responsibility of it in turns. A move from management into cultivation could be done, to embrace the workforce and to nurture their interest. This way the company would get both content and engagement. Creating content creates engagement, and engagement emerges from co-action.

The third recommendation is to plan, create and execute the needed trainings, and educate the employees and consultants into social media, and how to use it for work purposes. This ensures that the company learns to walk before it tries to run; in other words, creates the groundwork that is needed in order to advance further. At this point itim should make sure that all the employees would be somewhat comfortable using all the main channels of the company. This would make them able to choose their audience, and this way have a larger scale of options to choose from what to post also.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for Future Researches**

Based on the recommendations and the results of the survey, the next researches are suggested for itim International to conduct at some point in the future:

- Planning and creating an employee engagement program
  
- Planning of the training provided for the employees and consultants

-Profiling of the consultants; how employee engagement and social media marketing could be integrated in a way, that a consultant could receive real value that would be aligned with their professional profile

- How are technical know-how, and social media know-how correlating in the usage of digital employee engagement programs

## **5.5 Reflection on Learning**

Sometimes there is an ultimate problem behind a problem. The problem that was perceived as the primary one, can actually be the secondary one. For example; it could be thought that sharing content was a problem, but the fundamental problem is actually in the technical know-how.

Positive feedback on the survey was received, and a mention that also the employees would be interested in seeing the results of it. Some of the employees experienced that the survey itself was encouraging, because they felt included in the development of the company.

With this research I learned to work systematically and analyze and search for literature from the library. I noticed that with this topic it was fairly difficult to find suitable sources for referencing for free. As I did not have access to a lot of the literature and many journal articles that I had originally planned using, I had to find a way to work around the problem. This way I learned perseverance, and how sometimes you have to tone down your very literal natured personality, and learn to be a little more adapting to a situation.

I also learned to work with different types of people, although via internet, but it was an experience of one kind. I learned to be considerate towards a company in a written form, and to be responsible of a certain time frame and sticking to it.

During this process I also faced some scheduling difficulties, as I had to work and attend classes at the same time when conducting this study. The problems were eventually solved, and I learned that sometimes stepping out of your customary comfort zone might be a good and a refreshing experience once in a while.



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## Appendices

### Appendix 1.

#### Social Media and Employee Engagement in itim International

1. How old are you?

\_\_\_\_\_ years

2. How often do you use the following channels?

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never
Twitter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Facebook	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LinkedIn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. What are your perceptions and experiences about sharing the company content in your social media channels?

In this questionnaire the company content discussed means the news, articles and other possible content, that is provided by itim International for its employees to share in their own social media channels.

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4. What are the challenges you have faced when sharing company content in social media?

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5. What do you think of the company content that is provided for you?

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6. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the content in your opinion?

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7. How could the company content be improved?

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8. What would promote your willingness to share more of the company content in your social media channels?

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9. Benefits of sharing content

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel that I benefit from sharing company's content.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel that itim International benefits, if I share the company content.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**10.** How could the company's social media marketing be improved?

- By creating a clear program
- By establishing a clear goal
- By preparing more interesting content
- By involving the employees in creating the content
- By involving the employees in other ways, please specify

\_\_\_\_\_

Other, please specify

\_\_\_\_\_

**11.** How do you feel about the training and support that is provided to you, regarding sharing of the company content

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The training offered is sufficient	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The training could be developed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The support offered is sufficient	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The support could be developed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**12.** Do you have any other suggestions or comments?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_