

Social Media Planning Case company Forsman tea

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Abstract



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In today's world, where social media platforms are increasing in popularity and commonplace everywhere, the role of social media marketing is increasingly important.

This study was commissioned by Forsman tea, a company that imports, mixes, bags, and finally sells tea and tea related products, mostly through B2B channels. While the case company is active on social media it does not have a clear plan for social media marketing. The objective of this study is to provide valuable information on how social media activities should be planned, what key performance indicators should be considered, and what can be learned from the market and industry audience through benchmarking and conducting a survey. This study will focus on four of the most used social media platforms; Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter.

The theoretical framework touches upon the benefits and challenges of social media, social media trends in 2017, social media engagement, content marketing and cross promotion, but the focus will be on the planning and strategy phases of social media marketing. Key performance indicators are crucial in determining the success of social media efforts and for this reason are also discussed in the study.

Benchmarking is used in this study to gain insights into how two similar, but larger companies organize their social media activities, what type of content they use, how frequently and how their audience reacts to the efforts. This study also utilizes a survey-based research to map case company's customer's social media preferences. The survey itself received over 900 replies and provides valuable insights into the case company, even when separated from this study.

The concluding chapter draws together what was learned from the theoretical framework and combines the framework with the results of the benchmarking and the survey to provide valuable suggestions for the case company's social media marketing actions. These suggestions will provide information on social media planning, but will also provide information of which platforms social media efforts should be directed towards, and which strategical elements to include for each platform. Implementing the suggestions provided, the case company can enhance its social media efforts to a new level.

Keywords

social media, social media marketing, planning and strategy, social media metrics, key performance indicator

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1 Introduction

This chapter will explain why this study was done, what research question is and the investigative questions to be researched, what will be included and what will be left out of this study, who will benefit from the study, and finally some key concepts and information of the case company.

The purpose of this chapter is to give the reader an overview of what the study will be about and to give the reader more information on what to expect further on in the study.

1.1 Background

In today's business, the role of social media in marketing is becoming more important as the focus from traditional channels is shifting towards new, more social channels. Platforms such as Facebook and YouTube are built around the social aspect, and streaming and on-demand video platforms like Netflix and Twitch are gaining popularity over traditional channels.

Social media marketing is also very flexible in comparison to traditional media, at least investment-wise. It can be done very cheaply, virtually for free, but it is also possible to pour endless amounts of money to social media marketing efforts. This means that if social media marketing is highly scalable, it is doable from small, one-man businesses to massive corporations spanning multiple continents and languages. Done correctly, social media marketing can have huge returns on investment. This can be life-changing for smaller companies with no or limited marketing budgets.

The thesis is also important for the case company, Forsman tea. Currently Forsman tea is functioning mostly as a tea and tea related products wholesaler for Kesko and S Group, but it would like to be more present in the market themselves serving the customers directly without any middlemen. One way to achieve this is to build up presence on social media and this way get the attention of potential customers. If the company name is known, the company is more present on social media, will it likely lead to increased direct sales, which is what the company ultimately wants to achieve through the increased social media presence. Notable side goals here are attaining a larger user base and reaching new customer groups.

From a professional standpoint as the writer of the thesis, the topic is important because investing in the more current and upcoming advertising channels instead of the traditional ones can prove useful in future careers. The topic can also act as a stepping stone into other potential marketing channels that can be somewhat tied to social media marketing,

at least in their initial phases. Basic knowledge of social media marketing can be a good base for more specialized efforts and act as a path to get into the cutting-edge wave of marketing.

1.2 Research question

The objective of this thesis is to research social media planning, strategy, and key performance indicators in addition to benchmarking companies similar to the case company Forsman tea, and conducting a survey to research the social media preferences of Forsman tea customers. The theoretical framework, benchmarking, and the results of the survey are used to provide Forsman tea some recommended actions, but the focus of the study is in the planning and strategy sections.

RQ: How can Forsman tea use social media as a tool to increase visibility in the B2C sector?

- IQ 1. What is the current state of social media usage in the case company?
- IQ 2. What content and elements are other tea houses using in their social media (benchmarking)?
- IQ 3. What social media metrics are the most useful in measuring marketing effectiveness for Forsman tea?
- IQ 4. What are the recommended actions for the case company?

Table 1. Overlay matrix

Investigative question	Theoretical Framework*	Research Methods	Results (chapter)
IQ 1. What is the current state of social media usage in the case company?	Social media, social media marketing	desktop study, quantitative re- search	4.
IQ 2. What content and elements are other tea houses using in their social media (benchmarking)?	Social media planning and strategy, content marketing	desktop study, benchmarking	3.
IQ 3. What social media metrics are the most useful in measuring marketing effectiveness for Forsman tea?	Social media engagement, metrics	desktop study, quantitative re- search	5.
IQ 4. What are the recommended actions for the case company?	Social media engagement, social media marketing, so- cial media planning and strat- egy, social media engage- ment, metrics	desktop study, benchmarking, quantitative re- search	5.

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

1.3 Demarcation

This study will explain the current state and the importance of social media in marketing including current and future trends. Social media as a digital media is an important part of integrated marketing, a combination of traditional and new media. This study will focus only on social media, thus other digital and traditional marketing are excluded from this study. Digital marketing includes important key concepts like web page and search engine optimization, email marketing, and mobile marketing. Digital marketing also includes the concept of content marketing which is included as an exception because it goes well together with social media marketing. Content marketing will only be used in the context of social media and other content marketing channels are ignored.

The case company wants to focus only on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram so other social media platforms will be demarcated from the study. The chosen direction of communication is company to customer which demarcates B2B actions from this thesis. Many of these platforms offer paid advertising features but these will be excluded to keep the scope of the study narrow enough.

While the suggested actions derived from the theoretical framework can theoretically be universally applied no matter the language or region, the case company operates in Finland, and mainly to Finnish speaking customers. That, in addition to the customer survey done for Finnish speaking customers, geographically demarcates this study to include only Finland.

1.4 International aspect

The international aspect required in the study is achieved through benchmarking the social media marketing efforts of tea houses abroad. The key takeaway from benchmarking is to uncover how the industry leaders in other countries handle social media and to see if successful strategies - together with the theoretical framework - can be applied in creating the suggested actions for the case company.

1.5 Benefits

The main stakeholder to benefit from this study is the case company, as it is going to get concrete suggestions on how to effectively utilize social media to get more visibility on different social media and attain more customers, and increase sales as a result. The increased social media presence will possibly also increase direct customer engagement with the company which in turn gives the company invaluable first hand feedback. In-

creased social media presence will also have an impact on brand awareness and customer loyalty because it is easier for customers to find the company and have a direct channel through which to connect with them. Social media is also a highly cost-effective and it allows the company to deliver the content you want to a highly specific target audience (Copp 2016). The suggestions will also be the expected result of the thesis as they will be a combination of everything presented in this study; theory, customer survey and benchmarking.

The second stakeholder group to benefit are B2C customers. The customers will benefit from the increased social media presence of the company by gaining more insight and knowledge of the company itself, because as of now the company is less visible, being more focused on the B2B market with its wholesaler status.

Other GLOBBA students, especially those taking the marketing specialization, will also benefit from my study. Currently, the curriculum does not include much about social media. One wanting to learn more about social media must find an optional course. Students interested in social media marketing could learn the basics of social media strategy and planning by reading this study, but at least gain more insight on what social media marketing is in practice. This could lead to more interest in enrolling to the optional courses, and through that the students could develop their social media competencies which can be highly important in future career life, especially for marketing students.

1.6 Key concepts

Social media "are online means of communication, conveyance, collaboration, and cultivation among interconnected and interdependent networks of people, communities, and organizations enhanced by technological capabilities and mobility" (Tuten & Solomon 2013, 24).

Social media marketing "is a term that describes use of social networks. online communities, blogs, wikis or any other online collaborative media for marketing, sales, public relations and customer service" (Barker, Barker, Normann & Neher 2008, 3).

Content marketing "...is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly-defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action" (Content Marketing Institute 2016).

SOSTAC is a marketing planning model developed by Paul Smith. SOSTAC stands for situation, objectives, strategy, tactics, actions, and control. (Chaffey 2016.)

Engagement in social media refers to the act of being active on social media, reading, writing comments and posting photos and other media to and with other persons or companies (Agresta & Bough 2011, 63-65).

Follower "refers to a person who subscribes to your account in order to receive your u dates" (Stec 2015).

Social media metrics are goals and stats that by which measuring a marketer can track if the marketing efforts have a desired effect (Lee 2016).

1.7 Case company

Forsman tea is a Finnish tea house that was founded in 1979. The company imports tea from abroad which it then packs and flavors in Finland in one of the biggest tea factories in the Nordic countries. Tea leaves are imported from all over the world and then sold in Finland or exported abroad. Currently the company operates mostly in B2B wholesale business providing tea in Finland for Kesko and S Group.

Currently Forsman tea is trying to expand their business by trying to add more B2C sales in addition to B2B sales which means the company must increase their presence in social media to get the attention of private customers which provides the need for this thesis.

2 Basics of social media marketing

This chapter will discuss the key concepts, models, and theories that will be researched and used in the study. The purpose of this chapter is to shed light on why these topics are important in social media and social media planning.

One of the key concepts discussed is social media, which is a given since it is one of the main themes of the study. The theoretical framework part includes what social media is, the importance in terms of marketing, and short introductions of each platform included in the study. Other key concept discussed is social media marketing; its definition, role in marketing, and current and upcoming trends.

Engagement is what social media marketers strive for. And in many cases, it can even be the desired customer action on par with the purchase of the product or service. For the theoretical framework, it is useful to describe what engagement is and when it happens.

Content marketing is starting to become more important in terms of successful social media marketing. Even though social media are communication platforms where users are the content creators, people also look for content that is useful for and gives them value. Because content marketing leverages all channels with social media being only one of them (Content Marketing Institute 2016.), it should only be used as a guideline for defining what type of content is the most effective in social media context. It would be interesting to include more content marketing, but that would mean including topics like search engine optimization, email marketing, WhatsApp, and mobile marketing and the like which in turn would draw the focus away from social media marketing.

One important concept that ties content marketing and social media together is cross promotion, which is discussed briefly in the theoretical framework. Cross promotion can be used to link the different social media platforms to each other by promoting content (provided by content marketing guidelines) posted on one social media platform on another platform. E.g. promoting content originally posted on Instagram on Facebook. SOSTAC marketing planning model by Smith can be used as a frame for the strategy and planning parts.

Social media planning and strategy

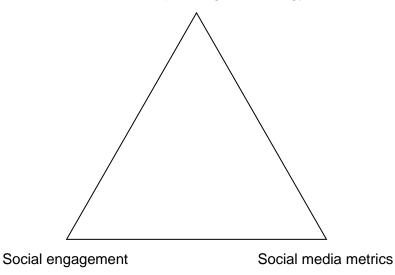


Figure 1. Theory framework.

Figure 1 above illustrates thee important cornerstones of a social media plan. Planning and strategy are important, but ultimately useless without the other two; engagement and metrics. Without plans and strategy, social media can be a chaos, without engagement there is no social media, and without metrics there is no way of knowing how successful the social media efforts are. All three are needed to build a balanced social media plan which is also the goal of this thesis.

2.1 Social media marketing

Social media can be defined as "online means of communication, conveyance, collaboration, and cultivation among interconnected and interdependent networks of people, communities, and organizations enhanced by technological capabilities and mobility" (Tuten & Solomon 2013, 24). These networks are in constant change, some dying, and new ones emerging to replace the ones that cannot keep up. The potential of social media channels is huge as the user count keeps climbing at an astounding pace. As of January 2017, the biggest social network, Facebook, has over 1.8 billion users (Statista 2017) which is a huge amount of the world's 7.4 billion people (Population Reference Bureau 2016). In total, there are approximately 2.34 billion social media users worldwide, which translates into a 31% global social network penetration. Some parts of the world have an even larger social network penetration of around 50% (Statista 2017). At this point, social media have undoubtedly become an integral part of today's society.

2.1.1 Benefits of social media marketing for businesses

The rising number social media users indicates that social media is here to stay. The sheer number of users also demonstrates a huge marketing potential, which companies should tap into if they wish to learn more about their customers and improve their marketing efforts. Not having a social media presence can turn out to be a disadvantage.

Increasing brand awareness is a big benefit of social media marketing. In its simplest form, brand awareness is increased just by being on a certain platform. Being on social media opens new channels for the company to reach the customers, but also makes it easier for the customers to reach the company. This makes the company more accessible, recognizable and familiar. In addition to people who already are a customer of the company, there is the possibility of reaching new audiences, locally and globally, to further increase the brand awareness and visibility. Since almost everyone has a device that can access different social media, there is also no financial obstacle for having a social media presence. Marketing costs through social media are highly scalable, at its lowest, social media costs are only the time invested in them. (DeMers 2014.)

Social media channels are also important in a sense that they provide the company with the possibility to gain a great amount of customer insights. Learning who the company's customers are, what they like, and how they feel about the company is highly useful in making marketing decisions such as what type of content generates the most leads or interest, and what type of material works for a certain type of audience. In addition to marketing decisions, the insight gained from social media can also be useful in making business decisions. (Copp 2016; DeMers 2014; Torr 2015.)

According to DeMers (2014), social media also provides more opportunities to convert potential customers. In addition to providing more opportunities, the conversion rates are also higher since companies and brands feel more like actual people, which is important since people like doing business with other people. Inbound traffic is usually also increased since every piece of content generated and posted on social media platforms can drive people towards the company webpages.

Copp (2016) also mentions that social media monitoring is an effective way of gaining more insight on your key competitors, which can be useful in customer research, and in making product and marketing decisions.

2.1.2 Challenges in social media marketing

While social media marketing has many benefits for businesses, there are also some challenges. Gilliland (2016) argues that balancing between local and global strategy can

prove to be difficult. A global strategy can easily be kept consistent across all channels, but not having a local presence means that the opportunity to benefit from diverse cultural aspects is lost. This is mostly a challenge for larger companies. Larger companies usually also have larger marketing teams i.e. more people handling various aspects of social media which can present the issue of keeping a consistent brand image across all channels and countries. Challenges more related to smaller companies, Gilliland mentions that keeping a consistent posting schedule, creating social media content, and encouraging conversation to keep the audience engaged can be challenging.

While having a presence in social media is generally free, like mentioned in the previous subchapter, there is a cost in terms of free time and resources. In case of larger companies where more people are needed to take care of social media, it also means bigger investments in salaries. Some companies choose to use agencies and consultants to help build and execute social media strategies, which does not come for free. Producing and creating relevant content for social media also requires time and money. (Barker & al. 2008.)

Most social media platforms provide the option for users to create paid ads which are guaranteed to have an audience and visibility per how much money is put into them. Paid promotion can start as cheap as \$1 per day and can scale up to substantial numbers (Facebook 2017). Having the option of doing paid advertising and promotion in social media is good to have, the current trend is going to a direction where the content serving algorithms give preferential treatment to paid content. Paid content is growing faster than ever across all social media channels, which can turn out to be a challenge for companies with limited budgets. (York 2017.)

2.1.3 Social media trends in 2017

2017 will most likely bring some new trends and changes within the social media landscape in terms of which services will gain traction and which will lose users. Facebook will continue its growth as the biggest platform and Twitter, as one of the first social media platforms, will continue its decline. WhatsApp, the Chinese WeChat, and Instagram are among the fastest growing social media networks. (Chaffey 2017.)

2017 will also bring some changes into social media platforms or continue some trends that emerged last year. One of the biggest upcoming trends is live video and streaming with almost half of social media marketers planning to use it in 2017. Many platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter rolled out live streaming capabilities out in 2016

and some brands have been very successful in utilizing them in keeping followers engaged and in bringing events available to people who are physically unable to attend them. (Bernazzani 2017.)

One thing that will affect how social media will function in the future are the changes in content-providing algorithms. The algorithms are starting to limit people who see the posts to reduce clutter and provide more relevant content. In practice this means that organic, non-paid reach of the posts will be reduced and paid advertising will be needed to reach the masses in social media. Most of the networks have implemented native ads and promoted posts in their platforms which can be used to reach the wanted audience. The upside to this is that ads and posts can be shown to a targeted audience if wanted, but advertising costs of companies might go up if they have previously relied only on organic posts. (Holmes 2017.)

The utilization of social media as a direct sales channel is also predicted to rise as social media platforms are testing and rolling out ecommerce features in their apps, which means that users are provided with a relatively effortless way of purchasing products through social media apps (Holmes 2017). This goes hand in hand with the paid advertising, since the paid posts and ads can promote the product but also offer a way to purchase it. Nearly a third of online shoppers use social media to browse for new items and over half of the people who follow brands on these platforms do so to look out for new products to buy. (Chahal 2016.)

2.1.4 Social media engagement

This subchapter will explain what social media engagement is and its importance to social media users and social media marketers.

Social engagement can be defined as "the extent to which an individual participates in a broad range of social roles and relationships" (Avison, McLeod & Pescosolido 2007). This definition of social engagement applies to social media engagement too since social media platforms give the possibility of users, companies, and other entities to participate in different social roles and relationships.

From a company perspective, engagement in social media means that the company should genuinely be interested in their current and prospective customers, and try to build a relationship with them (Kerpen 2015, 69-71). Engagement should be looked at as a long-term phenomenon that is more like an open line of communication instead of being a single interaction with a single customer. Other customers can see, and have the possibil-

ity of joining the interaction, which makes social media engagement different from traditional customer relationships (York 2015). It should also be noted that social media users have the option to decide whether to engage with certain content, brands, or social media posts. This is an important thing for social media marketers to acknowledge since social media algorithms tend to favor social media content that gets a lot of engagement (Kolowich 2016). There are many different approaches to engagement on social media, but generally people like brands and companies that are authentic, transparent, respect consumer's time and opinions, and have a human presence. (Barker & al. 2008, 66.)

2.1.5 Social media platforms

This subchapter will briefly introduce the four social media platforms this study focuses on.

Facebook

Facebook is a social media platform founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg. As of January 2017, Facebook has over 1.8 billion monthly active users across the world, most of which access the platform through a mobile device (Statista 2017). Facebook states its mission to be the enabler for making the world more connected and giving people the possibility to connect with friends and family, and to share and express their own thoughts, feelings, and opinions through the platform. Initially being a social networking service for Harvard College students, Facebook has grown to be the biggest social media platform in the world. (Facebook 2017.)

YouTube

YouTube is a company owned by Google that allows "billions of people to discover, watch and share originally-created videos" by providing a platform for "people to connect, inform and inspire others across the globe, and acts as a distribution platform for original content creators and advertisers large and small" (YouTube 2017). The platform was launched in May 2005, and by April 2017 it had reached a billion users worldwide (Statista 2017).

Twitter

Twitter is a social media or micro-blogging platform that originally focused on short text messages of under 140 character called tweets that can be sent to the world to see or to other users privately. Since its conception, the ability to post short videos and images has been added. Twitter has the reputation of being a social media platform where the user might have the chance of directly interacting with a celebrity or politician. As of Q1 2017, Twitter has 328 million active users, but the user growth has been relatively slow during the past couple of years. (Statista 2017.)

Instagram

Instagram is a social media platform that has a focus on sharing photos the users can directly take with the app itself and edit them with various filters. Since it's conception, the option of sharing videos has been added. Like Twitter, Instagram is known as a platform where users can follow celebrities, athletes, and other notable people and interact with them directly. For businesses, Instagram has become an important channel to promote their brands and brand image. As of April 2016, Instagram had 700 million users and the user count has been increasing with 100 million a year during the past five years (Statista 2017). In 2012, Facebook bought Instagram and has recently integrated the option to advertise on the platform through the Facebook Advertising platform (Facebook 2017).

2.2 Content marketing

This subchapter will explain what is content marketing and its role in social media marketing. Cross promotion will also be discussed briefly because it goes hand in hand with content marketing and social media. It is worth noting that content marketing can be used with traditional media but this study only looks at the social media side of things.

Wainwright (2015) defines content marketing as a program that focuses on "creating, publishing, and distributing content for your target audience" to attract new customers. The key in content marketing is the creation and distribution of valuable, relevant, and consistent content that is useful for your target audience. The main goal with content marketing is to attract new customers, appeal to existing customers, and creating trust in a business through educating the customers. Content marketing is also highly scalable from one-person companies to large organizations, which means most marketers do utilize it in one way or another. Examples of notable companies using content marketing are Microsoft, P&G, Red Bull, and John Deere to mention a few. (Content Marketing Institute 2016; Farnworth 2015.)

According to Farnworth (2015), the type of content and its subject of matter that is the most suitable for a company depends on the industry of operation and customer interest. Brand story and the perspective the company wants to have on the content are also factors that affect how the company's content marketing will look like.

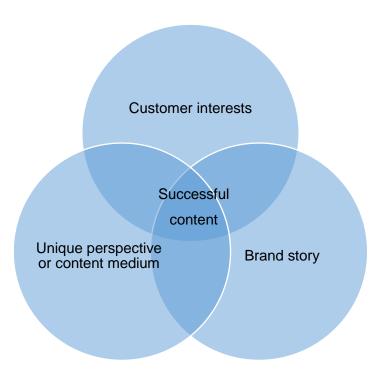


Figure 2. The elements of successful content marketing

The company's brand story, the unique perspective or content medium combined with the interests of the company's audience is generally needed to generate successful, valuable content for the customers. Common types of content marketing content are blogs, podcasts, videos, web pages, search engine optimization, copywriting, infographics and even books. (Farnworth 2015; Steimle 2014.)

Cross promotion is a marketing technique where another medium or channel is used to promote posts, services, or products. Its role in social media is important since content on one platform can be distributed through others. Cross promotion can be done internally, i.e. promoting the company's own content and channels on other company-managed mediums. Cross promotion can also be used to collaborate with relevant but non-competing brands. Partnering with a company that sells a complementary product for a company can be an effective way to reach new audiences and potential leads (Tarcomnicu 2016). Internal cross promotion is also important since not all members of your target audience are on the same social media channels. Providing as much opportunities as possible to come across content in different channels increases overall visibility of the content. (Barker & al. 2008, 96.)

2.3 Planning and strategy

This subchapter will explain the stages that need to be considered when planning a social media marketing strategy and what needs to be done before executing a strategy. Some platform specific guidelines for each of the four social media channels will also be mentioned.

According to Barker & al. (2008, 26), a social media plan details the goals wanted to achieve and the actions needed to achieve them. The planning process is a continuous cycle that consists of eight stages; listening, goal setting, strategy decisions, identifying target audience, selecting tools, implementation, monitoring, and tuning.

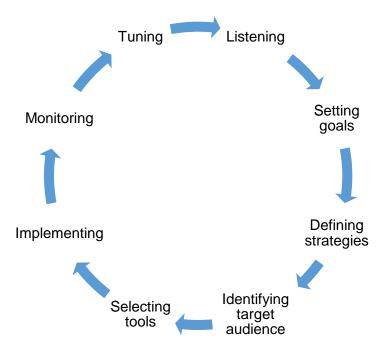


Figure 3. A social media planning cycle. (Barker & al. 2008, 26.)

There are various alternatives to the planning cycle by Barker & al. described above. One of these alternatives is SOSTAC by PR Smith. The planning system is developed for digital marketing, but can be easily applied to social media marketing. Like the cycle in Figure 3, SOSTAC too is a continuous cycle that has a lot in common with the one discussed by Barker & al., but instead of eight stages SOSTAC only has six. The name stands for situational analysis, objectives, strategy, tactics, actions, and control.



Figure 4. SOSTAC planning system. (Smith 2013.)

2.3.1 Situational analysis

The two planning cycles have a lot in common because they cover the same areas from preparation, goals, strategy, and monitoring. While the cycles are continuous, the most reasonable place to start when creating a social media marketing plan from scratch is situational analysis, or listening and identifying the target audience. In this stage, it is important to research where the company is currently standing, but also the current market trends in addition to analyzing competition and customer behavior.

Barker & al. (2008, 28) suggest listening to conversations about the brand and company, competition, industry in addition to the tone and social media usage of customers to gain useful insight for decisions to be made on objectives and strategy further down the line. In addition to the more general situational analysis, in digital or social media context it is useful to spend more time to research who the online customers are. Things such as how they interact with the brand or other similar brands, what platforms do they use, and the basic demographic breakdown will be useful especially if paid advertising on social media is going to be used. A SWOT – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats – analysis specifically in social media context can be a useful tool. Even though competitor analysis was mentioned earlier, it is also crucial in an online context. Competitor analysis can provide information on what works for the target audience and thus save some time. It can also reveal some interesting information about the competitor's social media efforts.

2.3.2 Goals and objectives

After situational analysis, researching where the company is currently with its efforts, is it time to set the goals and objectives, i.e. make decisions where the company wants to be. Having goals and objectives is one of the most important parts in creating a social media plan and strategy. Without goals, it is almost impossible to come up with a plan that will be effective on any scale. Goals and objectives are also important in the control, or monitoring and tuning phase. They are needed to measure the success of social media efforts and react to strategies that are not going as expected. Goals for social media marketing can vary greatly depending on the company and the product or service they provide. In general, marketing goals can include - but are not limited to - the following; building a brand, increasing brand awareness, improving brand perception, positioning a brand, expanding brand loyalty, increasing customer satisfaction, driving word-of-mouth-recommendations, generating leads, crisis or reputation management, and search engine optimization. Tuten & Solomon (2008, 39) mention many of the previous, but also add a few new ones such as increasing website traffic, amplifying or augmenting public relations, and reducing customer acquisition and support costs. (Barker & al. 2008, 34; LePage 2016.)

LePage (2016) introduces the SMART framework for setting goals. SMART stands for specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time bound. Specific refers to the goal being specific enough to pinpoint problems or opportunities, in real world terms. Measurable is quite self-explanatory and refers to if the objective can be measured or quantified. This step is important in social media context and will be discussed more in depth in chapter 2.4 of this study. Attainable, also known as actionable refers to if the objective is going to affect behavior or performance. If the objective does not yield any changes in anything, there is little point in having it. Relevant is about the objectives relevancy at the time the objective is made, and if it solves a specific issue or problem. Time bound is also important in social media context. An objective should have a time attribute tied to itself such as a week, a month or a year to properly measure its performance against itself and other similar objectives (Chaffey 2015). If the goals have all the elements of SMART, is it easy to track the progress on the chosen goals and objectives, measure their impact on the target audience, and calculate the return on investment easily. Tuten & Solomon (2008, 39) present characteristics the objectives should have. These are essentially the same characteristics that are included in SMART, but it adds the concept of a budget to the mix. This is a key factor since at its bare minimum, social media marketing requires time, but more increasingly, money if paid adverts are used. Social media marketing should have a budget like any other non-social media marketing. Having a set a budget for different goals makes it possible to have concrete numbers on return on investment, which helps marketing decisions in the future.

An example of a SMART framework objective in social media could be, for example; "For YouTube, videos with tips how to use the company's products will be posted twice a week with the target of 20 subscriptions, 50 comments and 100 likes". The previous example objective can be measured, is specific, and time bound. Attainability and relevancy cannot be known, since it is only a single example sentence, but if assumed that the company would like to introduce the customers more ways of utilizing the product because a lot of people have been asking for tips, would all five requirements be met. If money is used to enhance the visibility of the examples videos, the company could choose to set a budget of 10€ per video for promotional or paid advertising purposes.

As an alternative for SMART, Chaffey (2010) introduces the 5Ss of digital marketing, which can also be applied to social media marketing. The 5Ss are; sell, speak, serve, save, and sizzle, which are useful to check if other aspects than sales are considered in a plan. Written out, the 5Ss are, grow sales, get closer to customers through dialogue and participation, add value, save costs, and brand building. Unlike SMART, which expects each objective to fulfill the framework, with 5Ss one objective can cover one area if there are enough objectives to have at least one in each S.

2.3.3 Strategy

If the goals and objectives define what is about where the company wants to be, strategy is about how to get there. A good social media strategy considers other marketing efforts and should work together with the rest of the objectives and goals of the company, and not a be a separate part (Barker & al. 2008, 35). To create successful strategy, a company should start by looking at the data collected in the listening and situational analysis phase, and characterize the customers. Creating two or three customer personas helps with reaching the right audience with the right messages. (Foster 2015.)

A customer persona is a fictitious character, usually with a name, that represents a part of the company's target audience or the average customer (Moncrieff 2015). The right number of customer personas varies depending on how many ideal customers does the company have. A customer persona includes four different key areas; geographic, demographic, psychographic, and product usage characteristics in addition to social media usage habits. Demographic information is relatively simple as its role in a customer persona is to define where or in which type of climate does the customer live. In social media, this can be defined on a highly local level if desired. Demographics define criteria such the age, gender, income, educational background. Psychographic information usually tends to provide the most comprehensive picture of the persona because it defines the personality traits, motives, lifestyles, and attitudes and opinions. Demographic and psychographic information can be combined and used in targeted advertising. The customer personas

should also include product-usage characteristics or behavior such as their likes and dislikes, sports, hobbies and similar information. (Tuten & Solomon 2008, 42.)

Competitor analysis is useful in analyzing the company's current situation, but even more so in strategy formulation. Like mentioned briefly in chapter 2.1.1 about social media monitoring, competitor research on different social media platforms can provide very good insight on what is working and what is not, which will be useful in determining the right social media strategy. Researching competition keeps the company on track what the others are doing, but also tells which strategies work well for the target audience and which do not. The information gathered, such as the number of fans or followers, posting frequency, posting time in addition to the type of content and its context can be utilized in strategy creation, but it is also an important measure later when calculating the impact of the social media efforts. (Houssem 2016.)

Barker & al. (2008, 35) present the eight Cs of strategy development as a broad guideline for several types of strategies that can be adapted to each organization based on their SWOT analysis. The eight Cs are;

Categorize

The company should direct the most efforts to platforms that are the most relevant for the target audience and divide the effort between platforms accordingly.

Comprehend

Each platform has its own set of rules and policies on how to behave and interact appropriately. Companies that conform to rules and act respectfully tend to look better in the eyes of the audience.

Converse

Acknowledging and responding to other user and acting as a contributor, not a promoter on social media is an effective way to establish trust with the target audience.

Collaborate

Building real connections with the target audience can encourage repeat business and word-of-mouth recommendations. Trying to show the "human side" of business and creating personal connections between the audience and the company can often lead to better customer loyalty and support.

Contribute

Providing and showcasing the company's knowledge in their area of operations is an effective way to build reputation if it is used to help the community.

Connect

Contacting influencers and enlisting them to promote the product or service is an effective way to get some half-genuine visibility for the companies.

Community

Participating and creating discussions across various social media the company uses can be used to build community around the company. It also acts as an effective two-way communication channel between the customers and the company, which can lead to consumer suggestions for improving products or services.

Convert

One of the most used general strategies includes objectives such as brand building, increasing customer satisfaction, driving word-of-mouth recommendations, generating leads, and integrating social media marketing with traditional advertising.

The above eight Cs are examples of distinct types of strategies. However, more important is to find a suitable approach to the goals and objectives that also consider the customer, market, and competitor research. One thing to remember is that one strategy can also target multiple goals and objectives, which means it is not required to have one strategy per objective. Social media can also change unexpectedly, which means being adaptive and ready to change strategies, even objectives, is sometimes required. After all, the social media planning is a continuous circle as depicted in figures three and four at the beginning of the chapter. (Barker & al. 2008, 35-37.)

Tuten & Solomon (2008, 45-46) present a social media strategy planning brief that has nine questions that all should have an answer in a good social media strategy. The brief includes the following questions:

- 1. What are the goals and objectives of the social media campaign
- 2. What is the desired brand position of the company
- 3. What is the target audience
- 4. Can influencers be utilized
- 5. How can the current creative assets be used in social media context
- 6. How can the social media strategy be integrated with other marketing
- How can engagement be driven across different social media platforms and devices
- 8. What content is needed
- 9. How can the content be used across different social media platforms

As discussed earlier in the chapter, many of the strategy decisions are based on research and objectives. This social media brief can also be used with the earlier eight Cs when creating a social media strategy.

2.3.4 Tactics

Continuing the planning cycle, after the strategy phase comes the tactics, or tool selection as Barker & al. (2008, 26) call it. Tactics and tool selection are interchangeable in this case as both are meant to provide an answer to how the strategies are supposed to be implemented. The tactics and tool selection is an extension to the strategy phase, and it is used to describe the in-depth details of the strategies, such as what type of content to use, timing, frequency, and which social media metrics should be used to track the progress.

Since social media is all about great content, every social media strategy should include a content marketing plan. Content marketing plan addresses what type of content will be posted and promoted, how often and when, to which audience, who will create it, and how will the content be promoted (LePage 2016). Figuring out the proper posting times and frequency is almost as important as the content shared. If the posting times are off, the content does not get as much engagement than it could. The same applies if the frequency is too low. Too high of a frequency will most likely annoy the target audience because too many posts can seem like spam, especially if the content is not that great. The proper frequency and posting times for the company's target audience can be figured out from different social media insights and should be customized accordingly. (Houssem 2016.)

However, if there is no access to social media metrics or not enough data to provide reliable insights on the audience, general guidelines for frequency and timing can be used. Ellering (2016) has gone through multiple studies and created a comprehensive guide on social media post timing and frequency on different platforms. The following part presents the findings by Ellering (2016) limited to the platforms used in this study; Facebook, Instagram, Twitter with YouTube recommendations from a different source. One notable feature is that consistency is key regardless the platform.

Facebook

Best time to post on Facebook is between 13-16 late into the week the best times being Saturday and Sunday 12-13, Thursday and Friday 13-16, and Wednesday at 15. General times that can be applied throughout the week are 9, 13, and 15.

Posting frequency should be at least once a day, but not more than two to avoid numbing the viewers and making them feel annoyed by the amount of content from the company. Three times a week is considered the minimum recommended frequency.

Instagram

The best times to post on Instagram are generally 8-9, 14, and 17 with the most active day being Monday. Frequency-wise, there should be one or two posts per day but no more than three. Three posts a week is considered the minimum amount.

Twitter

Generally, the best times to tweet are 12-15 and at 17 through the workweek. Due the nature of Twitter, the posting frequency can be much higher than on other platforms with anywhere between one to 51 tweets. Derived from the multiple studies, around 15 tweets seem to be a good amount with a daily minimum of five tweets. (Ellering 2016.)

YouTube

Through Monday to Wednesday the best times to post on YouTube are from 14-16, 12-15 on Thursday and Friday and earlier between nine and 11 on the weekends. Thursday and Friday are generally the best days to post a video. Frequency-wise there is no set rule on how often one should post on YouTube, however consistency helps. YouTube is slightly different compared to other platform as the material does not have to be as timely or current if it is valuable to the target group. People will watch older videos if it provides them useful information. YouTube could also be considered as a content platform and posting there whenever there is suitable material and using the other channels to cross promote the posted video per the platform specific posting guidelines. (Gielen 2015.)

2.3.5 Actions

Actions or implementation is finally the step where the strategies and tactics are put into use. But before actually doing anything, decisions on who does what and when should be done.

To help with the content planning and responsibility decision, LePage (2016), Kolowich (2016), and many other authors suggest using an editorial calendar that can be used to plan social media posts ahead by writing down what, when, how, and where the content should be posted. Using the editorial calendar also allows content to be created beforehand and scheduled to be posted on the appropriate time, which can free time from other tasks.

2.3.6 Control

The final stage before the social media planning circle starts from the beginning is the control stage, or monitoring and tuning stage. In this stage, the performance based on the objectives is monitored and measured via the various social media metrics chosen for the

task. These social media metrics and key performance indicators will be discussed in chapter 2.4, social media metrics. If the situation requires, the strategies and tactics can be adapted accordingly. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, being flexible and adaptive is useful since social media can change at a fast pace, which will sometimes lead to even a change in the objectives.

This chapter discussed the social media planning cycle and its various stages with the intention of emphasizing the objective formulation and strategy phases. The control phase is as important as the previous two, but since it would also require explaining social media metrics and key performance indicators the part was kept short and chapter 2.4 will be going through those more thoroughly.

2.4 Social media metrics

This subchapter will discuss what social media metrics are, what are they used for, and some example key performance indicators (KPIs) in general in addition to some platform specific KPIs.

By definition, "social media metrics are goals and stats that by which measuring a marketer can track if the marketing efforts have a desired effect" (Lee 29 January 2016). Many of these metrics are universal, but as there are many different social media platforms, are there also many platform specific metrics that are needed to be considered. Some metrics are also calculated differently on different platforms (Jackson 2016). Lee (2017) also argues that it is vital to gather data to track marketing goals to help with decision-making.

Social media measurement can be divided into two categories, qualitative and quantitative measurement. Quantitative metrics can be easily measured and calculated in numbers as the name suggests. Examples of quantitative metrics are things such as number of posts, comments, tweets, retweets, likes, follows, and shares or any other metric that can be used to measure the volume of content. These quantitative metrics can also be divided into subcategories; consumption, sharing, lead-generating, and sales metrics. Consumption metrics focus on how many times the content was seen, downloaded, or listened. Sharing metrics, as the name suggests, is about how often the content is shared, which is an indicator of the resonance of the content. Lead-generating metrics measure the how frequently the content consumption results in a lead, and sales metrics can be used to measure if money was made from the content. (Barker & al. 2008, 283; Lee 2017.)

Quantitative metrics are used to assess the sentiment of the target audience towards the company or brand. Mentions, comments, conversations, and feedback are examples of quantitative metrics in social media. (Barker & al. 2008, 283.)

Tuten & Solomon (2008, 208) also provide a social media marketing matrix, which proposes an alternative way of classifying different metrics. These three are activity, or the actions the company takes relative to social media, interaction, or how the target audience engages and responds to the social media efforts, and finally, return metrics that focus on the financial outcomes of marketing.

2.4.1 KPIs

In the previous chapter, 2.3, while discussing about setting goals and objectives for social media, one of the traits of a good goal was that it is measurable. Social media metrics can be used to provide the measurability to the objectives and oftentimes are the only way to measure the performance if the goals is very platform specific. Metrics and measurement are also crucial to the social media planning circle as many adjustments to the goals, strategies, and tactics can only be done based on the measurements and data achieved through the metrics. Without them, assessing the effectiveness of the campaigns is difficult. Social media metrics can also be used to determine the return-on-investment (ROI) of the marketing efforts, or how much did income did the social media investments generate. (Tuten & Solomon 2008, 217.)

These measurements that indicate the progress the strategies in achieving the goals are called key performance indicators, KPIs. When defining the objectives and goals, it is important to also choose the right KPI to track. To be able to choose the proper KPI, proper understanding of what the company wants to achieve is needed because there many KPIs to choose from. Finding the right ones that correlate with the goals and objectives is crucial in being able to properly track the marketing efforts. It is also important to set a base-line of benchmarks so that there is something to measure against. (Barker & al. 2008, 284.)

While the right KPIs depend on the goals, objectives, and platform, Fontein (2016) presents a general list of key social media KPI suggestions. These are divided into five categories; social media presence, engagement, reach and influence, goal completion and ROI, and internal KPIs. The five categories are more specific than the three (activity, interaction, and performance) provided by Tuten & Solomon (2008, 209) but cover roughly the same areas. Tuten & Solomon group presence, engagement, and reach and influence into one category, interaction, but still retain separate categories for goal completion and ROI (performance), and internal KPIs (activity).

Presence

Social media presence refers to how the company appears and social media, and how many are talking about the company or its products and services. Key social media presence indicators are:

- 1. The number of followers and fans
- 2. The number of mentions
- Reach

The number of followers and fans is an important metric since the total count of them represents the number of individuals who have expressed interest towards the company. These numbers can be used to track the quality of the content and how interesting it is. If the numbers are growing, it means the content is good. The reach metric tells the number of people who have seen the company's content, both within and outside the audience or followers. In some platforms, Facebook for example, there is also a KPI called potential reach, which tells how many can potentially see the audience based on the targeting. Reach is a good metric when used as a base for comparison because it can be used to calculate engagement rates such as what percentage of the people who saw the post commented of clicked a link. (Fontein 2016; Agius 2016; Davis 2012.)

Engagement

While KPIs gauging social media presence are useful, the engagement metrics are usually more interesting since it is a better way of gauging the success of the social media campaign. Tracking engagement is also useful in determining what type of content works the best for the company's audience and where to improve. The role of engagement in social media is also increasing since the social media algorithms have recently changed to provide more relevant content to the users and one of the key factors affecting these algorithms is the engagement it receives. The algorithms tend to prefer content that has more engagement (in addition to paid content) because it is usually an indicator that the content is interesting (Agrawal 2016). Key engagement indicators are:

- 1. Social media shares
- 2. Comments
- 3. Likes and reactions

All the three previous are good engagement indicators, but they are not equal. Shares are the most powerful of the three since it requires the user to share it on their personal feed. This generally means the post is valuable, or in some cases, controversial or something the user wants to comment on. Shares also affect the reach of the content more greatly than comments and likes. With shares, it is also possible to track the amplification rate, or the ratio of shares per post compared to the number of followers. After shares, in terms of importance, comes comments to posts. Comments are an effective way to

measure how interesting the content is, but also functions as a direct feedback channel on what the audience thinks of the content. Likes and reactions are the most usual form on engagement since they require least input from the audience. Keeping track of likes and reactions is also used to gauge how interesting the content is but is useful in determining interest in certain posts but also the type of the content. Generally, likes and reactions give some information what content works best and comments and shares can be used to determine what type of content works especially well. The success of different posts can also be tracked through conversion rate, which is the ratio of comments per post to the number of followers. This information can and should be used in future social media marketing efforts. (Fontein 2016; Agius 2016; Davis 2012.)

Reach and influence

Reach was already mentioned in the presence indicators, it also is its own category with some additional KPIs. Reach KPIs are used to gauge how well does the social media content spread. Tracking these KPIs is important since social media content is rendered useful if there is no one to see or engage with it. Influence is about who is talking about the company and what kind of impact do they have. Tracking this can be difficult since there is no "right" way of doing it and while there are many tools available for tracking purposes do they all measure it differently. Measuring influence is currently mostly based on assumptions and thus not that reliable. One thing that is agreeable is that influence is not always tied to audience size (Davis 2012). Key reach and influence indicators are:

- Share of voice
- 2. Sentiment
- 3. Reach and potential reach
- 4. Number of social influencers
- 5. Video views

Rowley (2016) mentions that in addition to monitoring mentions it can also be useful to track the "social share of voice", which means tracking what percentage of the mentions within the industry are about the company and what percentage about the competition. Over time the social share of voice can illustrate how well the social media campaigns are paying off. This is usually measured as a percentage of total mentions within an industry. Sentiment is a form of qualitative metrics that aim to understand how the audience feels about the company, service, or product. Social media influencers are social media users that have the potential of reaching a big audience and thus spread awareness. Having many influencers and many people who would like to endorse some products is a good indicator of popularity. Video views is a KPI that is a good indicator of reach in video platforms like YouTube but is not alone a complete indicator if there is some bigger meaning behind the video.

Goal completion and ROI

While the previous metrics are useful in measuring the state of the social media efforts, goal completion (actions) and ROI are arguably more important to a company because the purpose of marketing is often to generate leads and drive sales. This is especially true in larger companies where marketing decisions and evaluation of social media marketing is often made, or is affected by, the number of sales generated or other financial figures. These metrics are used to track and measure if the audience completes the desired actions the company is trying to promote. ROI figures directly address the financial side since social media return-on-investment tells the company how much income did the investments on social media generate (Tuten & Solomon 2008, 210). Even though ROI is a relatively simple calculation, due the nature of social media, it can be difficult to link the sales and expenses. To provide some financial figures to measure social media efforts, various return-on-investment models have been created in addition to the broader social media return on investment. Tuten & Solomon (2008, 210) present some of these models; return on impressions describes how many impressions (opportunities to see) were generated, returns on social media impact tracks coverage on social media against sales over time, and return on target influence uses surveys to assess the effectivity of social media tactics and calculates a probability of purchase based on the exposure.

Conversions are one of the more important KPIs. Conversions are positive or wanted actions the company wants the customer to take. These actions can be sales, but also newsletter signups, content downloads, or other actions that usually lead into a sale at some point. Conversion tracking is important because if it is not done properly, measuring the revenue gained through social media is difficult. As of now, conversion tracking cannot be done directly on most social media platforms because they do not act as a sales platform. This is subject to change soon as Facebook is planning to roll out marketplace features on Facebook and Instagram. Sales, newsletter signups, downloads, and others currently must be done on the company webpage, which means the conversions will have to be calculated outside social media platforms. (Fontein 2016; Facebook Business 2017.)

However, there are tools for webpage analytics, which usually have the option of tracking conversions and distinguishing what channel drove the customer to the conversion. The most notable webpage analytics tool is Google Analytics, which provides a powerful set of tools for conversion tracking and for distinguishing conversion sources i.e. through what social media channel did the user doing the conversion come from. Facebook metrics tool Facebook Insights also provides an extension to the Insights platform called the Facebook Pixel. Using the Pixel tracking tool on a webpage provides a way to track conversions that came through Facebook or Instagram, but is only limited to Facebook owned platforms. One of the most important conversion related features on both Analytics and Facebook insights (with the Pixel) is the possibility of adding a monetary value to

the conversion already on the tracking platforms. This provides an effortless way of estimating revenue gained through different social media platforms. The possibilities of both platforms, especially Google Analytics, extend way further than tracking conversions gained through social media but that is a topic of its own. (Google Analytics Help 2017; Facebook Business 2017.)

Related to conversions, metrics like lead conversion rate and cost per lead are also useful. Leads are prospective buyers, and following how many of them turn into actual customers but also how much money is spent acquiring them are both useful metrics, which can be useful for allocating budgets for social media efforts. (Fontein 2016.)

Internal KPIs

The four key performance indicator groups presented earlier have the focus on the customers and target audiences since they are the people the company wants to reach social media platforms. But paying attention to some internal indicators can also be useful. Mentioned earlier in the study, at its cheapest, social media costs only the time the company puts into it. This will vary greatly depending on the size of the company and the marketing personnel for example. Internal KPIs mostly focus on how much time and resources are spent for creating material for social media and generally spent on different platforms. Internal KPIs can be used to determine, for example, how many hours does it take to create a certain type of content and how does it generally perform and other similar time related tasks. By keeping track of the time and effort used for various activities, the processes can be streamlined to the ones that provide the most returns given the time and effort spent on them. (Fontein 2016.)

2.4.2 **Tools**

In the previous subchapter, various KPIs were introduced. This subchapter will introduce official tools, which can be used to track the various KPIs and analyze the social media efforts in general. While discussing the platforms specific tools, some additional, more platform specific KPIs are also mentioned briefly.

Google Analytics

Analytics was briefly mentioned in subchapter 2.4.1. While it is not a social media analysis tool, but a reporting tool that focuses on providing information about a company's webpage, webpage visitors and other traffic, it is extremely useful in providing insight on referrals, more specifically social referrals. Referrals tell the source of the traffic, i.e. how did the webpage visitor find the page. In social media context, the referrals can be used to gauge which social media drive the most traffic to the company webpage, but also more specifically what exact social media post drove them to the page. Google Analytics can

also be used to find out if users acquired through different social media channels visit different pages on the website and that way adjust the focus of social media efforts if needed or wanted. Where Google Analytics is the most useful for social media marketing is its ability to track conversions, with a monetary value if needed, based on social referrals. Other than referral and conversion tracking, Analytics can provide good insight on the webpage visitors, which can be useful in the initial stages of social media strategy planning. (Google Analytics Help Center 2017.)

Facebook Insights

Facebook Insights is an analytics platform that provides valuable metrics and insights on how well a Facebook page or post performs. Insights can provide a great amount of data for the user, but likes, reach, and engagement are most present in many of the views on Insights. Metrics can the seen as a page overview, but also on a per post basis, which is useful in determining what content works best with the company's audience. In addition to the general social media metrics, Insights also provides highly detailed data of the page audience, or people who have liked the company Facebook page. This includes data such as page visitor age, sex, location, page visit times, and various other data, which can be used in social media planning but also in other marketing purposes. Facebook Insights also works well together with Facebooks advertising platform and includes also some metrics from Instagram since it is also Facebook-owned. (Fontein 2016.)

Instagram Insights

As of now, Instagram Insights is only available through the official Instagram app and provides relatively few metrics to track. Instagram Insights presents the user with a general overview that includes impressions, reach, profile views in addition to link, phone number, or other company data clicks. More detailed data is only available on a per post or story basis. This data includes likes, comments, engagement in addition to the metrics mentioned earlier. Some follower data is also presented to the user. This includes the number of followers, sex distribution, age ranges, locations and typical usage times. In addition to the post and follower metrics, Instagram Insights has a promotional post feature that works through Facebooks advertising platform, but not much else making it quite limited if compared to the vast amount of metrics available through Facebook. (Facebook 2017.)

YouTube Analytics

YouTube Analytics is a part of YouTube Creator Studio and provides a vast amount of metrics like Google Analytics, but with a focus KPIs more related to video material. The YouTube Analytics platform van be used to track the regular array of social media engagement actions such as likes, dislikes, comments, shares, and subscribers (followers) in addition to demographic data and traffic sources. The video content specific KPIs are the highlight of YouTube Analytics. Average view duration and average percentage viewed KPIs are important since it gives some insight in determining which type of videos

retain the most viewers the longest. They also double as guidelines of how long is the attention span of the viewers, which can be used to determine the optimal length for videos. Since YouTube is a Google-owned service, YouTube Analytics data can be integrated to some extent with Google Analytics data. (YouTube Help Centre 2017.)

Twitter Analytics

Twitter Analytics is the analytics platform of Twitter, which offers the tools to track the success of the activity down to a per tweet basis. Regular social media metrics such as impressions, engagements, likes, several types of clicks are available. Twitter shares a lot of KPIs with other social media but has one distinct KPI called a retweet. Retweets are comparable to shares on other social media. Twitter Analytics also provides audience insights such as follower growth, follower interests, and demographics. (Twitter Inc. 2017.)

2.4.3 Summary of social media metrics

In chapter 2.4, the concept of key performance indicators (KPIs) was explained more thoroughly and five distinct categories for KPIs was introduced to provide insight on how to utilize them. The five categories were; social media presence, engagement, reach and influence, goal completion and ROI, and internal KPIs. Some KPIs for each category was explained to provide some information on key metrics to track and subchapter 2.4.2 introduced some tools for tracking the metrics on each platform.

2.5 Summary of social media marketing

This chapter of social media marketing discussed what are the benefits and challenges of social media marketing for business purposes, 2017 trends in social media, engagement in social media, the meaning of content marketing and cross promotion in terms of social media marketing, and finally, explained the planning and strategy process and key performance indicators more in detail. In 2017, the growth of social media continues at a brisk pace and it can be said that it is quite clear that it is here to stay (Statista 2017). This means businesses should have a presence in social media or at least start creating one since more and more potential customers are online. Social media marketing might provide smaller businesses a way to affordably market their products or even sell them directly through the platform (Holmes 2017). Social media platforms being free to use provides many of the smaller companies a way to have a possibility to relatively affordable marketing, but it is necessary to take the time used for social media efforts into account when judging if the efforts are worth the returns (Barker & al. 2008). Paid or sponsored social media posts are also rising in popularity, which in turn makes it difficult than a few years past to reach new customers, but social media platforms are still a great platform to reach out to current customers (Holmes 2017).

In chapter 2.3 six steps, or rather a cycle with six stages, was presented to shed light on how to approach social media planning and what factors are needed to be considered to create a proper, fully encompassing strategy. One key aspect to keep in mind is that since social media are in constant change and the opinions and preferences of the social media audience can change very quickly, the planning process must be kept on going and ready to react to the changes. One of the most important parts in the social media planning process is the goals and objective stages because they are what the success of social media efforts are measured against through various key performance indicators discussed in chapter 2.4. The basics social media marketing chapter should give the reader a clear idea why social media marketing is important, how to approach strategy and planning, and finally how to measure the success of the efforts.

3 Benchmarking

In this chapter, social media efforts of brands like Forsman tea will be benchmarked and studied to get some insight into what actions and content work the best for an audience interested in tea and tea-related accessories. Benchmarking refers to comparing processes, performance, and actions of other companies to learn what works well and could be implemented in the company's own strategy, but also what should be avoided (Raghupathi 2017). The information gathered through benchmarking will be used later in chapter 5 together with the results of the survey and theory to create suggestions for Forsman tea.

3.1 Company selection

Two companies in different countries was selected for benchmarking purposes. Since Forsman tea is a tea importer who mixes its own loose leaf tea blends and focuses more on the enthusiast side of the tea business, companies who operate similarly would be the best benchmarking targets. During discussions with Forsman tea, a French tea house Mariage Fréres was brought up as a similar company, but upon initial research, the company is only present on Facebook which is not ideal. A well-known UK-based tea company Twinings Tea was chosen instead. While Twinings Tea operates on the mass market end of the tea industry unlike Forsman tea, has the company a notable presence on the four social media platforms chosen for this study, which makes it a good target to find some insight into Forsman teas social media efforts. Twinings Tea has multiple social media accounts that could be analyzed, but for the sake of simplicity the UK account will be used since that is the home market for the company.

The other company chosen for the benchmarking is a UK-based company Clipper Teas, which was chosen based on their visual appeal on various social media platforms. Like Twinings Tea, Clipper Teas has a good presence the four social media platforms. To give some scale on the size of the social media audience, Twinings Tea, Clipper Tea, and Forsman tea have around 225 000, 40 000, and 3 700 Facebook followers, respectively.

3.2 Evaluation topics and tools

The benchmarking will mainly focus on examining the type of content, posting frequency, and engagement but also some platform specific items. The analysis will be mainly done by inspecting the various social media of the two companies apart from Facebook where a third-party tool LikeAlyzer by Meltwater is used to aid the benchmarking. Because Facebook is the most popular social media platform as of 2017 (Statista 2017), will the social media efforts on that platform receive more attention than the other three.

For analyzing social media efforts, Hannay (2015) provides some suggestions for where to focus:

Facebook

- Follower count
- Type of content
- Is content from internal (created by the company or linking to company's webpage) or external sources or a combination of the two
- Posting frequency
- How much engagement posts receive
- Does the company run games, polls, or contests

YouTube

- Type and focus of video content (I. e. do the videos focus the products or branding)
- Subscriber count
- Video engagement

Instagram

- Follower count
- Number of accounts followed
- Internal or external content
- Does content promote brand image (lifestyle) or products

Twitter

- Follower count
- Number of accounts followed
- Content of posts
- Internal or external content
- Post engagement

LikeAlyzer is a free tool that can be used to analyze Facebook pages. LikeAlyzer can provide insight on page performance, posts by pages, posts by other people on the page, page comparison to similar brands and averages in the same industry, and lastly some simple recommendations based on the previous insights. Page performance KPIs used by LikeAlyzer are likes, likes growth, PTAT (actions that result in a news feed story on Facebook such as likes, shares, comments, tags, and most other engagement related to the page), and engagement rate. Posts by pages metrics include posting frequency, likes, comments and shares per post, posts per type, timing, and post length. (Meltwater 2016.)

3.3 Benchmarking by platform

In this subchapter, the social media efforts of the two companies chosen earlier, Twinings Tea and Clipper Teas will be analyzed. The analysis is divided into four parts, a chapter per social media platform since doing it this way allows easier comparison between the two companies.

3.3.1 Facebook

On Facebook, Twinings Tea has over 225 000 followers, which is a relatively large following given the audience size of Clipper Teas and case company Forsman tea. Interestingly the company's posts get 147 likes, comments, and shares on average, which is quite little taken the follower count into account. LikeAlyzer reports the engagement rate to be as low as 0.28%, which is not much considering the tool suggests the engagement rate should be 7% or greater to reach success. LikeAlyzer also reports the posting frequency to be roughly two posts per week, which is lower than the minimum three posts per week as suggested by Ellering (2016). Even though the number of posts is lower than recommended, the timing is good and the posts are published when the followers are most active, as reported by LikeAlyzer. Content-wise, Twinings Tea seems to focus mostly on video content (58.3%) followed by photos (37.5%) with only a fraction of content (4.2%) being links to internal or external content. Even though LikeAlyzer reports the amount of links to be quite small, many of the photo and video posts do include a link to the company webpage, but the link is in the post text instead of being shown as a link the way Facebook links are usually shared. This way Twinings Tea can get the audience's attention by having a large image or video instead of the relatively small image the regular link preview has and still provide interested customers a link to the company webpage.

Majority of the content posted on Twinings Tea page seems to be internal content show-casing the company's products. Interestingly a lot of the recent content is slideshow-type videos promoting company products in various settings, oftentimes just showing an image of the product showcased with a colorful changing background, which is quite noticeable. The photos and videos always have the product package in it with a cup of tea and a fruit or other edible items depending on the flavor of the product. For example, a post promoting lemon tea has the colorful product packaging in it, a clear cup with lemon tea showcasing the color of the tea, and a bowl with lemons. This gives the viewers a good idea of what the post is about even if they see only a glance of it. Even though the company has a large following on Facebook, the posts get a relatively small number of likes (100-200 per post) and comments (20 to 60). Twinings Tea does not run any contests or polls and rarely encourages people to engage in the posts.

Clipper Teas has a Facebook following of 42 000, which is remarkably smaller than what Twinings Teas has, but still over ten times what the case company has. However, like the case with Twinings, likes, comments, and shares per post and engagement rate is quite low given the audience size, 60 and 0.86% respectively. Clipper Teas posts on the almost once a day, which is above the minimum of three as suggested by Ellering (2016), but the timing is lightly off. LikeAlyzer reports that most posts (91.7%) are photos with the rest being videos. Clipper Teas seems to utilize the same practice with links Twinings Tea uses, which is to not share links like Facebook would normally show them and instead attain the

audiences interest with a large photo and leave the link in the post text. Clipper Teas also utilizes hashtags on Facebook while Twinings Tea does not. While hashtags are supported by Facebook, are they more commonly seen on Instagram or Twitter.

Like with Twinings Tea, Clipper Teas also utilizes the visual appeal of the product packages in its posts, oftentimes accompanied with a cup of tea. However, compared to Twinings Tea, the images look less professional and processed, which gives Clipper Teas a more down-to-earth feel. Many of the photos are also credited to the company's Instagram followers, which makes a nice balance with internal and external content while simultaneously promoting the company's products. Clipper Teas seems to run contests on their Facebook page occasionally. These contests do get more likes and comments than the average, which indicates that running contests do engage the customers more than a regular post.

Key takeaway from analyzing Twinings Tea and Clipper Teas Facebook efforts is to create a consistent posting strategy with posts scheduled to times where the customers are most active on Facebook. Content-wise, creating a recognizable style where the company's products are featured seems to attract the most engagement. When sharing links, sharing them in the post text accompanied by a photo or video is utilized by both companies and does attract the viewers' attention seemingly better than just sharing the link the regular way Facebook links would be shared. Utilizing follower's photos from the platform or from other social media such as Instagram do promote a feel that the company takes the customers into account and values the content they create. Occasionally running contests might also be useful in creating more engagement than the average post, which leads to a larger reach.

3.3.2 YouTube

On YouTube Twinings Tea has roughly 5 000 subscribers. The first noticeable thing when looking at all the videos is that there is quite long time between the videos are posted, and when they are, there is usually three or more videos, which suggests that Twinings Tea does not have a regular video production schedule. Instead, the company posts videos on the platform as they are ready and leave them there for people to watch, promoting them through other social media platforms. The videos have generally around a thousand views each, which is not much considering the amount of YouTube subscribers and the large Facebook audience. The general engagement on Twinings Tea's YouTube channel is almost nonexistent. The videos have only two to three comments, if any. Based on the current state of the channel, it seems to only exist for having a presence on YouTube. Con-

tent-wise, the channel consists of adverts, which do have around half the views of the average video on the channel but there is also tea-brewing instructions and different tea types introduced in a form of a tasting video, which seem to be the most popular videos.

Clipper Teas YouTube efforts fall into the same category as Twinings Tea's attempt. The channel has nearly 700 subscribers, almost as much as Twinings Tea, which is interesting given the latter ones much larger following on Facebook. The videos have views ranging from a thousand to ten thousand views with a few videos reaching more than 200 000 views and the most viewed video reaching almost a million views. Even though the videos have respectable amounts of views, the engagement is minimal. Even the most viewed video has less than ten comments and only 50 likes. Almost all the channels videos are adverts, which might explain the low engagement. The unusually high view counts on some of the videos compared to the rest suggests the videos have once been a part of a paid advertising campaign at some point. As of March 2017, the newest video is a year old, and the others are older than two years is also a clear sign that Clipper Teas focuses its social media efforts on other channels.

Both benchmarking companies have chosen to treat YouTube as secondary to other social media and only posting some material on them to keep up the presence on the platform. Adverts could be posted on YouTube, but if that is all the content, it most likely will not attract much engagement based on the two YouTube pages analyzed.

3.3.3 Instagram

On Instagram Twinings Tea has 23 000 followers and is following roughly 130 accounts. The posts generally get between 200 to 600 likes, which is not much considering the follower count. On average, the posts get only a couple of comments. The number of likes and especially comments suggests the company's followers are not especially active or interested in content Twinings Tea publishes. The company does not seem to have a consistent posting strategy on Instagram either as it posts new content only once or twice a week, which is less than the suggested three while once a day would be optimal (Ellering 2016). The content is mostly internal following the style of images and videos used on Facebook, which focus on showcasing the company's products, with the occasional photo from an event the company was at. There are no photos from the company's followers and there is rarely people shown on them. Twinings Tea does not also utilize hashtags on their posts save for the event related ones.

Clipper Teas has 16 400 followers and is following 370 accounts. On average, the posts get around 300 likes and ten comments. Like on Facebook, Clipper Teas often shares content by the created company's followers, which makes the Instagram page feel more

natural compared to the relatively corporate feel of Twinings Teas Instagram page. While Twinings has chosen to mostly focus on showcasing products, Clipper Teas gone with a strategy of posting both content showcasing the products but also using lifestyle photos every now and then. Interestingly, content where the company's products are in the spotlight get more likes and more comments, which suggests the company followers are more interested in commenting on the products instead of the lifestyle. Clipper Teas keeps up a consistent posting schedule with new content almost daily and does utilize relevant hashtags wherever possible.

Key takeaway from Instagram benchmarking is that content used on Facebook can also be used on Instagram. Doing so makes the brand image consistent across both social media while also reducing the amount of content needed to create. A consistent posting schedule also helps to keep up the customer engagement and utilizing relevant hashtags can be useful. Clipper Teas' utilization content created by followers seems make the channel less corporate in comparison to Twinings Tea, which might affect how the customers see the company. While creating both product-centric and lifestyle-type content can increase the variety of content posted on the platform, testing what type of content is generally received better by the followers should be done to create enjoyable content.

3.3.4 Twitter

Twinings Teas has 41 000 followers on Twitter and is following 3 400 accounts. The content on Twitter is content mirrored from Facebook with the addition of retweeting (sharing) tweets from users featuring the company products. Like on Facebook and Instagram, the company does not utilize hashtags on Twitter either, but does engage with the customers more by replying to tweets directed to the company providing customer service.

Clipper Teas has 20 000 followers on Twitter and is following around a thousand accounts. Like seen on Facebook and Instagram, the company often shares photos taken by the company followers in addition to their own content, which is mostly same content used on Facebook and Instagram. Clipper Teas does also utilize the retweet feature like Twinings Tea, but in addition to sharing posts featuring the company products they also occasionally retweet relevant content, which does not promote the company itself. Like Twinings Tea, Clipper Teas utilizes Twitter as a channel for customer service.

Analyzing the two companies' efforts in social media suggests that using the same content created for Facebook and Instagram can be utilized on Twitter, which helps cutting down on time spend creating content. Sharing or retweeting content that feature company products can be done, but Clipper Teas actions suggest that sharing industry relevant

content is also interesting. In addition to posting and retweeting content in Twitter, the actions of both companies benchmarked suggests that Twitter is a good channel for customer service.

3.4 Summary of benchmarking

This chapter benchmarked the social media efforts of two UK based companies, Twinings Tea and Clipper Teas. Analyzing the efforts on the four social media platforms used in this study provided some useful insight that can be used later in chapter five to provide useful suggestions for the case company Forsman tea. The main takeaways for each platform were summarized at the end of each platform analyzes.

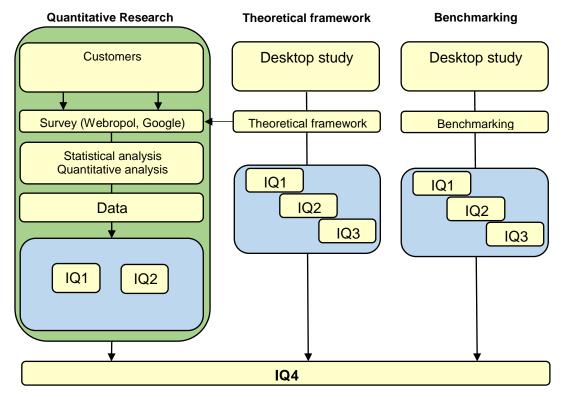
4 Research methods and results

This chapter will explain why the research was done, what research methods were used in this study, what were the goals and targets for the research, how it was designed, and what were the research results.

4.1 Purpose and approach of the research

The theoretical framework and benchmarking can be used as general guidelines to base the suggestions on in chapter five. However, there can be differences in the preferences of the company's customers compared to the general social media user base. To provide accurate suggestions, must the actual social media preferences of the case company's customers be researched. The type of social media content they prefer, how often do they want to see the content, which channels they prefer, and related questions about social media is most relevant to this study.

The approach for the research is quantitative. Quantitative research can be defined as "research involving the administration of a set of structured questions with predetermined response options to a large number of respondents" (Burns & Bush 2014, 118). For this study, a quantitative research approach works better because data, which can be compiled and categorized in numerical terms is more useful in creating a social media plan in the proper scale required represent the whole customer base. With qualitative research, the effort needed to gather and analyze a similar amount of responses is much bigger. For this study, quantitative research is the most efficient way of gathering a general opinion of the masses given the relative simplicity of the questions. Structured questions with predetermined answers allows the data gathered to be represented in numerical terms, which helps reducing the customer's preferences into simple, easily understandable figures. (Burns & Bush 2014, 118-120.)



RQ: How can Forsman Tea use social media as a tool to increase visibility in the B2C sector?

- IQ 1. What is the current state of social media usage in the case company?
- IQ 2. What content and elements are other tea houses using in their social media (benchmarking)?
- IQ 3. What social media metrics are the most useful in measuring marketing effectiveness for Forsman Tea?
- IQ 4. What are the recommended actions for the case company?

Figure 6. Research methods.

Figure 6 above explains the research process and its role in the study. The quantitative research is conducted on customers on social media, and on walk-in customers at the case company's store. The research is in a form of a survey, which is built on the investigative questions and the theoretical framework. The survey results is analyzed and the data is used to get some knowledge needed to answer investigative questions one and two. In the meanwhile, benchmarking other companies' social media efforts is be done. The quantitative research and benchmarking is backed by the theoretical framework and these three in combination is used to form and answer to the final investigative question, or the recommendations for the case company Forsman tea.

4.2 Research target group

The best target group to acquire the information are customers who know the company and are active in social media since they have some insight of the company's current social media efforts. Other reliable sources of information are customers who visit the company's own location because they are direct customers, which the company wishes to at-

tract more through social media. Input from these customers is valuable because the location of the store is not exactly in the most accessible place and it takes effort to come there, which means the customers are willing to take the effort to get there. While customers who deal, or have dealt with the case company directly are the best informants in my opinion, '3rd party' customers are also valuable as case company is a wholesaler, and '3rd party' customers buy case company products through retailers. These 'casual' customers might provide a different view of the company compared to direct customers.

The target audience of the quantitative research to will provide valuable information to base the suggested actions to the case company. The data will act as a guideline in the suggestions in terms of what type of content and platforms the customers will see as most valuable. This information crucial in creating the suggestions for the company as they can be tailored per the customer preferences. The suggestions will be the result from combining theory and benchmarking to customer preferences.

To reach the target group, the survey will be distributed primarily through Forsman teas email newsletter, but also social media channels out of which Facebook will be the main distribution channel. On-site surveying at the store will be prepared for if needed.

4.3 Research design

Chapters 2 and 3 provide insight on how social media planning should be done and measured, and how similar brands abroad approach social media strategy and content-wise. While that information is important and can provide some direction of what generally works best, it is crucial to have data of the actual customer base of the case company, Forsman tea, to provide accurate suggestions in chapter 5. The survey was designed to complement chapter 2, theoretical framework, and augment chapter 3, benchmarking. The theoretical framework part of this study will provide insight on how to create, implement, and monitor a social media plan. Benchmarking and the research survey will provide and answer of what type of content should be included in the plan, and where to direct most of the social media efforts. The survey also acts as an indicator of Forsman teas current social media efforts.

For the data collection method for this research, an online survey-type method was chosen. According to Burns and Bush (2014, 144), surveys are "interviews with a large number of respondents using a predesigned questionnaire". These interviews can be administered by interviewers, but also remotely with computers or other devices. Survey-type research was chosen due to being able to take advantage of standardization, ease of administration, and the resulting data being more suitable for statistical analysis. The survey

will be done on Webropol, which is an online computer assisted survey platform. Computer assisted surveys have and advantage of being a quicker, easier way for the potential respondents to take part in the survey requiring somewhat minimal effort. (Burns and Bush 2014, 144-150.)

4.4 Survey design

To gain information on what social media the customers are most present in, a simple "Do you use Facebook/YouTube/Instagram/Twitter" question was included in the survey. The respondents could choose yes or no for each platform. This provides a quick way to gauge which social media might reach the most audience. An open answer box was also provided if any other social media outside the four this study focuses on will arise. Chapter 2.3.4 discussed social media tactics including posting frequency on the different social media platforms. The general guidelines will likely work for most audiences, but to gain insight on what is the actual preference of Forsman tea customers, a question to directly address posting frequency preferences was created.

One main goal of the research was to map the type of content the customers prefer because content is in the spotlight on social media. A matrix question with various content examples was created for each of this study's social media platform (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter). The different content categories were based on typical types of content posted on each platform in addition to some industry specific flavor. The answering options were from one to five, or from least liked to most liked. If the survey respondent was not familiar with the platform, six or "Cannot answer" was also a possible answer. Disabling the possibility to answer to a matrix question completely if the answer to the first question (Do you use platform X) was negative was considered, but ultimately decided against because a respondent could have used the platform in the past even if the person was not using it currently. Each platform specific matrix question was also followed by an open answer box if the respondent had other suggestions than the options mentioned in the matrix.

The three previous questions were the most important in terms of the study. The survey also included basic questions about demographics, such as age, sex, and location in addition to some customer research questions Forsman tea wanted to include. These questions provided answers to if the respondents had bought Forsman tea products, and if yes, where did they buy them. Additionally, the possibility to provide open feedback, or join the company newsletter were included. A copy of the final survey is included in the appendices.

Webropol was chosen as the tool to build the survey form and gather the responses. Google Forms was considered as an alternative, but Webropol ended as the tool used because it allows a wider variety of question types, the possibility to make the survey match the brand image of the company, and easier exporting options for the data. Before the survey was sent out, it was tested by the case company representative at their store location and slight changes in the wording of some questions was done.

For the number of survey respondents, an estimated 200 replies would be sufficient to be able to analyze the general opinions and preferences of the case company's target audience. Even though many replies would be better in terms of the quality of the data, the general opinion and the preferences of the target audience could be gathered even from 100 responses. There is no upper limit for the number of responders.

To ensure the survey would get enough results, an incentive to answer was provided by Forsman tea. Incentives are "are offers to do something for the respondent to increase the probability that the respondent will participate in the survey" (Burns and Bush 2014, 196). By leaving an email address to the provided space at the end of the survey, the respondent could have a chance to win a product set worth 50€ in a lottery. The winner of the lottery was chosen at random from the pool of email addresses. These addresses were only used for the lottery purposes.

4.5 Research results

The survey was open for ten days and gathered 927 replies during the period. The number of replies greatly exceeded the target of 200 replies set in chapter 4.4. Total survey link clicks were tracked through URL-shortener service Bitly according to which the survey link was opened 1282 times. These numbers yield a 72.31% completion rate for the survey. Survey data was exported from Webropol and processed with Excel to get the research results in a more understandable, consolidated form.

The main concern in terms of the reliability and validity of the research was the number of survey responses. If the number of responses would have been low, could there have been the possibility of the data leaning towards the preferences of a small part percentage of the company's customer base, which might not represent the customer base as whole. However, this was avoided since the number of replies is large enough to represent the whole customer base of the company.

4.5.1 Demographics

The average age for a survey respondent was 42.91, which coincidentally is close also the median age for the survey (43). Standard deviation is 13.66, which means most the respondents are roughly between 30 and 55 years old. The youngest respondent was 14 and the oldest 84, which makes the age range quite wide.

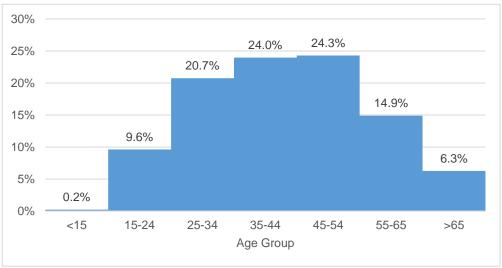


Figure 7. Survey respondent age distribution.

Figure 7 above depicts the age distribution of the survey respondents. By a tiny margin, most the respondents were from 45 to 54 years old. This age group is almost a quarter of the respondents (24.3%). The second largest age group is people between 35 to 44 years old, which makes up to 24% of the total number of respondents. The third largest group is 25-34 (20.7%) followed by 55-65 (14.9%). Interestingly younger people (15-24) who are generally more present in social media accounted only for 9.6% of the total number of respondents.

Majority of the 927 respondents were female, as depicted in Figure 8 below. The female respondents accounted for over 85% (85.22%) of the total number of respondents leaving only 13.48% for the male respondents, which is an indicator that majority of the social media users of Forsman tea are female. Some respondents chose to not to disclose their sex.

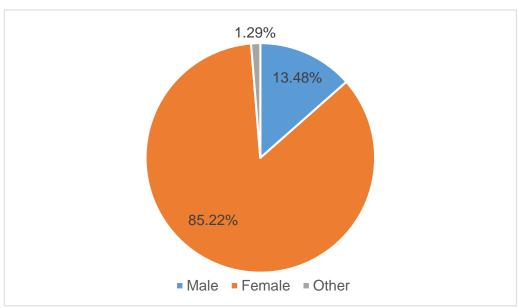


Figure 8. Survey sex distribution.

In conclusion, combining the information of the median age and sex distribution of the survey implies that the average social media user of Forsman tea is a 43-year-old female. This should be considered in the social media planning phase.

4.5.2 Use and frequency

The social media channel usage provides much more useful information in terms of investigative question 1 and chapter 5 suggestions. According to Figure 9 below, majority of the survey respondents (83%) are on Facebook. This is not surprising since Facebook is the biggest social media platform and has the largest penetration of any social media (Statista 2017).

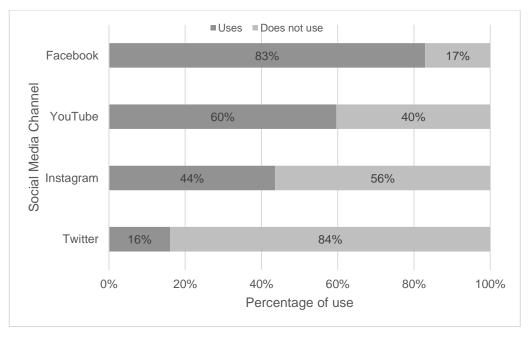


Figure 9. Social media presence of survey respondents.

Out of the four social media platforms presented in this survey, was YouTube the second most popular with 60% of the respondents using the platform. 44% of the respondents were also on Instagram, which means the platform has traction with Forsman tea customers, but there is room to improve. Only 16% of survey respondents use Twitter - an alarmingly low percentage. With such a low usage-percentage among customers, it could be time to move focus and resources from Twitter to other social media. In the open answers, Snapchat, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp were mentioned multiple times and could be marketing platforms to be considered in future social media planning. Multiple respondents also mentioned they are not on any social media platform and would like to see more content on the company webpage instead.

The frequency of customer visits on different social media platforms can be used to determine how often content could be posted on each platform without being annoying while providing fresh content often enough (Houssem 2016). Figure 10 below shows how often survey respondents, and by extension Forsman tea customers visit each platform. Possible answers for frequency were; more than six times a day, 2-5 times a day, once a day, a couple times a week, and lastly, rarely. An additional sixth option, "I don't use" was provided for people who did not use the given platform. This sixth option is not included in Figure 10 to focus on social media users since the study is about social media.

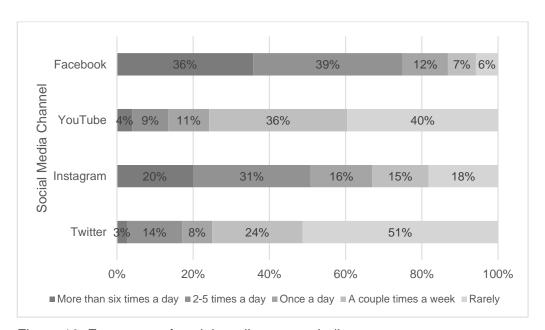


Figure 10. Frequency of social media use, excluding non-users.

Out of the four social media platforms Facebook and Instagram were frequented most often. 87% of Facebook users used the platform at least once a day, 39% 2-5 times, and over a third (36%) more often than six times a day. For Instagram, the percentages are 67%, 31%, and 20%, respectively. Only 13% of Facebook (33% of Instagram) users visit the platform less often than once a day.

Frequency of use for YouTube differs quite a lot from Facebook and Instagram, most likely because it differs from the other platforms focusing only on video content. 24% of YouTube users visit the platform once a day or more often, 36% couple times a week, and 40% less often than that. Disinterest towards Twitter can also be seen from Figure 10. As seen on Figure 9, only 16% of the total number of respondents use the platform in the first place. Figure 10 shows that out of the 16% who use the platform, the majority (51%) use it rarely. 24% announced they use the platform a couple times a week. Combined, 75% of the platform users use the platform less often than daily which would mean the suggested 15 Twitter posts a day (Ellering 2016) from chapter 2.3.4 would be unseen. Only 25% of the already small number of users use the platform once a day or more often.

Figure 11 below represents how often survey respondents would like to see new content on each platform. Out of Facebook users, 21% would like to see new content once a day or more often. 34% replied that one to three times a week is enough. Interestingly, 34% replied once a week would be the ideal for them, which goes against Ellerings (2016) suggestions. Majority of YouTube users (51%) thing new content to YouTube can be posted less often than once a week while 30% would like to see new content once a week and 19% would like to see content posted more often than once a week.

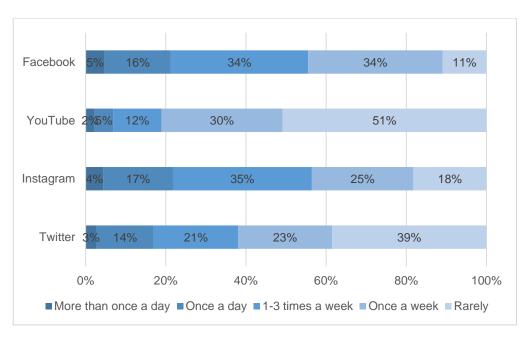


Figure 11. How often would customers want to see new content on each platform.

Frequency of new content posted for Instagram is almost identical to Facebook. Once a day or more often got 21% of replies, one to three times a week 35%, and 43% would prefer once a week or less often. Out of Twitter users 17% want to see content at least once a day, 21% one to three times a week, 23% once a week and the majority (39%) rarely.

In conclusion Facebook is clearly the platform the respondents, and by extension Forsman tea customers, are most present on based on the percentage of the respondents

on the platform, but also by how often the platform is visited. The frequency of Instagram use is somewhat like Facebook use, but only half of the respondents using the platform altogether. YouTube is the second most common platform respondents use, but is visited less often. Both customer presence and frequency of use is clearly less in case of Twitter.

4.5.3 Content preferences

In a matrix question form, different content options were provided and asked to be rated from one to five, five being the most preferred type and one the least preferred. This was done to gain insight on what type of content is most preferred on each platform.

Table 2 below represents survey respondent's content preferences on different social media platforms. In general, contests, recipes, product presentations, and news were the most interesting content. On Facebook, the most liked type of content is contests (4.03) followed by photos (3.94), news (3.76), articles (3.47), text (3.25), video (2.89), and blogs (2.83). Contests being regarded as the best type of content is not too surprising because there is the chance of getting something for free. The most interesting result is relative disinterest in video content over other content types considering video content generally has been increasing in popularity during the recent years with the current trend moving towards live streaming (Bernazzani 2017). This could be explained by the relatively old audience with 60% being 35 years old or older. Open answers for Facebook content specifically requested for more recipes, offers, and tea related tips.

Table 2. Social media content preferences (5 – most, 1 – least preferred).

Facebook		YouTube		Instagram	Twitter		
Con-	4.03	How-to-vid-	3.70	Contests	3.83	News	3.57
tests		eos					
Photos	3.94	Recipes	3.61	Serving sug-	3.75	Con-	3.49
				gestions		tests	
News	3.76	Product	3.61	Product	3.67	Text	3.31
		presentations		presentations			
Articles	3.47	Behind-the-	2.95	Behind-the-	3.22	Photos	3.26
		scenes		scenes			
Text	3.25	Event cover-	2.70	Lifestyle-pho-	3.07	Articles	3.16
		age		tos			
Video	2.89	Video blogs	2.46	Content from	2.94	Videos	2.64
				followers			
Blogs	2.83			Videos	2.79		

The most preferred content on YouTube according to the respondents is how-to-videos (3.70), recipes (3.61), and product presentations (3.61). After the first three, a relatively big drop in interest can be seen with behind-the-scenes, event coverage, and video blogs with all of them having a score under three. On Instagram, respondents prefer contests (3.83), serving suggestions (3.75), and product presentations (3.67) over other types of content. Like with Facebook, the respondents regarded videos the least preferred content,

which again, is interesting considering the overall increasing popularity of video content. On Twitter, the most preferred content is news (3.57), contests (3.49), text (3.31), photos (3.26), articles (3.16), and after a slight drop, videos (2.64). Twitter content was also rated slightly lower than similar content on other platforms

In conclusion, contests, recipes, product presentations, and news were generally regarded as the most interesting content according to the survey results. One notable difference between social media users in general, and Forsman tea customers is that the latter seem to not care too much about video content on the platforms (excluding YouTube).

4.6 Summary of research methods and results

When creating the survey to conduct the customer research was the main concern the validity of the research if the number of respondents would have ended up being minimal. Fortunately, Forsman teas customers responded to the survey well, which might partly be explained by the quite generous incentive offered by the company. The survey got enough replies to be considered valid to represent the customer base. Through the data analysis, valuable information regarding the social media preferences was gained and summarized into easily readable charts or tables. This data will be used in chapter 5 to guide the suggestions provided for the case company, but also made available for the case company for their own purposes. The most interesting information regarding the suggestions is, which platforms do most of the customers use, frequency of the content, and what type of content is preferred.

5 Discussion

This chapter will provide some suggestions for the study's case company Forsman tea. The suggestions are created based social media theory from chapter 2, benchmarking and the key takeaways from the analysis done in chapter 3, and the research of the case company's customers social media preferences done in chapter four. The chapter will begin with general suggestions mostly derived from social media theory to lay down some groundwork on how social media planning should be approached in general and what should be considered. The decision to summarize the theoretical framework in the suggestions was done because during the discussions with Forsman tea, the company representative told that while the company is active in social media, they do not have a set plan on how to implement social media strategies. The general suggestions are followed by platform specific suggestions, which will also draw some insight from the social media theory but more importantly, will utilize what was discovered in chapters three and four. Finally, some suggestions for further analysis will be provided followed by reflection of the thesis process.

5.1 General suggestions

Having a clear idea about a planning process and what a good plan should include, Forsman tea should consider following the planning process explained in chapter 2. Chapter 2.3 presented two similar approaches to social media planning and strategy, one from Barker & al. (2008, 26) and a similar from Smith (2013). Both approaches are depicted as continuous cycles because social media platforms keep evolving and changing and are highly reactive, which means the plans and strategies must be kept up to date. The different states are briefly summarized below into brief, concise actions according to chapter 2.3;

Situational analysis

Map out where the company is currently standing in social media by researching current social media trends, analyzing competition on social, and customer behavior, preferences and needs. The results of a SWOT analysis can provide pointers on what company features to promote.

Goals and objectives

Define what is wanted to achieve with social media marketing. Create goals that follow the SMART framework introduced in chapter 2.3.2 by LePage (2016) and ensure the goals are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time bound.

Strategy

Choose a strategy for social media marketing based on the goals and objectives set. One strategy can address multiple goals. The eight Cs by Barker & al. (2008, 35) is a useful guideline for what different strategies can contain. The eight Cs are; categorize, comprehend, converse, collaborate, contribute, connect, community, and convert. Since social media are prone to change, readiness to adapt and change strategies is crucial.

Tactics

Define how strategies are going to be implemented; define what type of content will be used on each platform and its timing, frequency, and key performance indicators for tracking the success of the strategies. The content, frequency, timing, and KPIs will be addressed more in-depth in chapter 5.2, platform specific suggestions. Creating a content marketing plan is a useful tool to utilize for planning tactics.

Actions

Define who does what and when. LePage (2016) and Kolowich (2016) suggest using an editorial calendar to keep track on content creation and posting times and responsibilities. Start implementing the strategies.

Control

Track the success of the strategies based on the goals and key performance indicators decided on earlier. Adjust and adapt the strategies to the situation and hand.

Having the social media planning process written down can make it easier to organize social media efforts especially if one person is mainly responsible of the planning and there are other people executing it. Going through the planning process also helps to clarify what is being done and what is the purpose of certain strategies and tactics. Regularly following how the strategies are doing in terms of the goals is crucial since if the progress is not kept track of doing changes to steer the strategies to the right direction is impossible.

5.2 Platform specific suggestions

In this chapter, platform specific suggestions will be created based on benchmarking and survey results from chapters three and four. Useful key performance indicators from chapter 2.4 will also be included.

5.2.1 Facebook

According to the research done in chapter four, the survey results indicate that Facebook is the social media platform majority of the company's customers use, and frequent the

most often. Based on that, most of the social media efforts should be directed to this social media channel. According to the survey 87% of customers using Facebook frequent the platform once a day or more often, which provides the opportunity provide new content at least once a day or sometimes even more often as suggested by Ellering (2016). However, only 5% of the company's customers prefer content more often than once a day with 34% of the customers preferring new content one to three times a week. A good compromise would be to capitalize on the high percentage of customers on the platform would be to post new content once a day as Ellering suggests. Since 34% would like to see content one to three times a week more than that is pushing the preference of those people aside, but the number of posts can be dialled back if required. The optimal times to post the content can be seen from the Audience tab on the company's Facebook Insights. Even though the times most customers are present on Facebook are available through Insights, testing the times provided by Ellerings research should be tested to see if posting at those times influence engagement. Posting times provided by Ellering are; between 13-16 late into the week the best times being Saturday and Sunday 12-13, Thursday and Friday 13-16, and Wednesday at 15. Outside the previously mentioned times and days, the recommended times are at 9, 13, and 15.

As for the content, the customers deemed contests on Facebook the most preferred type of content. However, running contests every day is not the ideal option budget-wise, limiting the number of contests to once or twice a month would be a good option. Running them relatively rarely would also keep the interest to participate in the contest higher since they would not be a common occurrence. The second most preferred type of content according to the customers was photos. This would mean photos should be the most common type of posts since contest should be run relatively seldom. The benchmarking results for Facebook from chapter three suggest that when the purpose of the photo is to showcase company products, it can be beneficial to include the product (tea) packaging in the photo. If the photo would be of a certain kind of loose leaf tea Forsman tea sells, including the product packaging in the image would tell the customers what to look for if buying the product from somewhere else than from the flagship store. The benchmarking results also suggest that content, mainly photos, created by customers is well received. One of the companied benchmarked used a mix of product/company-centric and lifestyle photos, which increases the variety of content but since the lifestyle photos did not generally do well compared to other content, should Forsman tea test how the customers react to these kinds of photos. Combining the two into one photo i.e. a lifestyle photo with company products highly visible is an option to be explored.

Since photos are well-received by the customers, and the companies benchmarked use a relevant photo to accompany a link to webpage, news, or text post, should Forsman tea also consider adopting this custom especially if the content is internal i.e. by the company.

External links, news, and similar can be posted in a regular manner. Even though the Facebook users of Forsman tea customers did not seem to care too much about video content according to the survey should the possibilities of video content and live streaming for the company be explored at least on a basic level since a major social media trend for 2017 video and live streaming content (Bernazzani 2017) as discussed in chapter 2.1.3.

Out of the key performance indicators discussed in chapter 2.4, likes, reach, and engagement including likes, comments, shares, and other actions are the most important in determining the success of the Facebook page or any given post (Fontein 2016). Especially comparing the reach of a post to post engagement is important in determining how interested of the content the audience is. The overall number of Facebook followers and to, which direction the follower count is heading is a good indicator on how the company's Facebook page is seen. The suggested tool to track Facebook metrics is the tool provided by the platform itself, Facebook Insights. The tool provides all the needed metrics on a page and post level and comes with powerful advertising features built in.

5.2.2 YouTube

According to the survey and figure 9 in chapter 4.4.2, 60% of Forsman tea customers use YouTube most of them visiting the platform a couple times a week. According to customer's content frequency preferences most do not expect content posted on the platform often but a sizeable percentage (30%) would like to see new content weekly. However, it is noteworthy that YouTube differs from the other social media because content posted on the platform does not have to be as current as on Facebook and other if the content is perceived as valuable (Gielen 2015). There is no set rule on how often to post content on YouTube, but consistency in video creation helps to grow the channel. The companies studied in chapter three did not use YouTube regularly, and only used it to maintain a presence on the platform uploading content in sets whenever ready. While Forsman tea should aim to create a consistent video creation strategy for YouTube the benchmarking suggests that focusing on video quality over frequency is an option since the videos can be cross promoted on Facebook and other channels.

The survey results suggest that the customers would like to see how-to-videos, recipes, and product presentations the most. These YouTube content preferences could also be extended as general customer video content preferences since all the other platforms in this study support video content too even if YouTube is the only one strictly focusing on video. KPIs to track on YouTube to track is engagement including comments, likes and dislikes, shares, and subscriber count. Average view duration and average percentage viewed are also important metrics to be considered when planning future content.

5.2.3 Instagram

Customer social media preference survey results report 44% of Forsman tea customers as Instagram users. Like with Facebook, more than 60% visit the platform once a day or more often, which present the opportunity of posting content at least once a day to ensure a steady stream of fresh content. Ellerings (2016) research suggests three posts a week the minimum amount with one or two posts per day being the optimal amount. The survey results suggest most (35%) Forsman tea customers on Instagram would like to see content at least one to three times a week with over 20% once a day or more, which gives reason to follow Ellerings (2016) suggestions on post frequency. Twitter Insights will provide information when most Instagram followers are active on but suggested by Ellering should be tested. The best times to post are 8-9, 14, and 17 with the most active day being Monday.

According to survey results, most preferred content on Instagram is contests like on Facebook. But like mentioned in subchapter 5.2.1, running contests often is not reasonable. Since Forsman teas social customers do value contests, Forsman Tea should consider running two to four contests a month dividing the contests between Facebook and Instagram according to which platform is the most suitable for the contest in question. Facebook and Instagram would be the best platforms to run the contests on since both platforms do have a fair share of users and the customers use the social media platforms frequently. The customer survey suggests Instagram users would also like to see serving suggestions, product presentations, and behind the scenes content. Considering the findings of the benchmarking, most of the Instagram content could be the same content shared on Facebook to achieve a consistent brand image across both platforms but also to cut down time spent on content creation. If Instagram-specific content is wanted to create, can the photo guidelines summarized in Facebook suggestions chapter 5.1.1 be used. The major difference between Facebook and Instagram posts is that in the latter one's, relevant keywords should be used in order maximize the potential of the platform. The main KPIs to track in Instagram follow the same suit with Facebook the most important ones to track being likes and comments.

5.2.4 Twitter

Customer survey results revealed that only 16% of Forsman tea users are on Twitter and majority reported they visit the platform rarely (less often than once a week). This would suggest that it is not worth the returns to use time and resources on Twitter activities and focus on other social media channels instead. Since some presence on social media is better than none, Forsman tea could follow the footsteps of the two companies analysed in chapter three and mostly mirror content posted on Facebook since that content is being made anyway. The benchmarking also suggests that Twitter should still be monitored in

case some customers have any inquiries through it essentially turning it into one customer service channel.

5.3 Conclusion of suggestions

One of the key takeaways from the suggestions for Forsman tea is to create a social media strategy as described earlier with extra attention paid to that the formulation of goals and objectives is done clearly according to the SMART-principles, and which key performance indicators are the most suitable in measuring the success of the strategies. The platform specific suggestions can be valuable in determining to which social media platforms should most of the efforts be directed to, what type of content the customers generally prefer, and what posting frequency likely works the best. These suggestions will provide good insight for Forsman teas future social media efforts, but also provided valuable information of the preferences of the company's customers.

5.4 Suggestions for further research

Because this study focused only on four social media platforms, would the logical next step for Forsman tea be researching other social media to complement the company's online presence. Snapchat and LinkedIn came up multiple times in the other comments section of the survey, which would make these two platforms the first two to be researched more in depth. WhatsApp was also one platform that came up in the survey. While not being a social media platform itself, implementing it as a customer service channel should be researched. In addition to researching additional platforms, thorough research of the new features of the existing platforms should be considered. Especially Facebook and Instagram are evolving extremely fast, and coming out with features such as live streaming of video and even ecommerce-functionality, which should not be taken lightly since the platforms already have millions of users.

All four social media platforms discussed in this study have paid advertising features. Since the company is already present on these platforms, researching the suitability of using the paid advertising features for promoting the company and its products be a reasonable next step in increasing overall visibility of the company. However, the paid advertising features most likely would increase the social media marketing budget substantially if many clicks or a wide reach is wished. Generally, the more the company invests in paid advertising in social media, the more visibility will be achieved.

Out of the realm of social media, digital marketing provides multiple areas which could be researched. Content marketing would be a good option to consider since social media can be greatly utilized in distributing the content created. This would benefit both the reach of

the content, but also social media activities. Nowadays digital marketing includes areas such as search engine optimization, email marketing, and even advertising platforms such as Google AdWords can yield great results and should be considered. Especially Google AdWords together with Google Analytics, which was briefly mentioned in chapter 2.4.2 provide an extremely powerful tool to drive traffic to the company webpage. However, like paid advertising on social media, using Google AdWords will require extra funds in the marketing budget and can ultimately be a waste of money if the company webpage is not up to par.

5.5 Reliability and validity

The main concern for the reliability and validity of this study was finding proper, reliable source material. This turned out to be an interesting balancing act because social media platforms evolve at a quick pace, which means social media marketing study books only three or four years old are already obsolete, some even when they are released. Majority of the most relevant information is found online but is also less reliable since they could have been written by anyone. In this study, considerably more online sources than study books were used due to this fact that the most current information is available on webpages and blogs.

Another concern on the reliability is the benchmarking methodology. In this study, the benchmarking was done by using only one free tool and manual analysis. The main reason for this was that all the tools offering benchmarking and analysis features are paid tools, which can turn out to be quite expensive. Other concerns in terms of reliability and validity of the study was the survey discussed in chapter 4. While most of the validity concerns were avoided due the substantial number of replies, there was a lot to fill in on the survey, which might cause some respondents to mindlessly click through it to get it done. However, discrepancies in the responses of single respondents were not found.

5.6 Reflection of thesis process

The main goal for the me was to learn more about how to utilize social media in marketing purposes because it is in a key role in today's marketing, but also because the subject is not discussed much on the mandatory courses at school. Delving into the world of social media marketing would and did provide me a valuable learning experience and more insight on an interesting topic and enhance my competency in the field of marketing. While a vast array of different things was learned, one of the key realizations is that the world of social media marketing is large, complex, and in many cases highly interconnected, which means there is much more to learn and possibly specialize in later.

The number of various aspects of social media marketing made it also somewhat difficult to decide what to include and what to exclude, especially in the theoretical framework. I decided to focus on the theory of the planning process, which would provide a good starting point to social media marketing to anyone who reads this study. Exploring different social media strategies with some examples would have been an excellent idea in hindsight, but was left to a minimum.

Because this study was my first long term project done alone, one learning objective was also to learn how to find relevant and reliable information, in this case about social media marketing where most of the most recent material is online. Trying to find the most reliable online material was a good exercise in improving my skill in distinguishing quality sources, which will come in handy in the future.

Conducting the research part of the study was also an interesting experience for the author since the course on conducting research and surveys was running simultaneously with the thesis writing process lagging slightly behind the pace of the writing. While this did not cause any large obstacles in the end, would it have been useful to have some knowledge beforehand. Normally this would not have been a problem since the research course is usually done earlier in the studies. In the research design of the study, in hind-sight, I would have made changes to the survey questions mapping the content and use preferences of the case company's customers. Even though the survey was successful, the survey felt quite long. Examples accompanying the content preference questions would have been an effective way make the survey more visual, but might have affected the judgment of the respondents.

This study was also an exercise in time management. While the I mostly managed to stick to the initial plan, planning the schedule even down to a daily level would have been useful. Schedules are not an indicator that things will be done would it help to internalize that time for writing needs to be made, it does not come on its own. In addition to time management, this study can also be seen my first touch to marketing consulting. Learning how to interact with a company in a professional manner and organizing things like the survey done in this study was an interesting learning experience for me and instilled confidence in the skillset the I had learned during the previous courses at school.

In conclusion, the have learned a lot during the thesis process especially from the topic of social media marketing, but also on research methodology and source material evaluation, time management, and consultancy skills.

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Social media accounts used for benchmarking

Facebook: @ClipperTeas, @twiningsteauk
YouTube: ClipperTeas, TwiningsTeaUK
Instagram: @clipperteas, @twiningsteauk
Twitter: @clipperteas, @TwiningsTeaUK

Appendices

Appendix 1. Survey questionnaire form.



Forsman tea - Käyttäjätutkimus sosiaalisen median käytöstä

Forsman tea pyrkii uudistamaan ilmettään sosiaalisessa mediassa. Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoitus on selvittää, mitä sosiaalisia medioita Forsman tean asiakkaat suosivat, sekä minkälainen sisältö on mieluisinta. Osallistumalla kyselyyn voit vaikuttaa siihen minkälaista sisältöä tulet näkemään sosiaalisissa medioissamme jatkossa. Kysely on osa Haaga-Helia Ammattikorkeakoulun opiskelijan opinnäytetyötä.

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7. Muuta YouTube-sisältöä, mitä?

	1	2	3	4	5	En voi arvioida
uote-esittelyt						
arjoiluehdotukset						
Behind-the-scenes -kuvat						
ainaukset ja tekstipohjaiset kuvat						
ifestyle-kuvat						
Seuraajien lähettämät kuvat						
/ideot						
Kilpailut						
	e En voi arvioida	а.		А	5	En voi anvioida
os et käytä kyseistä sosiaalista mediaa, valitse	e En voi arvioid a 1	a. 2	3	4	5	En voi arvioida
os et käytä kyseistä sosiaalista mediaa, valitso	e En voi arvioid a	2	3			0
os et käytä kyseistä sosiaalista mediaa, valitse Feksti-postaukset Kuvat	e En voi arvioida	2 •	3	0	0	0
0. Minkälaista Twitter-sisältöä haluaisit nähe os et käytä kyseistä sosiaalista mediaa, valitse Teksti-postaukset Kuvat	e En voi arvioida	2	3	0	0	0
os et käytä kyseistä sosiaalista mediaa, valitse Feksti-postaukset Kuvat	e En voi arvioida	2 •	3	0	0	0

8. Minkälaista Instagram-sisältöä haluaisit nähdä? (1 - vähän, 5 - paljon) *

11. Muuta Twitter-sisältöä, mitä?



Forsman tea - Käyttäjätutkimus sosiaalisen median käytöstä

12. lkä *
42 Aquinnaikkakunta
13. Asuinpaikkakunta
14. Sukupuoli *
Valitse ▼
Valitse
15. Oletko ostanut Forsman tean tuotteita?*
─ Kyllä
○ En
16. Jos olet, mitä kautta olet ostanut Forsman tean tuotteita?
Päivittäistavarakaupat
Messut
Forsman tean nettikauppa
Forsman tean oma myymälä
Muu, mikä?

17. Olisitko kiinnostunut saamaan Forsman tealta uutiskirjeen?

Lisää sähköpostiosoitteesi, jos haluat tilata uutiskirjeen.

─ Kyllä	
○ En	
Olen jo tila	aja
18. Vapaa palau	te
Tähän kenttään	voit antaa halutessasi muuta palautetta.
19 Jos haluat o	sallistua arvontaan, laita sähköpostiosoitteesi alle.
	etta käytetään vain voittajalle ilmoittamiseen.
	,
Sähkõposti	
← Edelliner	Lähetä