DEVELOPING A SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGY FOR THE HORSE INDUSTRY CUSTOMER GROUP

Case: AVANT TECNO UK LTD

HAMK
HÄMEEN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
HÄME UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Bachelor's thesis

International Business

Valkeakoski / Spring 2017

Anna Tantsurina

Anna Tantsurina

HAMK
HÄMEEN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
HÄME UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Valkeakoski
International Business

Author	Anna Tantsurina	Year 2017
Subject of Bachelor's thesis	Developing a social media marketing strategy for the horse industry customer group.	

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis was to develop social media marketing plan and implementation steps for Avant Tecno UK LTD. The aim was to identify the most suitable online media channels, types and forms of content as well as techniques for reaching horse industry customer group via social media channels in the most efficient way.

Various research methods were used to reach different objectives of the thesis. The empirical study was conducted as a quantitative research by means of in-person, phone interviews and observations. The author received full access to company`s official social media profiles and statistical insights to perform analysis and monitoring including profiles observations, content auditing and organizational documents review. On top of that, different marketing models such as SOSTAC, PEST and SWOT as well as a number of online publications, e-commerce literature and company's records were utilised throughout the research.

The aim of the thesis was reached through analyzing The UK market including internal and external online business environment as well as the current social media marketing strategy for the targeted group. The horse industry customer group and its online behavior were explored further. This research was followed up with an assessment of social media channels which could be most applicable to the online behavior of the targeted customer group. The recommendations on how the social media marketing strategy should be adjusted and executed concluded the thesis.

Keywords Social Media Marketing, Content Marketing, SOSTAC Model.

Pages 35 p. + appendices 3 p.

CONTENTS

1   INTRODUCTION

The process of rapid digitalization is a phenomenon of the 21st century. Nowadays almost each sphere of daily and business life is fully or partly integrated with The Internet. Therefore, it is crucial for any company to establish its online presence in order to address the demand of a new market place, attract customers through arising marketing channels and take full advantage of online opportunities. On the other hand, rapid technological development has made The Internet accessible and cheap. It brings a challenge: companies have to stand out of the overwhelming flow of information in order to attract attention of a specific group and create awareness among potential clients. Without appropriate planning, continuous market research and systematic analysis, very few companies are able to achieve their marketing goals and establish valid online presence.

Broadly, digital marketing is a combination of new technologies which allow catching attention of a targeted audience in a fast-developing environment. Websites, email newsletters and offers, social media, online magazines and directories, blogs - these are all examples of online channels available to businesses. A combination of company's identity with the content which is relevant to a certain audience and an optimal set of online channels to distribute that content, allows increasing brand awareness, attracting potential customers and strengthening loyalty and satisfaction of the exciting clients base. This leads to a necessity of having usable and value-adding strategy that aims at increasing performance metrics with the help of the best online marketing techniques. The social media marketing is a powerful channel, which is actively utilized by businesses for various reasons. Here are only few of them: educating followers about the company, its products or services, driving lead generation, customer engagement and conversion rates.

The intention of this research project is to explore available online marketing communications, specifically social media marketing tools, and provide 6-months strategy for the case company—Avant Tecno UK LTD. SOSTAC model is a theoretical framework of the report, which is combined with current situation analysis at Avant Tecno UK, market and customers' analysis, new objectives development, strategy and tactics creation and KPI's identification.

1.1   Company

AVANT Tecno is a Finnish company established in 1991. By 2017 it has expanded operations to more than 40 countries globally with sales offices in Germany, the UK and the US. The production plant is located in Ylöjärvi, Finland. There are seven model series of multi-functional loaders and more than 200 different-purpose attachments suitable for such fields as farming, property maintenance, construction and personal use. Innovative and continuous product development, quality control, unique design are the core competencies for which the brand is known internationally.

Wide product range and customer needs orientation are main elements of the customer value proposition.

The history of Avant has started 25 years ago when its future owners, young Finnish engineers, have noticed a business opportunity in the lack of a proper cost-effective machinery for one of the toughest jobs in cow farms—silage distribution inside cow houses. The solution they have created was a skid steer loader, which was able to distribute feed to 50-80 cows in 10-15 minutes. 80 loaders have been sold during the first year. The demand they have met inspired them to go forward concentrating on product development and expansion to Germany where in the early 90's sales company was established. The next success came in 1995 when the first articulated loader was presented. Strong demand for a new series in such sectors as landscaping, green area maintenance, horse stables and private use accelerated exporting so sales increased to 80 loaders per month. In 2000s apart from continuing investments into the product development design has become equally important matter. Owners have noticed a new customer behavior pattern - appearance and design appreciation. At that time brand's identity has been developed and world-known, customer friendly design of the machines came into use. To date apart from seven model series and more than 200 attachments Avant offers such options as low emission diesel model, hand drive control loader for paraplegic people and fully electric battery powered compact loader.

Avant has entered the UK market 21 years ago however only in 1999 a wholly owned subsidiary has been established handling sales, marketing, servicing and repairs. Situated in Thetford, Norfolk area, Avant has been able to expand sales due to massive and constantly growing network of regional dealers and hire partners that cover most of the country promoting loaders and attachments. Farmers, landscape gardeners, local authorities, horse owners and private individuals are main clients of the UK office.

Currently Avant Tecno UK is seeking new ways to continue raising awareness as well as the efficiency of the communications with its clients, in particular horse industry customer group, through active utilization of social media channels. Digital marketing development and its increasing role for both Business-to-Business as well as Business-to-Customer environments has a direct impact on the marketing strategy of the company. The basic corporate values of the organization at the moment are customer centricity, integrity and innovation.

1.1. Research Objectives

The aim of this research is to create effective social media marketing strategy for the horse industry customer group. Three minor objectives have been set in order to achieve the core goal.
The first objective is to analyze the UK marketplace as well as the current social media marketing strategy for the targeted customer group.
The second is to analyze online behavior of the horse industry customer group.
The third objective is to analyze the most suitable social media platforms.

Research is followed by an assessment of social media channels suitability to online behavior of the targeted customer group and recommendations on how the social media marketing strategy should be adjusted and executed.

1.2. Research Question

The research question is defined as the following: "How Avant Tecno UK can reach the horse industry customer group via social media channels within the following 6 months in the most efficient way?"

1.3. Research Methods

In order to archive objectives described above particular research methods were utilized. To meet the first objective of analyzing the UK marketplace as well as the current social media marketing strategy, PEST and SWOT analysis were applied. More than that in order to precisely evaluate the conditions of the current social media marketing strategy, company's profiles observations and content auditing were conducted and company`s documentation was reviewed. In order to ensure deeper understanding of company's current online initiatives, full access and performance monitoring over all official channels and statistical insights were provided to the author for the period of 6 months.

The second objective of analyzing online behavior of the horse industry customer group was achieved by conducting the empirical study during the winter of 2016 as a qualitative inquiry with the help of interviews over the phone and in-person. The population of the study consisted of a group of Avant's existing and potential customers related to horse industry, occupationally involved into equestrian, media, health care, farming and other sub industries. 14 interviews were conducted.

The third objective of analyzing the most suitable social media platforms was achieved by using online publications, e-commerce literature, company's records as well as the author's observations.

2. THEORY

2.1. Social Media Marketing

Social media is the term that defines the Internet and mobile-based channels through which users to interact with each other, share opinions and content. As the name implies, social media involves the building of communities or networks, and encouraging participation, and engagement. (CIPR, 2011)

2.1.1 Introduction

Social media marketing (SMM) is a relatively new element of the Internet technology and e-commerce. The Internet is a computerized virtual network that provides access to massive scope of information and communication channels, which eventually have formed the phenomenon of social media networks. E-commerce is a type of marketing that uses various online advertisements such as banner advertisements, pay per click (PPC), targeted email lists and other to drive traffic to an advertiser's website. (Business Dictionary 2016.) At first this phenomenon was actively used by ordinary people for communication purposes. Later it was adopted by businesses in their marketing initiatives due to a wide range of opportunities and competitive advantages it brings. One of the biggest benefits is the ability to access wider audience with fewer efforts. Around 40% of the world population has an internet connection today. (Internet Live Stats.) This is 3.5 billion of users, which is more than 2 times bigger than the most populated country on the planet— China.

2.1.2 Importance and Steps

Social media has brought an essential element to online marketing, which no other digital tool could offer before—community. Social media is owned by the audience and the audience sets rules and dictates terms. Companies which are able to find new effective ways to attract, keep and convert visitors into customers through conversations generation, product experience enhancement, brand promotion and accessibility spread establish leading market positions and settle for biggest benefits. Therefore, the potential of digital media and the main advantage for brands lies within audience participation, interaction and sharing. There are several steps which ensure encouraging participation, interaction and sharing and thus developing optimal social media channels strategy. Those are going to be discussed in the chapter "Competitors".

2.1.3 Social Platforms

The amount of social media platforms is growing constantly with new technologies and innovation development. "Social media marketing radar" has been created by Smart Insights 2012. (Figure 1) It helps to understand the difference between most important social media platforms and their application by summarizing all options into one place. Social networks is the core social media channel of this study. It includes Facebook for consumer audiences, LinkedIn for business oriented audiences, Google+ and Twitter for both, YouTube and Pinterest for streaming media content including photos, video and podcasting. In order to identify the most suitable channels for the social media marketing strategy consumer demand and engagement have to be assessed separately for each of those. Statistical insights provided by such platforms as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn can be utilized. The information on followers' age, gender, location and even some online behavior characteristic for example the activity level during the day can be found there. Another method to choose most

effective channels for the targeted group is asking existing customers about their preferences through online or offline surveying and interviewing.
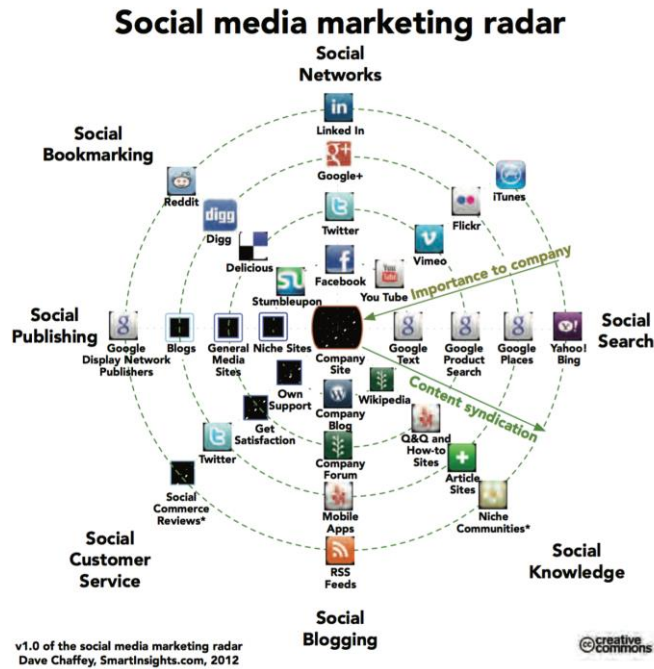

Figure 1   Social Media Marketing Radar. Accessed on 23.07.2016

2.1.4   Competitors

Benchmarking competitor as well as the companies' use of social media is another step. Certain KPIs are utilized to track competitors' online activities depending on the company's own social media marketing objectives, such as for example reach and influence or engagement (Marketing Excellence, p. 224). The first includes the following parameters: the amount of followers that discuss brand online expressed in numbers or percentages, sentiment percentage that counts amount of positive mentions. The second involves network size and growth indicators, social sharing of brand related content and followers' engagement rate.

2.1.5   Summary

Steps mentioned above offer a rough picture of the company's current social media marketing situation and used as an introduction to the study and the main framework to be used. There is enormous amount of relevant factors which influence online presence success. Moreover, the excess of online opportunities and tools determines necessity of having a straightforward, comprehensive model that aims at building the optimal online marketing plan and ensures its implementation and flexibility to environmental swifts. For that reason, the next chapter presents SOSTAC marketing planning model that serves as a basement and major framework for the study. Besides, other marketing models and analysis will be

applied. This ensures a strong and reasonable base for the main research project as well as gives a structured form to the whole work.

2.2. SOSTAC Model

SOSTAC is one of the leading planning models used for developing effective marketing, corporate, advertising and e-marketing plans and strategies. It has been developed in 1990 by Paul Smith or PR Smith who is, apart from being the best-selling marketing author, an international consultant and public speaker in a broad spectrum of marketing and management related topics such as change marketing, corporate leadership, planning, digital marketing strategy, social media marketing, CRM, automated marketing, digital body language, online engagement and creative thinking. He is also the co-author of online publisher and independent Internet marketing trainer Dave Chaffey on Emarketing Excellence Book that serves as a basis for this work.

SOSTAC defines directions and core aspects of an online marketing strategy, forms a complete, logical and more importantly easily adjusted plan of marketing activities. It stands for Situation Analysis, Objectives, Strategy, Tactics, Actions and Control. The model consists of two main parts, which bring straightforwardness to the whole process. *SOS* includes such elements as Situation analysis, Objectives and Strategy. It mainly consists of company's achievements, drawbacks, short-term and log-term goals and tells about the current situation. *TAC* is the second part of the model and includes Techniques, Actions and Control. It describes the implementation part of objectives set previously, detailed action plan and performance indicators for critical processes assessment and control. Further the planning stages for creating an e-marketing plan will be discussed.

2.3. Situation Analysis

The first stage is Situation Analysis that provides an answer on a question "Where is the company now?" It includes both internal organizational and external business environment analysis. Various methods can be used for different analytical areas.

2.3.1 External analysis

External analysis implies opportunities, threats, digital customers and competitors analysis. Opportunities and threats arise from the external environment such as market. Environmental scanning has to be carried out with a help of *PEST* analysis. *PEST* stands for Political factors such as regulations that may affect company's online operations, Economic variables that impact the market, Social aspects that shape online behaviour of the targeted group and the last one is Technological trends and developments.

The next step is analyzing the targeted customer group and its behaviour. It helps to understand customers' preferences and expectations. Customer profiling is a technique of a customer description: demographic, geographic, and psychographic characteristics, buying patterns and online behavior. Defining the ideal user facilitates deeper understanding of customers' needs and thereby allows satisfying them more effectively. The result of an accurate customer profiling is a customer persona that encompasses characteristics and motivations of the targeted customer group.

The last step of external analysis is benchmarking competitors by their social media presence. It is highly important to depict the competitive landscape of the market. Therefore, competitors have to be fairly selected based on available criteria and their online performance have to be assessed based on benchmarks. The selection criteria can be geographical area, business field, company's size. Performance has to be assessed by reviewing competitors' social media profiles and analyzing their activities. Content is one of the most important elements and activities of online presence that helps to stand out of overwhelming information and marketing material flows. It attracts new customers, promotes company's values and motivates to take an action towards purchasing or raising online performance parameters. Since it is an essential element of encouraging followers' activity it has to be taken into consideration when benchmarking competitors' performance against metrics, such as reach and influence or engagement, which have been discussed before in Social Media Marketing chapter.

2.3.2   Internal analysis

The internal analysis looks at key performance indicators (KPIs), strengths and weaknesses of the brand. Key Performance Indicators (or KPIs) are indicators which determine business success and progress against established benchmarks and thus measure the performance of the company and its competitors or of each strategical goal and objective. (Emarketing Excellence, p.541) Internal KPIs are used by team member for personal performance records and usually are not reported to clients, boss or senior management. External KPIs analysis are reported to clients and senior management and used in creation of web analytics measurement models or strategic roadmaps for future activities. KPIs ensure and measure success of digital marketing activities by adding, first of all, structured thinking and secondly, the ability to assess success or failure. KPIs have to be available in a timely manner, measurable, bottomline impacting, relevant, instantly useful and quickly applicable to upcoming changes

SWOT analysis is a great tool to summarize results of the situation analysis chapter. The analysis focuses on the internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats. It is also useful for development of company's positioning. Merging strengths and opportunities helps to develop attacking strategy whereas combining weaknesses and threats helps to build defensive strategy.

2.4. Objectives

Objectives is the next element of SOSTAC model that answers the question "Where do we want to get to?" It precisely describes where does the company want to be and what to achieve through online channels management. *5S goals model* refers to five main business actions – sell, speak, serve, save and sizzle. Companies have to be pragmatic and realistic when setting objectives. Not all goals have to be necessarily utilized for a particular strategy. Proper assessment of current situation, available resources and time frames is needed. SMART model helps to achieve it. SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-bound. These elements ensure objectives to be clear, detailed, measurable, possible to achieve, sensible and based on data and trends, linked to a specific timeframe. Further each objective from the *5S goals model* will be explained in details.

The first objective is Sell or when talking about online activities Lead generation. Sell stands for increasing sales through optimizing most important transactions which lead to revenue. Speak objective makes possible to increase awareness, build brand, shape customer opinion and communicate special offers to customers through relevant, exceptional, compelling content. The next objective is Serve in other words adding value. Serve answers the question of how good the company is at customer service and what can be done better. Benefits usually delivered through providing additional customer services. Dialog and feedback are essential during this process since these elements improve the customer loyalty and deeper understanding of needs and problems that clients face throughout the process. Save objective seeks for ways to reduce any kind of costs. The last objective Sizzle is meant to strengthen and enhance the brand online by extending customer's online experience.

2.5. Strategy

Being the next step of SOSTAC model, strategy is based on situation analysis and objectives and includes segmentation, targeting, positioning, OVP, credibility and awareness building. A clear digital strategy is a plan that company needs in order to maximize potential benefits of business operations via digital activities, increase online competitiveness, improve customer service and quality control, and accelerate business development. In accordance with the SOSTAC model, strategy is answering the question "How do we get there?" In order to create an adequate digital strategy, analysis undertaken previously in the paper are helpful to get a strategic insight on online marketing opportunities and threats, information on customer and marketplace demand, along with competitors.

Key components of marketing strategy are encompassed within the acronym *STP: Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning*. The goal of marketing segmentation and targeting is to divide the general market into categories according to specific characteristics, in order to make it simpler to target them depending on their needs and therefore market goods more effec-

tively. (Emarketing Excellence, p. 553) It brings up such advantages as user information, precise targeting, particular range of communication channels, customization. Positioning seeks for an exact answer on how the company wants to be perceived by the target audience and how to differentiate products with a unique *OVP*. *OVP* has to exploit advantages of being online and may differ from offline value proposition, reinforcing core brand values and offering not only a unique set of benefits but a complete customer experience of purchasing products or services of the particular company. The *OVP* has to explain: advantages of being online; a difference between company's and competitors' products and branding; benefits that customers obtain by purchasing products, services or following the company online; guarantee of credibility to deliver services and products. In order to determine *OVP* as well as the set and sequence of tactical tools *SWOT* analysis should be utilized.

2.6. Tactics

Tactics is short-term, flexible details of the strategy that answers the question "How are we going to get there?". At this stage communication mix has to be created based on the customer behavior analysis, objectives and the strategy. Tactics determines what type of content is needed in order to achieve strategical goals, which channels have to be used to deliver company's messages effectively and what tone to adapt speaking with customers. (Emarketing Excellence, p.258) Changing environment determines business success by its ability to respond to swifts timely. Therefore, tactical plan has to be detailed and form optimal marketing, communication and channel mixes from a vast amount of available tools.

Social media is a center of the study and all techniques discussed further on are related to it. As an advertisement tool it solves numerous challenges and provides new opportunities for brands such as effective two-way communication, real-time broadcast, community and reputation management, customer service support, awareness, SEO enhancement, data access and more. Apart from pointing the most suitable for the brand social media channels, content forms and topics it is necessary to overview activities of competitors and related to the industry communities, content they share and topics they discuss. Tracking, analyzing and optimizing social media marketing activities are as important as actual implementation process because social media marketing guideline created once has to be constantly modified and improved based on the experience and knowledge.

There are several methods which help to stay in focus while developing tactics. The first is utilizing customer behavior analysis, that enables to concentrate on motivations of the targeted group rather than spreading attention on the whole market. The second is creating content pillars—certain themes that match consumer's interests as well as the brand essence and online marketing objectives. Third method is to select suitable for established objectives content formats and distribution channels. The final continuous task that forms and keeps tactical plan updated is scan-

ning and assessing effectiveness and suitability of the content and channels to strategic objectives. All those methods have to be summarized and ordered into a brand style guides to set up universal instructions for any potential employee, responsible for social media content management.

2.7. Actions

Action is a section of SOSTAC model, which answers the question "Who is going to do what and when?" It provides key steps of tactics implementation plan, divides roles, sets time frames and allocates resources. Each tactical e-tool has to be managed separately at this stage. Gantt charts, critical path analysis, flow charts can be used to visualize processes.

2.8. Control

Control section evaluates "How can we control, measure and develop the process?". During this stage continuous measurement of the outcome and success of undertaken actions and efforts is carrying out. Identifying how well initial objectives have been fulfilled and what improvements can be made in future is another task. Control gives a broad view on targeted and repeat customers, their preferences, e-tools effectiveness, costs, competitors' situation. Control has to be built into a plan, which assigns objectives, roles, specific metrics (KPIs) and timing of reporting process. Metrics are varying based on goals and the audience, and used to indicate whether objectives are being met.

3. RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

3.1. Situation Analysis

3.1.1. PEST

Knowing macro environment of the marketplace is the first step towards online presence establishment. Nowadays The Internet is strongly interconnected with most of life spheres, and it is crucial to understand and track factors, which directly impact online business presence, in order to be able to react timely on changes. PEST analysis helps to review and assess such major factors as political, economical, social and technological conditions in which the company operates. Political includes information about a country's political system, regulations and legal issues, which directly affect the company and it's profitability. Economic variables, such as currency exchange rates, have a great impact on everyday operation flows, especially if they include monetary transactions and online purchasing. Social development and cultural patterns shape online behaviour of a targeted customer group: needs, preferences, technology acceptance, access to internet. The last element of the model is Technology that includes overviewing the emerging technology and being abreast with it. For the business sector technology development results in raising produc-

tivity, efficiency as well as increasing competitiveness. Most common issues addressed within this PEST variable: whether the online presence is important, how to make user journeys easier and elements of the marketing mix redundant.

Political.

The UK Government actively supports development of e-commerce. First of all, the government consists of the Parliament which is the supreme legislative body. It includes three other elements: the Monarch, the House of Lords and the House of Commons. The monarch Queen Elizabeth II is the head of state, whose most of the powers nowadays are ceremonial. The Prime Minister the Rt Hon Theresa May MP leads the government with the support of the Cabinet and ministers. Several initiatives directed to promote British trade across the world including online business initiatives were funded and supported by the Parliament.
UK Trade and Investment (Department for International Trade from July 2016) has created E-Exporting Programme in order to help brands and retailers to sell their products and services online as well as to build business relationships with the world's leading online marketplaces. It offers ongoing advising services, industry news, statistics and events organisation.

Owing to government's R&D promotion initiatives UK was leading European e-commerce industry with 142,315 million dollars turnover and ranked third in top 10 e-commerce markets worldwide after China and US in 2014 according to figures from eMarketer. Business sector had the biggest share of 65% of UK gross expenditure on R&D in 2014, where Computer programming and information service activities was the second biggest product group with 12% of expenditure after Pharmaceuticals. Therefore, there is a great potential for e-commerce in Britain due to strong government support and initiatives directed on strengthening leading positions and developing the industry further on.

Another initiative of The UK government that demonstrates technological and digital novation support is the EU Online Dispute Resolution Platform (ODR). It supports the adoption of the latest digital development throughout the political body. The goal of the platform is resolving trade disputes online. It was introduced in 2016 and potentially can modify the Court structure of UK and other countries in future. To date the judiciary system of the UK, which is independent of the executive and the legislature elements, consists of separate England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland courts. The highest court is the Supreme Court, headed by the President and Deputy President and composed of a further ten Justices.(Appendix 1) The court system is rather complicated. ODR programme aims at making online trade more secure and fair, allowing to resolve claims bypassing court system and thus saving efforts and resources. The link on the ODR website is planned to be carried by all trade web-sites, excluding financial companies, but does not oblige traders to use the platform.

In light of recent events—the decision of The Great Britain to leave the European Union—major changes are going to happen in political, economic and social systems, which will have a great impact on further development of the country.

Economical

United Kingdom has one of the most conductive regulatory and economical environments in the world for establishing and running a business. In 2015 UK's economy ranked 6th from 189 countries on ease of Doing Business by World Bank Group statistics and was 5th largest national economy by GDP which was worth 2,848,755 millions of US dollars. After the financial market shock in 2008 and 2009 when GDP decreased by 6.1%, it had recovered fully in 2013 and steadily grew ever since. Furthermore companies are able to take the advantage of one of the strongest currencies in the world, British Pound. Its continued circulation was reached by keeping the lowest interest rates level for six years, encouraging lending activity and thus growth.

The UK economy is composed of economies of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. There are 4 main economy sectors 3 of which showed GDP increases in 2016, including the agriculture and forestry, which encompass horse industry as well. There is no any source of statistical information that would clearly state contribution of the horse industry as a whole to The UK economy. However, there are studies that show economic values of 2 largest constituting sub industries. British horse racing generated £3.45 billion GVA in 2015 and employed 20,000 people, having one of the best reputations globally, report Deloitte LLP in Economic Impact of British Racing **2013.** Thoroughbred industry economic contribution estimated by The Thoroughbred Breeder's Association was £281 million including direct, indirect and induced GVA.

Gross Value Added (GVA) of the Digital Sector in 2014 was £118.3bn, experiencing the increase of 7.2 % compared with 2013 and accounting for 7.3% of the UK Economy as stated by UK Department for Culture Media and Support (UK Department for Culture Media and Support). In 2015 UK was the eleventh-largest exporter and the sixth-largest importer by The Central Intelligence Agency's report, calculated on an exchange rate basis (The Central Intelligence Agency). Total exports for the Digital Sector in 2013 was worth £43.0bn, which was 8.2 % of all UK exports. GDP of the Research and Development sector increased by 5% in current prices in 2014 and represented unchanged from 2013 1.67% of total GDP expenditure, with the biggest business sector's share of 65%. More than that, R&D tax credits promote innovation by offering various tax deduction regimes, which are based on a size of a company, for qualifying R&D expenditure. Summarizing mentioned above general economic figures, UK's economy, including digital and R&D sectors, is not only one of the most influential and innovative in EU and the rest of the world but also one of the most advantageous for brands.

Household final consumption expenditure (HHFCE) increased by 0.7% in Q1 2016 compared with Q4 2015, with the housing, water, gas, electricity and other fuels sector accounted for 0.9% of growth. The latest Visa UK Consumer Spending Index data reports the increase of e-commerce customer spending by 2.8% in July 2016, which is nevertheless slower than the past years average increases. At the same time spendings across all other channels have been increasing slower, for instance face-to-face rose for the first time in three months by 1.6%. The shift towards online purchasing demonstrates a big potential of digital marketplace for businesses.

The UK's unemployment rate decreased from 8.5% in 2011 to 4.9% in 2016 (Appendix 3). The latest Employment rate has reached a record high of 74.5% in June 2016. Non-UK nationals working in the UK increased from 1997 to 2016 by 7.2%, and composed mainly of EU nationals, mainly caused by new member states accession and EU expansion. Digital sector employed 2.0 million people in 2014, which was 1.7% larger compared to 2013. The record low unemployment rate assures the income level growth and as a result customer's eagerness to purchase goods online.

Bank of England's low inflation monetary policy aims at 2.0% +/-1 inflation rate, which leads to sustainable growth, price stability and fall of unemployment. In July 2016 inflation rate reached the highest for almost 2 years point of 0.6%, as a consequence of the UK vote to leave the EU. (Trading Economics) In the open letter to the Chancellor the Governor of the Bank explained the increase by external factors' influence, rather than the begging of a deflationary spiral. The deflationary spiral is a period of decreasing prices leading to a situation when the economy cannot recover, which compounds over time leading to even lower prices in a vicious cycle (Investopedia). As a part of measures to support UK's economy, The Bank of England has decided to cut of the Interest Rate to 0.25% and thus keeping the inflation within the target. For the period of almost seven years the interest or Bank rate has been at the historic low level of 0.5%. This low interest rate was applied to open market operations of the Bank of England with commercial banks, building societies and securities firms as well as to encourage borrowing. Other terms of the economic stabilisation plan are: creating the new Term Funding Scheme, purchasing of up to £10 billion of UK corporate bonds and an expanding the asset purchase scheme for UK government bonds (Trading Economics). UK's increase of inflation rate affects the demand for e-commerce goods, reducing consumer's ability to purchase products, whereas lowered interest rate has the opposite impact, keeping relatively stable level of money circulation.

To some extend UK's digital market opportunities and conditions are one of the richest in the world. However, UK's and EU's digital markets are still quite limited and less competitive comparing to such players as US and Canada, due to economical, administrative and legal barriers between member states. In order to encourage online consumer spending, transaction security and confidentiality have to be improved, common set of digital rights has to be created to educate both trading parties about their obligations and rights. Price discrimination based on the Member State af-

filiation has to be further eliminated. From the business perspective the following actions can be undertaken: easing administrative and legal requirements, softening VAT payment regulations and offering an online business registration with unified across all member states web-domain, enhancing innovation and its transferability across countries.

Social

Technology development boosts consumer spending, allowing to purchase goods and services at any time of the day and any place, requiring only access to The Internet. By 2018, the value of UK e-commerce is estimated to be £60 billion (from £10 billion in 2013) (UK Trade and Investment). As the amount of online spending grow together with global societal challenges such as climate change and pollution, the demand for innovative and secure processes and products increases.

In order to keep leading positions in worldwide online trading, governments have to not only support business sector but also attract, encourage and invest into R&D sector. In terms of R&D expenditure European countries are still behind such global competitors as the United States, Japan and South Korea. UK ranked 11th in R&D intensity by country in EU in July 2016. UK is home of world's top Universities with annually growing number of EU and Non-EU students. The number of full-time students studying for a first degree across the UK has increased between 2010 and 2014 by 11% (Education and Training Statistics for the United Kingdom 2015). Tech City is a cluster comparable to Silicon Valley in the United States, which is aiming at accelerating and supporting UK's digital economy development and representing fastest tech spot in EU. One more important factor towards e-commerce growth is internet access distribution for private users and businesses. The internet usage rose noticeably in all age groups. 87.9% of adults in the UK were regularly using it in 2016. Smartphones is number one device with 33% of users, whereas laptop users account for 30%. (Ofcom's 2015 Communications Market report).

Studying a society form the cultural perspective is crucial for the development of a digital strategy, since patterns, which form consumer habits could be explored and influenced. Brief analysis is going to be undertaken based on the framework of Dutch Professor Geert Hofstede described in his book "*Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*" (newest edition 2010). The first dimension to be looked at is power distance index (PDI). It shows the level of society's acceptance of unequally distributed power between its members. Britain scores 35 and represent a low PDI. Even though the historical class system determines expectations for the higher index, English people strive to decrease inequalities among people, granting equal opportunities. The next dimension is Individualism, which determines the weight of such terms as "I" and "we". UK has one of highest indexes showing 89 of Individualism, meaning that independence and self-reliance are core attributes. Masculinity determines the extent to which competition and achievements define success. Britain scores 66 of Masculinity, being highly goal orientated and ambitious society. Uncertainty Avoidance is a degree to which

people are striving to prevent unknown situations. UK's low score (35) shows positive attitude towards changing environment, innovative ideas, creativity and tendency for few regulations and little planning. Long Term Orientation dimension shows how much people care and prepare to the future and based on this priorities their goals and life. British culture does not incline to any extreme and cannot be referred to any of them. Indulgence is the last dimension, which reflect how people are willing to enjoy their lives and follow emotional impulses. UK's society is highly Indulgent with a score of 69. These people are optimistic and relaxed, social and friendly, inclined to enjoy life and realize desires. Such dimensions as law uncertainty avoidance, long term orientation and indulgence classify British culture as open towards novelty, new technologies and goods. Strive to reach equality and fairness grant foreign companies and products entering particular market benefits of and equal to existing brands opportunities.

Technology

The world is on the threshold of the Forth Industrial Revolution and digitalisation is the main driver. Velocity, scope and systems impact of the digital industry ensure that upcoming changes will essentially transform our society, rather than just prolong consequences of The Third Revolution. Main focus of worldwide players is spread on such areas as the cloud computing and services, data analytics and the Internet of Things.

Telecommunications has been the fastest growing sector of information industry in UK at 5.7% p.a. during 2000-2013. The UK has by far the largest trade surplus in Computer and Information Services in the G7, ranking second in the world for technological readiness by the WEF. The Government has launched several initiatives and programmes to emphasize technological development and strengthen leading positions of the country.

Conclusion

UK is one of the most influential players in the worldwide arena of both innovation and business sectors. With modest amount of economical limitations and challenges, pleasant and comparably stable micro environment of UK's economy displays a wide range of opportunities for local and international enterprises. Government offers wide range of initiatives and programs which support top industries development. At the same time its strong focus on education and R&D sector ensures stability of technological and scientific development. Current digital and e-commerce policy leaves no doubts that the UK is going to be in the vanguard of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. However recent decision to leave the European Union brings uncertainty to the most of industries and economy sectors. Estimations of consequences will be known only after final conditions of the agreement between The UK and EU will be arranged.

3.1.2. Customer behavior analysis

Questionnaire

At first the author together with company's representative has decided to use only online questionnaire as a method to obtain and analyse data. However relatively small sample size as well as limitations in potential customer's motivation to participate in the research have been reasons for changing the form of communication. In-person and phone interviewer-administered questionnaire has been selected as the most optimal communication form for the exploratory study. This also allowed digging deeper into customer's preferences and behaviors providing a lot of additional information and opinions when giving answers on main questions of the questionnaire. It also helped to understand reasons for particular decisions, attitudes   and   opinions   of   participants.

The sample covered existing and potential Avant customers and end-users of the equipment involved occupationally into horse industry. Some special requirements were applied for choosing interviewees. Respondents had to be with a different occupational background in order to represent as wider customer segment as possible. It was possible to attract customers from 10 different fields such as Photography, Equestrian, Health Services, Education, Farming, Machinery, Technology, Tourism, Dental and Breeding. All participants have been contacted beforehand in order to get their confirmation of participation and agreement for using results of the interview for scholarly purposes.

The questionnaire itself was created together with the representative of the company. During interviews questions were read out, answers recorded and notes made and studied later after interviews. This helped to control bias when analyzing results, produce reliable data and to concentrate on questioning and listening. Question were mainly close ended and supported by open ended in order to clarify or get to know reasons for a particular answer if needed. In the beginning of November 2016 the research was conducted. It took few weeks to interview 14 participants.

Results

In order to be able to create an accurate and precise customer profile a qualitative scientific research has been undertaken as mentioned before. Profiling questions were created and answers gathered through interviewing a sample of 14 randomly chosen UK horse industry customers aged over 30 years old. 64.3% of interviewees were female and 35.7% males. The most common channel used when searching for new machinery/equipment was The Internet mentioned by 85.7% of people and surpass such channels as events, stores and magazines. The majority of the sample searched for machinery/equipment online occasionally (71.4%), whereas 21.4% frequently and only 7.2% never. All interviewees pointed out that Google, Yahoo and other search engines were the first to be turned to when searching for new machinery/equipment online. Social networks were the second important channel used by 7 interviewees. Online directories and magazines were the least favorable options.

10 out of 13 participants admitted that detailed product description was the important factor to be looked at. 8 people paid attention on a web-site of the company, 6 on reviews and recommendations of other users and 5 on products' pictures and videos. More than a half of interviewees used social networks several times per day (57.1%). Facebook turned to be the most popular platform that was used daily by 9 participants. Twitter was checked at least monthly by 6 people and never used by 5. LinkedIn was not much more important for interviewees than Twitter with at least 7 people used it monthly and 2 never. Youtube was the only channel used by all participants with 1 daily, 5 weekly and 6 monthly users. Instagram was the last channel mentioned by only 3 interviewees as their weekly checked and the least used platform.

News was the most popular type of content customers were looking for on social media networks. Second was updates of friends and the least popular one was companies' updates. Interviewees found mobiles and desktops equally usable for going online. Whereas tablets are less often utilized by customers.

Persona Summary

Considering all information collected about customers' preferences and online behavior the AVANT's customer profile *persona* has been created. A person aged over 30 years' old who is a citizen of The UK and the Republic of Ireland and involved into the horse industry. The person demonstrates generally high level of the internet activity and moderate level of social networks activity. Facebook is the most frequently visited channel used for tracking news and other users' updates. The least important channel is Instagram. The customer prefers a mobile and a desktop for going online and seeks for detailed product information together with a company's web-site when considering buying new equipment or machinery. Such content as reviews, recommendations, products' pictures and videos are less important but not irrelevant for the person.

3.1.3. Competitors analysis

The list of competitors has been created based on the following criteria: geographical area, business field and company's size. All companies had to operate and have a physical office on the territory of The UK and Republic of Ireland. They had to provide at least one series of similar type of machinery as the case company does— compact or skid steer loaders. Small and medium-sized enterprises which employ up to 49 persons were considered to be of the first importance because of the comparable business scale and thus opportunities. Large enterprises which employ more than 250 people were of secondary.

Facebook profiles have been studied in order to assess the performance. Particular benchmarks have been selected beforehand. The first one was the amount of followers that showed approximate online audience reach. However, this metric was not the most reliable one since nowadays many

companies buy "Zombie Accounts" in order to boost visibility and an image. In most cases it is impossible to evaluate if a company has utilized this technique. Therefore, another benchmark have been applied - average social sharing rate. It showed the amount of followers that shared company's content to their news feed. It was a good parameter to measure effectiveness of competitors' content marketing strategy and a degree to which a particular brand satisfied and impressed its online audience. The last benchmark for competitors' social media strategy analysis was followers' engagement rate. This measure discovered a degree to which followers were eager to collaborate with a brand. Spotting engaged customers and building relationships with them strengthened the brand and increased customers' loyalty. Stages of engagement have been identified by Smith and Zook (2011). They started with such simple activities as ratings, reviews and discussions and moved towards collaborative co-creation that included ideas, ads, brands, processes and product development. It was important to find out where the biggest share of competitors' customers was and if companies undertook any actions towards collaborative co-creation.

The first competitor was small-sized enterprises MultiOne UK. It is a distributor of Italian multi-purpose compact loaders and attachments. It has a physical office in Derbyshire. It had 7,218 total page likes which is a very good amount. However the fact that there was very little volume of engagement activities with the average post engagement rate of 29 allowed to assume that a significant amount of followers were either indifferent to the brand and its activities or had been bought with use of zombie accounts generators. The average post engagement rate had been counted as follows. The amount of total likes, shares and comments for the period of one month from 25th of December to 25th of January, that equaled to 695, divided by the amount of total posts created for the same period of time, equaled to 24. The total amount of followers that discussed brand online that encompassed amount of times people shared content created by the company to their newsfeed, equaled to 75. Considering all facts collected the official MultiOne UK Facebook page had quite low customer involvement rates and thus poor online performance.

The next pool of competitors was big international corporations such as CASE Construction Equipment, JCB, John Deere, Caterpillar and Bobcat. All of these companies are large enterprises which apart from offering steer loaders produce broad spectrum of heavy duty machinery such as excavators, wheel loaders, vibratory compaction rollers, crawler dozers and others for global construction, rental, landscaping, agriculture, grounds maintenance, government, utility, industrial, mining markets and much more. They are indirect competitors because skid steers or compact loaders together with attachments are not their main business focus. There was another reason for creating a separate pool for these brands. All mentioned above companies have only global FB page tailored either for a worldwide audience or for The US customer group. It creates certain limitations to analysis. Comparing social media performance of globally orientated companies to those whose marketing activities target The UK specifically will lead to bias. However, one important conclusion has been made in re-

gards to the analysis—there was no particular social media strategy for The UK online audience.

Summarizing results of competitors' social media marketing strategy analysis there is only one direct competitor—MultiOne UK. The biggest international competitors do not have tailored to The UK's online audience needs social media strategy. However, these companies are active at promoting their products globally, following the majority's interests which are mostly lying within the heavy duty machinery.

3.1.4   Company's KPIs.

The internal analysis also looks at company's KPIs current situation and determines business progress against established benchmarks. It has already been applied for the competitors' performance analysis. The same benchmarks are going to be used for measuring current social media performance of Avant: reach, influence and engagement. There were 1,310 total page likes, which was 5.5 times less than the amount of total page likes of the direct competitor MultiOne UK. 11,769 people had been reached for the period of one month from 25th of December to 25th of January, which was by 30% bigger than the previous month, as Facebook insights reports. Total post engagement rate equaled to 2,898. It included the number of times people liked, commented or shared content published by Avant for the same period of one month. The average engagement rate per post was 241.5. It was counted as total engagement rate divided by total amount of posts created for the same period of time that equaled to 12. This parameter was 8.3 times bigger comparing to MultiOne UK. The amount of followers that discussed brand online by sharing company's content equaled to 28, that was 2.7 time less comparing to MultiOne. Summarizing results of Avant's Facebook performance for the last month growth indicators were relatively slow. However existing audience encompassed quality followers who were actively engaging with content by liking and commenting company's posts. Social sharing rate leaved room for improvements showing quite low discussion level comparing to the direct competitor.

3.1.5   SWOT

Designing e-marketplace SWOT is the next step in market analyses. It includes identifying internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats (Chaffey, Marketing Excellence). Well defined strengths allow enhancing the brand online. Knowing weaknesses helps to eliminate or limit their impact. Opportunities affect online business externally and have to be explored in a great detail in order to identify new trends and take a maximum advantage of them. This element is especially important for the digital market, as for one of the fastest growing, with vast amount of industry developments, new technologies and occurring pools of customers. Competitor's weaknesses is another source of opportunities. Threats have to be defined in order to be able to control and address them timely. E-commerce has the most changing environment, over-

flowing with new threats, which without proper actions might hinder growth of a company. Those can be related to new policies and regulations, new competitors, changes in customers' behavior and etc.

S	W
Existing and differentiable brand Worldwide image Years of experience Initial satisfied customers, who are ready to share their pleasant experience Extending services and product range Strong dealer network Outstanding features Customer support services	Foreign brand for UK market Relatively little awareness Lack of services comparing to the competitors` offers Customer choice Poor web experience and online usage Strong heavy-load competition Dependence on the head office in Finland
O	**T**
Large market Alliance and co-branding Competition can boost new services development Stretching the business to the nearby regions Sustainability trends Digital and technology opportunities Important role of equestrian business in society and economy	Existing competition from the local and international companies New market entrants Strong market players with worldwide reputation UK's decision to leave EU Active online presence of the competitors Lagging behind in the Internet technology sector (IoT)

Table 1   SWOT Analysis

3.2   Objectives

Objectives is the next element of SOSTAC model and the second part of current situation analysis. It precisely describes desired results of activities and tells where does the company want to be and what to achieve through online channels management. Ensuring objectives to be SMART that stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-bound—is one of the key elements of the success. (Doran, G. T. (1981). "There's a S.M.A.R.T. way to write management's goals and objectives". *Management Review*, AMA FORUM. **70** (11): 35–36.) In a nutshell that means that the objective must be clear and detailed, measurable, possible to achieve, sensible and based on data and trends, linked to a specific timeframe.

Serve and Speak objectives have been chosen for the AVANT Tecno UK social media marketing strategy. These objectives aim at improving customers' experience and increasing the amount of engaged customers and supporting a trialogue with them. (Objectives for the 5Ss of e-marketing, p.23 Emarketing Excellence). Since products offered by the company have high value, online sales happen infrequently. Therefore, the focus shifts from the main goal of making profit towards a long term objective of building a strong and positive online identity in eyes of customers, partners and the audience and thus strengthens the brand and market positions in The UK.

The official web-site of the company as well as online platforms provide help, customer support as well as company related information. High competitiveness of the market and other players determine the importance of offering additional values as well as building up strong trusting relationships with the audience. Serve objective finds new ways to increase content quality and thus grow the audience of mentioned above sources by creating additional benefits for followers. Speak objective makes possible to increase awareness, build brand, shape customer opinion and communicate special offers to customers through relevant, exceptional, compelling content.

Based on the information provided above 2 SMART objectives have been formulated:
1. Well-structured, relevant, educational and interconnected nature of the official web-site and social media channels as well as of the content and marketing campaigns, has to increase the amount of AVANT's followers by 5 times in a period of 6 months.
2. Through creating exceptional and compelling content, engaging with the audience, monitoring opinions, communicating effectively messages increase customer engagement rate by 100% in a period of 6 months.

3.3   Strategy

Strategy is the third element of SOSTAC model and the last part of current situation analysis. It summarizes the outcome of the current situation analysis chapter and narrows gathered information to a brief guideline that makes possible moving towards the implementation part of the study and recommendations. Strategy includes several steps. The first one is finalizing customer segmentation and targeting considering results of conducted market and customer analysis. The second is positioning that summarizes KPIs and SWOT analysis to establish a direction for fulfilling company's online goals and ambitions. And the last step is compiling all information related to customer engagement, communications and content strategies to a general social media marketing guideline.

3.3.1 Segmentation and Targeting

PEST analysis conducted in the situation analysis chapter identified no significant barriers or limitations for the social media strategy implementation so far. Apart from few economical, administrative and legal barriers between EU member states and the rest of the world there are lots of initiatives which show general positive attitude towards digitalization. Such programs as E-Exporting Programme, EU Online Dispute Resolution Platform and supporting SMEs online transactions initiative practically prove eagerness to strengthen leading positions of the country in technological sector. Additionally, law uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation and indulgence indexes of British culture provide strong basement and support for novelty, new technologies and goods from the customer perspective.

Avant's online marketing strategy excludes the majority of its customer segments apart from The UK horse industry customer group. Results of the customer behavior analysis conducted for this study has composed a customer persona that encompasses main demographic characteristics of the whole segment and represents it. Therefore company's social media marketing strategy targets clients in the age range from 30 years or older. Demographically the segment is located in The UK and the Republic of Ireland. Occupationally it is involved into any sector within the horse industry. It has full access to the Internet and to all available social media channels. Moreover, the segment shows modest level of online activity. Therefore the customer group can be reached with marketing initiatives through relevant online channels, such as Facebook and Twitter and encouraged to join the community and engage with content.

3.3.2 Positioning

In order to create company's unique OVP list that provides instructions on how to reinforce core brand values and customer experience SWOT analysis has been utilized and adjusted. The table below is a new SWOT structured in a certain way that highlights correlated factors using the same color. These factors form attacking and defensive strategies.

S	O
• Existing, differentiable brand • Worldwide image • Initial customers, who are ready to share their experience • Extending services and product range • Strong dealer network	• Large market • Alliance and co-branding • Digital and technology opportunities • Sustainability trends • Stretching the business to the nearby regions • Important role of equestrian business in society and economy

W	T
• Foreign brand • Lack of services comparing to the competitors` offers • Poor web experience and online usage • Dependance on the head office in Finland	• "Brexit" • Strong market players with world-wide reputation • Active online presence of the competitors • Lagging behind in the Internet technology

Table 2   SWOT Analysis

Attacking strategy leverages strengths to maximize opportunities. The first strength is established, unique brand that together with a right combination of tools and techniques able to capture big share of a constantly growing online market. The second strength is the strong worldwide image built through active expansion to other markets and countries with physical offices in The UK, The USA, South Africa, Belorussia, Poland, Germany, Sweden, Estonia and Hungary. Long history and well-known name support building up beneficial digital relationships and partnerships, also called affiliates, with other companies and dealers. The third aspect is existing customers. Different types of those play different equally important roles. Nowadays customer experience go viral quickly. Company's objective is to track and encourage this kind of activity and take part in it if necessary. Satisfied clients spread the word about the company, its products and services to other users therefore increasing awareness and the amount of followers. Another side of the aspect is unhappy customers, which are even more important than the first group. If poor customer experience goes viral it usually has a very negative impact on the whole brand, bringing short and long-term financial losses. Luckily online negative mentions can be easily tracked and eliminated by reacting on customer's feedback and improving his or her experience. The next strength of AVANT is constant product development. It offers zero emission battery powered electric loader and low emission models almost in all series. It is currently working on a Hand Drive Control Option for 200 Series loaders. Following global sustainability trends adds to the company's image and increase interest around the brand not only of the online but also of the offline community, promoting corporate responsibility initiatives. The last strength is continuous development and growth of a strong dealer network in The UK. This ongoing process allows rapid extension to even distant regions, where horse industry is more developed and bigger so the demand for Avant's products.

Defensive strategy deals with company's weaknesses and threats and aiming at minimizing the impact of those on business operations and profit. The first weakness is skeptical attitude and legal regulations towards foreign businesses. Even though Avant is the international, family owned

company with more than 25 years of experience it is still relatively un-known and unpopular comparing to local firms in The UK. In terms of international trading mentioned above weakness became even more significant after the decision of The UK to leave European Union. Legal consequences and new regulations, after the Brexit negotiations will be completed, will impact firms established in The UK. At the moment there are only predictions about the future of labour, financial, trading and other regulations. Therefore, it is crucial to follow and react in a timely manner on any officially announced changes and decisions. Furthermore, there are such downsides as poor online marketing strategy, decentralized and disorganized channels management, dependence on the head office in Finland in such matters as the official web-site editing, inability to make changes and add online services beneficial for both parties—customers and the organization. The result is lagging behind competitors and technological development, sacrificing productivity and creating outdated image in eyes of stakeholders.

The following list of OVP activities based on updated SWOT will help to achieve the first objective and increase the amount of AVANT's followers by 5 times in 6 months:

- emphasizing and spreading company's brand unicity through relevant, educational content marketing and use positive worldwide image in building lasting partnerships
- encouraging dealers to establish online presence, share and create high quality content, attract the audience through marketing campaigns covering particular areas
- decreasing followers' skeptical attitudes by providing excellent online and offline service and customer support, promoting company's values and experience, growing fan base
- organizing, structuring and interconnecting online channels
- in a long run decreasing dependence on the head office, creating online services and products databases, following and reacting timely on new online legal regulations

The second objective that aims at increasing customer engagement rate by 100% in a period of 6 months can be reached through executing the following list of OVP activities:

- encouraging existing customers to talk about their positive experience online, keeping dialog with them
- eliminating negative mentions and reacting on customer's feedback
- proclaiming company's product development news and sustainability trends
- providing exceptional and compelling content, promoting company's values and experience, growing fan base

4. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The research and analysis outcomes have been encompassed into the strategical guide in the previous chapter. The goal of this chapter is to provide

detailed and clear social media marketing strategy implementation plan, or as the name of the chapter states recommendations, including Tactics, Action and Control elements of the SOSTAC model. The focus of this part stays within the objectives set before Serve and Speak, since these are main areas for improvements. Outcomes and recommendations will be based on the related to the social media marketing literature, articles and observations. Conclusions upon the study will be made in the end.

4.1 Tactics

Tactics are comprised of e-tools and the sequence of those based on the strategical steps. It is important to keep them flexible and short-term oriented in order to be able to adjust anytime.

4.1.1 Serve Objective

The objective to increase the amount of AVANT's followers by 5 times in 6 months consists of several steps. Generating traffic is a core activity. Each traffic related strategical OVP activity of the following objective is going to be developed in depth and tactical techniques are going to be suggested.

The first step is emphasizing and spreading company's brand unicity through relevant and educational content marketing. In order to get an optimal plan 6 essential elements of the effective content marketing (by Chaffey 2004) are going to be combined with the results of online behaviour analysis. The last element—generating traffic is going to be ignored, since this is the core activity for the serve objective and is going to be achieved through the rest of 5 steps:

1. All published content has to be related to the horse industry or the company because this is what Avant's potential customer is looking for visiting official profiles online. Content pillars are thematic 'buckets' that describe and define the content that a brand produces.(King Content, Creating Content Pillars) For Avant those will be: industry news, innovative product developments, sustainability trends, positive customer experience, industry advocates' opinions and publications, dealers and followers contests, presentations from conferences, product guides, events updates.
2. The most relevant types of content for the targeted group are educational, text-based content, such as detailed product descriptions, articles, reviews, recommendations and sector related news. Interactive materials, such as original photos, videos, infographics, SlideShare presentations, eBooks are of secondary importance and should be mainly used as an entertaining, attracting attention element.
3. Most popular social media channels for publishing ready content are Facebook and Twitter. However, such horse industry orientated platforms as Dutch start-up—Universal Horse Data, which potential cannot be fully assessed at the moment, cannot be left without attention and has to be tested and observed for some period of time. Online advertis-

ing is another method which is going to be reviewed as a separate communication channel. It includes various types of display adverts such as banner adverts, interstitial banners, popups and pop-unders, floating adverts and map adverts. Online advertising function is available on most of social media platforms however rules, requirements and pricing models may differ a lot. Particular pricing models are recommended for brand awareness and exposure goals, for example Cost per thousand impressions (CPM) or Cost per click (CPC) available on Facebook, Cost per acquisition (CPA) or Cost per engagement (CPE) on Twitter. Online advertising channels employ one of the most effective tracking system and grant to advertisers such information about visitors as browser and operating system they used, time of day they were most active, amount of impressions, clicks, conversions and much more.

4. Content participation, as mentioned before in the paper, is the process of monitoring, managing, supporting discussions of the audience. Building loyal community and encouraging its participation increase effectiveness of content creation. It can be done by allowing followers to comment, rate, share and review content in the original location and elsewhere. Social sharing has to be encouraged heavily because viral content is the cheapest way to raise awareness. Followers' content, that fits brand's positioning and OVP, should be shared by company's profiles as well. This reduces a gap between the brand and the audience and reflects positively on the company's image and followers' loyalty. Feedback that occurs as a result of the dialogue between two parties have to be tracked and collected. It gives a great insight into followers' preferences and opportunity to measure and improve customer satisfaction level in future projects.

5. Preferred content access platforms are mobiles and desktops. Tablets are less often utilized by the target customer group.

The second step is using positive worldwide image for building lasting online partnerships and taking part in advantageous affiliate programs. Affiliate marketing is a model of advertising, where an advertiser addresses accountable web-site for referencing to the merchant's online properties, and pays only when desirable action has been conducted by a potential customer as a result of this reference. Commissioning depends on the type of action, that visitor has to undertake, in order to archive targeted by the marketer results. Lead is the most suitable metric for the objective of raising the amount of followers. A tracking software and inserted into it cookies are used by both parties to manage and control the process and avoid big discrepancies. Potential Avant's affiliates are personal websites of influential in the sector people, content and niche sites, coupon and promotions sites where local brands are presented. Little industry regulations make this type of online advertisement riskier and thus all potential affiliates have to be checked and selected carefully.

The third strategical step is encouraging dealers to establish and strengthen their online presence. It is an advantageous scheme for Avant to raise brand's awareness. There are more than 20 dealers and hire partners around The UK. In order to attract companies which are not currently using social media, educational presentations and seminars have to be orga-

nized several times per year by the main office. During these seminars advantages of using digital channels for marketing and advertising activities can be explained and different online marketing techniques studied in details. Sharing experiences and knowledge is beneficial for both parties. One more way to motivate partners to use SMM is marketing campaigns creation, where the main goal of participating dealers is to generate traffic on their official profiles that partially brings new followers for Avant as well, together with raising awareness about the product and the brand through various channels simultaneously. The winner of the campaign receives beneficial offer from Avant on further purchases or some valuable prize.

The forth step is decreasing followers' skeptical attitudes by providing excellent online and offline service and customer support, promoting company's values and experience, growing fan base. To date the easiest and at the same time the most effective additional service offered by most of companies is email marketing or direct email. It enables to push a message to a customer in order to inform or remind about products and offers they are interested in. This is a pro-active approach of Customer Relationship Management, which can be perceived as a SPAM and thus has to be carefully formed. The first step is gaining the access to the contact information of customers, which will make legal to provide marketing materials and advertise products. Furthermore, the ability to select preferred communication options need to be offered to customers, those are frequency or a type of a content. Apart from company's ability to reach already existing customer database, there are 3 different types of email marketing which can be utilized for expanding the reach. (Emarketing Excellence, p.400.) Cold emailing implies that customers' contact details are rented from a consumer email list providers and targets potential customers within this list. Co-branded scenario uses a customer base of a partnering company, whose clients have a reasonably strong affinity to the marketed products or a company and have opted in to receive emails from third party companies. Such technique can be used with dealers and hire partners of the company. Third-party email marketing implies publicizing company's advertisings in third-party company's e-newsletters forwarding customers to the destination site. (Emarketing Excellence.) However availability of the dealer network screens out cold and third-party emailing as the most expensive and inefficient to the moment scenarios.

The fifth step is organizing, structuring and interconnecting online channels. Web-site and profiles optimization helps to organise the information, make it easier to perceive, increase visibility in search engines and interconnect all channels. There are lots of factors influencing the relevance of pages. The most important factors to pay attention on are frequency of key brand phrases, occurrence of those in headings and in anchor text of hyperlinks, markups such as bold, alternative image such as text hidden from users but seen and indexed by the search engine, images, maps and videos. Off-page optimization stimulates and boosts awareness with a help of natural and proactive external linking after creating content and services. Natural occurs when visitors bookmark a page of the content or tell a friend about it. This can be done not only from the home page, but also

from other web-site pages and partners' sites such as directories of links, traditional media sites, niche online media sites and other business partners, press release distribution sites, bloggers including customers and partners. However internal link structures have to be assessed as well and include key phrases used by searchers within the anchor text of a hyperlink to point to relevant content.

4.1.2 Speak Objective

- encouraging existing customers to talk about their positive experience online, keeping dialog with them
- eliminating negative mentions and reacting on customer's feedback
- proclaiming company's product development news and sustainability trends
- providing exceptional and compelling content, promoting company's values and experience, growing fan base

The second objective to increase customer engagement rate by 100% in a period of 6 months can be reached with a help of Online PR. It is the most suitable technique for increasing the amount of positive mentions, eliminating negative ones, keeping dialog with followers, collecting and reacting on their feedback. This online technique covers first two OVP activities at the same time. Online PR is crucially important part of nowadays online marketing strategy, since the main idea of The Internet is interconnected nature of information and open access to users' profiles, their opinions and experiences. The more quality backlinks are referring to company's web-site, the higher the site will be placed in the natural or organic listings, and thus more users will visit a particular page on the website or a channel.

The most important PR activities for the objective of increasing customer engagement rate are brand engagement activities, buzz-building activities and defensive/crisis PR. The first one includes communicating and interacting with the online audience, gathering information about their needs and problems and affecting those in a positive manner. All that can be done through surveys, polls, audience research, social media and user-generated content, own blogs and communities, nurturing relationships with advocates who wield influence in the industry. The next is buzz-building or creating awareness about campaigns through viral channels. This can include propagating campaign 'big idea', viral marketing, press and social media releases, influencing media owners and blogger relations. The last activity is defensive and crisis PR directed to enhance the company's reputation online proactively, by eliminating negative impacts of scandals and incidents. It also can be tracked through reputation management tools, social media monitoring, influencing media owners and blogger relations. Combining online PR with sustainability related content and trends can significantly increase involvement of the audience as company's social media observations show.

4.2 Actions

Actions is one of the last sections of SOSTAC model. It answers the question "Who is going to do what and when?" It provides key stages of tactics implementation, dividing roles, setting time frames and allocating resources. Each tactical e-tool has to be managed separately at this stage. Gantt charts, critical path analysis, flow charts can be used to visualize processes.

4.2.1. Serve action plan

The first, Serve Objective, consists of such steps as: content creation and management; social media channels management including Facebook, Twitter, Universal Horse Data and Online advertising; monitoring, managing, supporting discussions; building lasting online partnerships such as Affiliate marketing; encouraging dealers; decreasing followers' skeptical attitudes by providing excellent online CRM and email marketing; organizing, structuring and interconnecting online channels including internal and external optimization. Gantt chart has been developed in order to show what online marketing techniques are going to be applied when.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Facebook	x	x	x	x	x	x
Twitter	x	x	x	x	x	x
Universal Horse Data	x	x	x	x	x	x
Online advertising	x		x		x	
Monitoring, managing, supporting discussions		x	x	x	x	
Affiliate marketing		x		x		x
Encouraging dealers		x			x	
Online CRM	x		x		x	
Email marketing		x	x	x	x	x
Interconnecting online	x					x

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
channels						
Internal optimisation	x					
External optimisation						x

Table 3   Gantt Chart Serve Objective

4.2.2. Speak action plan

The second objective is Speak and it encompasses such 4 steps as Online PR for increasing the amount of positive mentions, eliminating negative ones and keeping and initiating dialogue especially on such topic as sustainability trends. PR activities can be executed through surveys, polls, audience research creation, social media and user-generated content, own blogs and communities, nurturing relationships with advocates, viral marketing, press and social media releases, influencing media owners and blogger relations and enhancing the company's reputation online proactively.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Online PR	x	x	x	x	x	x
Positive mentions	x		x		x	
Negative mentions		x		x		x
Initiating dialogue	x	x			x	x
Sustainability trends	x	x	x	x	x	x

Table 4   Gantt Chart Speak Objective

Since there is no constant marketing team so far, tasks have to be executed by the responsible person. This person should be fully responsible for only online marking activities since there is a lot room for development and improvements. It can be an intern with education in Business Administration, Marketing, Online Marketing and Management fields with a decent experience in SMM and online marketing in general.

4.2.3. Social Media Campaign Development

In order to visualize the actual implementation process social media marketing campaign will be created and described step-by-step assigning roles.

Driving traffic and engaging with potential and existing customers are 2 main objectives and both of them are going to be set for this campaign. Various online techniques, which build awareness and interest of the audience and after that route it to the particular channel or towards some action are going to be applied. Such tools as online PR, advertising and affiliate marketing are involved into this process. Engagement rate that represents progress in the relationship building is going to be increased with a help of CRM, social media and e-mail marketing. SOSTAC will be applied for the campaign planning as another example of how the model can be utilized on different marketing activities levels.

The current situation is as follows. Avant manufactures and sells wide range of loaders and attachments which are perfectly suitable for demanding do-it-yourself, heavy duty professional use, equestrian centres and stable yards works, like shifting silage, unfolding & handling of round bales, manure removal, sweeping and much more. Products are actively advertised on social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter by creating marketing brochures, offers, promotions and educational articles and news. However it has been noticed that the engagement rate of horse related audience is much lower than of any other business segment. Brief research and situation analysis showed that the amount of followers involved into horse business is significantly smaller than of any other sector. It means that all previous efforts applied towards reaching this particular group of customers with brand's messages did not bring any results, due to serious limitations in the amount of horse industry related followers. The managing director has decided to solve the problem and set goals for increasing effectiveness of social media marketing activities.

The objectives of 1 month long campaign that implies usage of organic methods only are:
- to increase the amount of horse related followers on such official profiles as Facebook and Twitter by 3 times on each channel
- to increase engagement rate to 800 impressions
- to increase brand discussion rate to 56 shares

The strategy includes activating certain OVP activities. Driving dealers' cooperation and participation by spreading the campaign on their social media channels will significantly raise segment reach and thus awareness about the campaign. As a result more followers will be informed about the campaign, company and its products. Therefore the first step is laggers development focused on raising dealers' competitiveness and eagerness to contribute to the success of the campaign. Another step is creating entertaining, exceptional, high quality content in order to increase followers' sharing and engagement rates. The last strategical step, which is also directed towards increasing customer engagement rate, is stimulating dia-

logs, discussions and experience sharing through providing some kind of rewards for doing so.

Tactics have been developed further to ensure implementation of the campaign. The first strategical step is driving dealers' cooperation and participation. It has to be made by creating a contest between company's dealers. In order to enter the contest dealers have to share company's campaign post to their Facebook and Twitter news feeds and keep it there until the end of the campaign. Whereas in order to win the contest they have to promote the post on their social media platforms and web-sites and encourage followers to like, comment or share the post to increase activity level under it using paid and organic online marketing methods and techniques. The winner has to be rewarded in the end after finalizing and evaluating results of the contest. Detailed description, guidance and terms of conditions of the dealer contest have to be send to all dealers. Conditions of eligibility have to be clearly formulated and mentioned in all internal emails especially terms of using robots and "zombie accounts" to increase activity volume under the post.

The second step is creating entertaining, exceptional, quality content in order to increase followers' sharing and engagement rates. This have to be done thorough creating a short, high resolution, impressive video clip, where products of the company will be presented as well as some creative concept to generate excitement and stimulate engaging together with social speaking. The video can be filmed with a use of drone. The word "win" can be puzzled with actual Avant machines on one of the fields or horse stables areas and filmed from above. The description of the campaign has to be attached to the post together with a video. It has to include information about terms and conditions of the campaign, who can enter the campaign, which action they have to accomplish to enter, what is the prize and when results of the campaign will be assessed and published. The campaign targets Avant Tecno UK Facebook and Twitter followers and requires participants to like and tag 2 friends under the announcement post created by the company in order to enter the draw for 2 months loan on 200 Series Machine. At the beginning of December a winner of the campaign is going to be chosen randomly and announced publicly. The campaign is fully organized by Avant Tecno UK. Dealers are not eligible to take part in this campaign for 2 months machine loan.

The last strategical step is stimulating dialogs, discussions and experience sharing through PR activities such as brand engagement and buzz-building activities. It particularly includes communicating and interacting with the online audience through social media and user-generated content, blogs and horse industry advocates, viral channels and press and social media releases, involving media owners and blogger relations.

Action plan has to be implemented by the same person responsible for the online marketing activities. This person has to have access to the customer database and dealers contact information. Control part of the SOSTAC model is the most important one since it tracks the progress and results of both customer campaign and dealers contest. KPIs can be measured

through such analytical tools as Facebook and Twitter insights. The following parameters have to be tracked and analyzed: the amount of total page likes, post engagement rate including number of times people liked, commented or shared content, reach for the period of the campaign. Summarizing results of Avant's Facebook performance during the campaign is an essential part that seeks for the outcomes and answers such questions as if desired results and goals have been achieved, how well, what were limitations and difficulties.

5 CONTROL

Control section answers the question "How can we control, measure and develop the process?" During this stage continuous measurement of the outcome and success of undertaken actions and efforts is carrying out. Identifying how well initial objectives have been fulfilled and what improvements can be made in future is another task. Control gives a broad view on targeted and repeat customers, their preferences, e-tools effectiveness, costs and competitors' situation. Control has to be built into a plan, which assigns objectives, roles, specific metrics (KPIs) and timing of reporting process. Metrics are varying based on goals and the audience, and used to indicate whether objectives are being met.

Apart from KPIs which have been already mentioned there are few more suitable for Avant's social media marketing strategy for the horse industry customers such as click-throughs, unique visitors, repeat visitors and repeat comments. Such benchmarks as competitors' period performance can also serve as KPIs and measure metric. Web analytics softwares besides those inserted into online channels, are able to track, analyse and draw other useful insight from online data (eMarketing, The essential guide to marketing in a digital world 5th Edition). It provides more information on further audience activities for example durations, enquiries, subscriptions, sales, conversion rates, churn rates, loyalty levels and more. The frequency of reviewing metrics usually defined based on strategical objectives and tactical plan.

6. CONCLUSION

The main objective of the report was to set up optimal social media marketing strategy for the targeted group of horse industry customers as well as suggest full implementation plan. The evaluation of trends and business environment has helped in identifying external and internal threats and opportunities and to consider them further. After that the current strategy at Avant Tecno UK was assessed using several techniques. It provided strong basement for strengths and weaknesses analysis and further strategy development. In the last part of the research the new objectives were established, action and control plans were outlined.

The following interim conclusions have been drawn. Social media is one of the most dynamically developing and have transforming online channel and thus it is crucial to follow trends and new technologies development.

Only by doing so needs of customers can be satisfied effectively and time-ly. Designed strategy for SMM, structured content marketing and process mapping throughout of the 6-months period will bring desired results and help to reach short-terms and long-term objectives.

SOURCES

Anderson, C. (2006) The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business is Selling Less of More. Hyperion, New York.

Apollo (2007) US consumer research project. Arbitron and the Nielsen Company. World Advertising Research Centre (WARC), London.

Awais M. and Samin T. (2012) Advanced SWOT Analysis of E-Commerce. [Online] IJCSI International Journal of Computer Science Issues (8). p.60-72. Available from: http://ijcsi.org/papers/IJCSI-9-2-2-569-574.pdf [Accessed: 30.12.2016].

Beal V. (2014) Webopedia [Online] Available from: http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/S/search_engine.html [Accessed: 10.10.2016.]

Chaffey D. and Smith PR. (2013) Emarketing Excellence: Planning and optimizing your digital marketing,USA and Canada: Routledge

Danyl Bosomworth (2012) Smart Insights [Online] Available from: www.smartinsights.com/social-media-marketing/facebook-marketing/95-of-facebook-posts-ignored-by-brands/ [Accessed: 14.09.2016.]

Delahaye Paine K. and Chaves M. (2012) Social Media Metrics, Listening, Understanding and Predicting the Impacts of Social Media on Your Business. The USA: SAS Institute Inc. World Headquarters

Deloitte and British Horseacing Authority.(2013). ECONOMIC IMPACT OF BRITISH RACING. The UK

Department for Business Innovation and Skills, (2015) BUSINESS POPULATION ESTIMATES FOR THE UK AND REGIONS 2015, Sheffield: Department for Business Innovation and Skills

DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES POLICY DEPARTMENT A: ECONOMIC AND SCIENTIFIC POLICY. INTERNAL MARKET AND CONSUMER PROTECTION. (2011) Consumer behaviour in a digital environment. The UK

Hayes M. (2013) 32 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Ecommerce [Online] Available from:https://www.shopify.com/blog/7365564-32-key-performance-indicators-kpis-for-ecommerce. [Accessed: 02.01.2017].

House of Commons Library. (2016) Components of GDP.

Kaushik (2015) Digital Marketing and Measurement Model [Online] Available from:https://www.kaushik.net/avinash/digital-marketing-and-measurement-model/ [Accessed: 02.02.2017].

Melanie J. Martin (2015) Small Business [Online] Available from: http://smallbusiness.chron.com/vertical-horizontal-advertising-25017.html [Accessed: 13.09.2016.]

Office for National Statistics (2014) A Comparison between Annual Business Survey and National Accounts Measures of Value Added South Wales: Heather   Bovill

Optimize Smart (2015) Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) – Complete Guide   [Online]   Available from:https://www.optimizesmart.com/understanding-key-performance-indicators-kpis-just-like-that/   [Accessed: 02.02.2017].

Samia Yasir, Office for National Statistics. (2014) Public Administration, Defence and Compulsory Social Security Industry.The UK

Smith, P.R. (2011) The SOSTAC® Guide to Writing the Perfect Plan [Online] Available at: Self-published E-book available on Amazon and Kindle.

Stokes R. and the Minds of Quirk (2008) eMarketing: The essential guide to marketing in a digital world 5th Edition, Quirk eMarketing (Pty) Ltd.

What Makes Good Leader (2012) Sample SWOT Analysis For a Web Business   [Online]   Available   from: http://www.whatmakesagoodleader.com/sample_swot_analysis.html [Accessed: 30.12.2016]
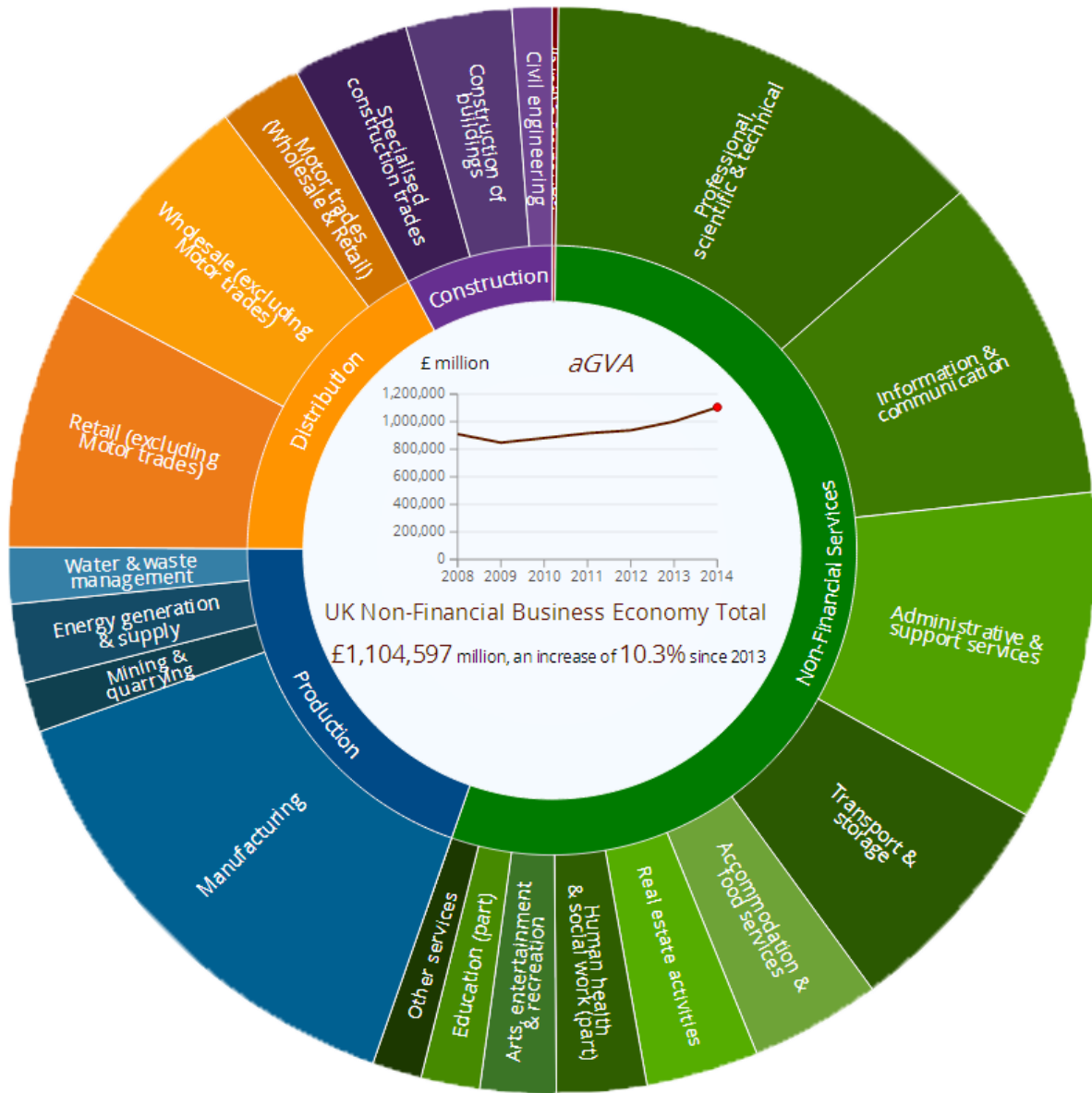
Appendix 1

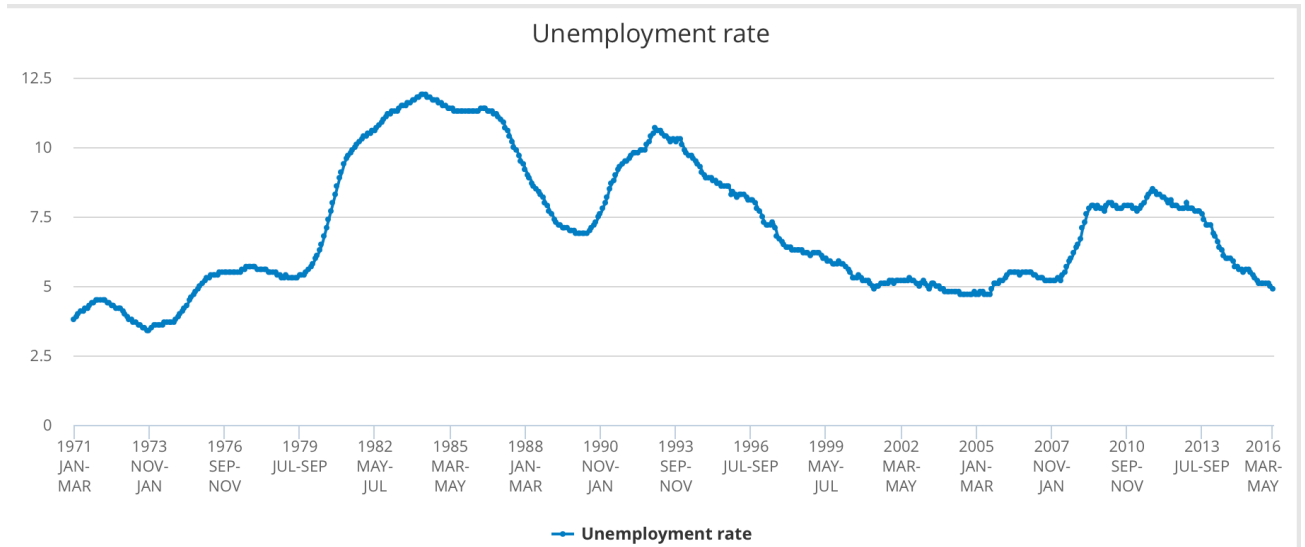The Supreme Court and the United Kingdom's legal system
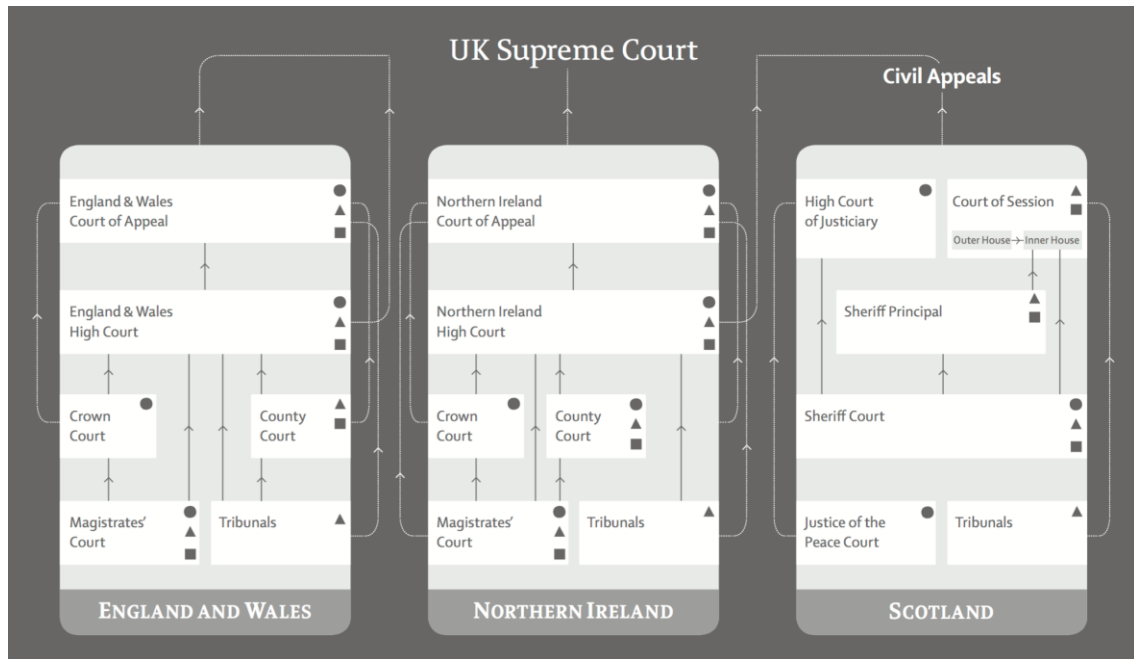
Source: www.supremecourt.uk/docs/supreme-court-and-the-uks-legal-system.pdf

Appendix 2

UK Non-Financial Business Economy

Source: www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/HTMLDocs/dvc105/index.html#

Appendix 3

Unemployment Rate

Source: www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/unemployment