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MARKETING ANALYSIS FOR AN EDUCATIONAL GAME COMPANY

– Current situation and future improvement

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NordicEdu is an educational game company with less than ten employees. The thesis was done in order to evaluate how well they met their marketing 2016 goals and what is their marketing situation in 2017. The research was done by analyzing data from the website and social media sites and combining those with results from interviews with two employees.

According to the research in B2B the purchase decision process is longer than in B2C and involves more decision makers. It is important to provide information to support the purchase decision. NordicEdu's prospective clients are divided into different segments which different motivations that should be recognized.

Online marketing can be a cost effective channel for a small company. Social media marketing requires frequent presence and well made, preferably visual content to fully utilize the different social media channels. A blog is a platform for the company to share their expertise and gain visibility. With search engine optimization the company can rank higher in search results and attract more visitors to their page.

NordicEdu met their 2016 goals well. The blog gathered readers and some visibility in social media. The understanding of the customer segments is better than before they started working on their marketing plan. To meet their goals for 2017 NordicEdu should focus on measuring, diverse content and to those customers who are in the early stage of their purchase decision.

KEYWORDS:

marketing, edugames, B2B, social media

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MARKKINOINTIANALYYSI OPETUSPELIYRITYKSELLE

- Nykytilanne ja kehitysehdotukset

NordicEdu on alle kymmenen hengen opetuspeliyritys. Opinnäytetyö tehtiin, jotta pystyttiin analysoimaan miten vuoden 2016 tavoitteisiin oli päästy ja millainen markkinoinnin tila oli 2017. Tutkimus suoritettiin analysoimalla verkkosivuilta ja sosiaalisesta mediasta saatua dataa sekä yhdistämällä se kahden työntekijän haastatteluista saatuihin tuloksiin.

B2B-ostoprosessi on pidempi ja siihen osallistuu useampi päätöksentekijä kuin kuluttajamarkkinoilla. Opinnäytetyössä selvisi, että yrityksen tulisi tarjota tietoa, joka vähentää ostopäätökseen liittyviä epävarmuuksia. NordicEdun asiakasryhmät jakautuvat eri ryhmiin, joiden erilaiset motivaatiot tulisi tunnistaa.

Online-markkinointi on pienelle yritykselle tehokas tapa markkinoida. Eri sosiaalisen median kanavien hyödyntäminen vaatii hyvin tehtyä, mielellään visuaalista sisältöä ja toistuvaa läsnäoloa. Blogi mahdollistaa yritykselle kanavan esitellä osaamistaan ja saada näkyvyyttä. Hakukoneoptimoinnilla yritys voi nousta paremmin esille hakutuloksissa ja sitä kautta tuoda sivuilleen kävijöitä.

NordicEdu saavutti vuoden 2016 tavoitteensa hyvin. Loppuvuodesta avattu blogi on kerännyt lukijoita ja saanut näkyvyyttä myös sosiaalisessa mediassa. Ymmärrys asiakkaista ja tavoitteista on parempi kuin ennen markkinointisuunnitelman tekemistä. Päästäkseen tavoitteisiinsa myös 2017 NordicEdun tulisi keskittyä mittaamiseen, sisällön monimuotoisuuteen ja keskittyä niihin kävijöihin, jotka ovat ostoprosessin alkupäässä.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (OR) SYMBOLS

B2B	Business to Business
B2C	Business to Customer
CTA	Call to Action
SNS	Social networking service
SME	Small to medium-sized enterprises
ROI	Return on investment
KPI	Key performance indicator
WOM	Word of Mouth

1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis researches marketing of a small educational game company located in Finland. The case company NordicEdu is operating in serious game industry which is a field that that requires a lot of expertise and skilled workforce. Planning the marketing, for example channels and content, is also different for a B2B company and a SME compared for example to a big retailer. In order to attract new customers and differentiate the business type from other companies NordicEdu needs to have a marketing strategy suited for their budget and resources.

In 2015 82% of the Finnish people used Internet to find information about goods or services. Social media was used by 58% but the amount was significantly bigger among younger age groups. (Tilastokeskus 2015). For a small company using social media can be a cost-efficient way to reach a wide audience. It also makes it possible to focus on the platforms that reach the customer base best.

NordicEdu Oy is an educational and serious game company. Serious games are games that are developed for some other purpose than pure entertainment. NordicEdu was founded in 2011 and they have produced over 30 games for clients and a couple of their own productions as well. The company employs full time 4-6 employees depending on their need and some part-timers during big projects. The turnover in 2016 was around 160 000 euros.

The vision of the NordicEdu is to provide high quality games and services that fit the unique needs of each customer. The company offers both the planning and the technical development or only one of them depending on the customer's needs. They work in the B2B sector and the potential customers are organizations, governmental institutions, businesses or other game development companies outsourcing a part of their game production.

The author of the thesis did her practical training in the case company during spring 2016. The motivation for the thesis came from the need to re-evaluate the marketing goals set in 2016. NordicEdu's current marketing situation is analyzed and suggestions on how to improve during the next year are offered based on the findings and theoretical research. The aim is to be able to come up with cost and time effective ways to reach more potential customers.

Research consists of both interviews and data analysis. Combining numbers and qualitative data gives a better understanding of the current situation. As time and resources are limited, it is important for the marketing persons to focus on creating content that matters to prospective and existing customers and share it using the platforms where their customers are.

1.1.   Research questions

The questions this thesis aims to answer are:

1. What in the current marketing is working well?
   - What parts of the marketing are reaching the customer base and turning visitors or followers into clients?
   - What kind of content and what kind of channels work for NordicEdu?

2. What of their marketing could be improved?
   - Based on the research of online and offline sources, which actions are more effective in order to make the marketing money and time spent work more efficiently?
   - Is there something they should remove from their marketing activities or something that they are not yet doing that could be added to their marketing strategy?

To be able to answer these questions there should be an understanding of foundations of marketing for a B2B company, who their potential customers are and how they behave as well as what channels there are available and how to use them. The choice of channels, content and allocation of time between marketing activities should be based on understanding of how to reach the customers and what kind of information they are looking for. The theory part of the thesis provides information on these topics to support the research.

1.2. Focus and structure

The focus of the research is on B2B marketing and the use of online platforms such as social media and blogs. This is done in order to limit the size and scope of the thesis. As the research is done for a SME the thesis does not cover the kind of marketing that would be too time consuming or require big investments. That leaves out some of the more traditional ways of marketing such as TV campaigns or ads in local newspapers.

The thesis begins with basic information about the company. The theory part covers the principles of marketing and characteristics of B2B marketing and social media. Research chapter is divided to analysis of how the 2016 goals were met and interviewing the marketing people. Then suggestions on improvements will be provided where appropriate.

Closing chapter has conclusions about the research, its validity and reliability as well as discussion about the author's thesis process.

2. MARKETING

This chapter consists of basics of marketing, the characteristics of B2B marketing and how to measure marketing.

2.1. Definition of marketing

In their book Principles of Marketing Kohler and Armstrong define **marketing** as "managing profitable customer relationships". It is a process in which the company creates and maintains a relationship with its customers. (Kohler & Armstrong 2014, 27.)

This approach takes into account that marketing is not just a set of individual campaigns or promotional events but rather a continuous process that should be evaluated and changed if the situation changes. **Marketing research** is done to gather data to spot any opportunities or issues, evaluate how well the marketing is working and if needed fix the marketing plan to fit the current situation better (AMA 2016).

American Marketing Association defines marketing as "the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large". (AMA 2016). In this relationship both sides give something of value to each other.

Marketing is something that's not only between a company and the customer, it is also meant for stakeholders, partners and for the society around the company. It is important to note that it is not just a one way road where the company keeps pushing out messages to the customers but one where the customers have a voice as well. After the introduction of the Internet and especially social media it is easier for customers to continue the discussion without the presence of the company.

2.2. B2B marketing

Before looking at the characteristics of B2B marketing this subchapter will first go into the differences between B2B and B2C industries in general.

2.2.1. Characteristics of B2B

In business to business (B2B) the customer is another company or other organization (Ojasalo, J. & Ojasalo, K. 2010, 19). This includes also non-profits and governmental institutions. This makes selling and marketing products different to B2C markets.

Key characteristics		
	Consumer markets	B2B markets
Purchase orientation to satisfy	Individual or family needs	Organisational needs
Number of decision makers	Small	Large
Length of decision making	Short and simple	Long and complex
Size of purchase	Small quantities	Large in value and volume
Consequence of poor purchase	Limited	Potentially critical
Nature of product/service	Standard range of products	Customised packages
Channel configuration	Complex and long	Simple and short
Promotion focus	Psychological benefits	Economic/utilitarian benefits
Primary promotion tool	Advertising	Personal selling
Supplier switching cost	Limited	Large

Table 1. The main differences between B2B and consumer marketing. From Fill & Fill 2005, 18.

As we can see from Table 1 above, the process of buying a product in B2B market is longer and involves more decision makers. As a bad purchase might cost the company large amounts of money the risk is bigger. That's why making the decision takes longer as there need to be enough information to base the decision on. In consumer markets where products and services are generally cheaper the risk is much smaller so the individuals can more freely just act on a whim.

In the serious game industry, a customer to switch the company producing their game in middle of the process would cost them both money and time. Even if it's a small scale project, the time to terminate the project and starting over again with a new company would take time that could be used for other things. For this reason it is more important to choose the company to work with carefully to avoid future conflicts.

On top of the characteristics mentioned before also the pricing is different. In consumer markets it's often the same list price for everyone whereas in B2B the price can be negotiated with the customer or is the result of a tender competition (Ojasalo, J. & Ojasalo, K. 2010, 25). A game product consists of different smaller services and steps and the size of the project has a big impact on how expensive the end product will be. The price will be estimated for each customer based on their needs.

2.2.2. B2B marketing

The goal for both B2B companies as well as SMEs is to act as thought leader and be seen as an expert on the field (Hubspot A 2015, Guardian 2013). As the customer might not have the technical knowledge and understanding of games they need someone whose expertise they can rely on. However, they might not have enough knowledge of all the aspects of game production to choose the right company that meets their needs. That is why it is important to provide relevant of information to support the decision making to make the risk the company takes more calculated.

LinkedIn has divided the content marketing goals into three categories: Brand Awareness, Thought Leadership and Lead Generation (Linkedin A 2017). For NordicEdu, the main goal is to generate leads but that can be done by a mix of Thought Leadership and Brand Awareness. When they attend an IT or educational fair it is a part of the process of visible to potential clients whereas blog posts aim to strengthen the image that NordicEdu is a professional on their field.

There will be more about the way people purchase in the next chapter but especially for an edugame company it's not likely that even if people see your ad or an article about you in the newspaper they will immediately want to buy something. It's a very specific field of business and companies or organizations do not go buying games every day. As it will take several steps for a customer to eventually purchase something a company should provide content for all the subgroups and make themselves known (Moz A 2017).

People won't give their email if they do not know who you are.

It is important to know who the customers are, as the marketing decisions will be based on where they are, how they behave online and what their goals are (Simply Measured A 2017). NordicEdu's customers groups will be shortly examined in chapter 3.3. However, as they fall into different categories, the marketing materials and channels should be chosen so that there is something available for all of the groups. The kind of content B2B customers favor when searching for businesses to work with are more likely to be informative rather than entertaining (Hubspot A 2015). That doesn't mean a company can't create more light content to be shared in social media to raise awareness for the brand.

2.3. Measuring marketing

The important terms to know for this chapter are ROI and KPI. ROI is an abbreviation for Return on Investment. It is the measurement of how much is any investment or investments bringing back in return. KPI is Key Performance Indicator, it's a metric used to measure some part of the company's performance over time. (Investopedia A 2017; Investopedia B 2017.)

According to a survey done by HubSpot 50-60% of the marketers measured the ROI for paid and email marketing, but only 30% measured ROI for their social media marketing. However, about 55% said they would want to do that. (Zarrella, D. 2013, 177.) This could mean that measuring the effectiveness of social media marketing is seen as more difficult than measuring the investment in paid marketing.

Measuring the ROI of marketing can be difficult as some of the actions done, such as starting a blog, do not instantly turn into money. It can help establish the company as the thought leader but it will take time for the results to be seen. It can also be difficult to identify which were the actions that in the end closed the deal. However, careful measuring is important so that there is data to base future planning on.

What kind of KPIs the company chooses depends on their overall marketing and sales goals. Amount of visitors is a sign of traffic to the page, shares and likes are a sign of interesting content and newsletter subscribers mean potential interest in purchasing something in the future. KPIs related to sales are important but they do not necessarily show how well marketing works for other steps of the buying process, such as

recognizing the need or evaluation of alternatives (the buying process will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.1.).

If a company hasn't before actively measured their marketing efforts, the place to start is to look at past activities and investments. Based on that the company can plan future investments and activities and determine the metrics they want to use to measure the success of said activities. Important step is to continuously evaluate the process and look for any room for improvement. (Powell, G. 2012, 103.) For NordicEdu that would mean looking at the marketing money allocated for different marketing activities (new web page, attending events) and choosing the metrics on which they measure the success of those activities.

Other way to look at it is to find the points that the company most struggles with. Is it getting visitors to look at the web page? Or perhaps the amount of leads is not in line with how many people visit the page? To measure the success of any given activity you need to first know what the goal is, the "R" in the ROI. (Content Marketing Institute A 2016). The amount of likes on a Facebook post might not be the optimal measurement for the success of that said post for NordicEdu. As landing deals is the main focus, it might be more interesting to look at how many people followed a link on that Facebook post to visit the web page, or how many people shared that specific content in industry related forums.

Another point is to give each piece of content a goal and a metric to go with it. An example in Content Marketing Institute's article showed that the goal for a blog post could be to increase the subscriber base and get a bigger audience for an upcoming webinar (Content Marketing Institute A 2016). If the ultimate goal is for a customer to start a game project, the content should be leading the potential customers towards that point. A tweet about a new blog post that showcases a successful completed case project, and at the bottom of the blog post a link to subscribe to the newsletter. Giving each step its own metrics makes it easier to see if the content is working. Trying to simply measure all of the money spent on marketing versus sales might not provide detailed information about the points of failure or success.

3. CUSTOMERS' BUYER DECISION PROCESS

This chapter looks into the buyer decision process with the focus on B2B customers. The steps most important for the case company are provided with more detailed information. After that the chapter will cover general theory behind the decision-making unit in B2B as well as give an overview of the most important customer groups for NordicEdu.

3.1. The buyer decision process

The buyer decision process represents the steps a buyer (or a group of buyers) take when making a purchase of a good or a service.

The steps are

- Need recognition
- Information search
- Evaluation of alternatives
- Purchase decision
- Post purchase behaviour

(Koyler & Armstrong 2014, 176).

The names of the steps give a good understanding of what happens during the steps. The important point is to look into how potential customers act during each step and where and how do they find the information they need to make a purchase decision. It's worthwhile to mention that for the need recognition, the stimuli can be **internal** or **external** (Kotler & Armstrong 2014, 176). That means a company can actively communicate about a solution they offer to make their potential customers more aware of their specific needs.

During the second step the top types of information companies looked for were pricing information, details about the product/service and an industry comparison (Buyersphere 2015). This seems logical as understanding the product and the cost are essential when purchasing something. People also searched for interviews with experts and customer testimonials or case studies (Buyersphere 2015). In B2B, nn average person looks at 10 pieces marketing of content before making a purchase decision (Linkedin D 2017).

For NordicEdu it's not possible to have a price list for their games on their page as it's calculated separately for each case. However, there's already a section explaining the process of developing an educational game and the finished products have a list of all the skills and production phases used for them (such as planning, UIX design or graphics).

The most commonly used places in B2B business to look for information were search engines, company web pages and advice from colleagues (Buyersphere 2015; Technologyadvice 2016). The highest influence was on recommendations from colleagues or industry specials. Social media wasn't used very actively nor did it play an important role on making the final decision. (Buyersphere 2015.) This seems to be in line with the feedback collected from NordicEdu's customers. Big part of them had either heard about the company from a colleague or simply used a search engine with suitable search words when looking for edugame companies or information about the industry.

The ideal supplier among Buyersphere's research respondents was someone who is reliable and offers a low price. However, in reality the factors most affecting the purchase decision were that the product or service seemed better than other suppliers' and the company was somehow familiar to them beforehand. Other important factors were better understanding of the customers' needs and responding quickly. (Buyersphere 2015).

Post purchase behavior is the actions a customer makes after their purchase, based on how satisfied or dissatisfied they were (Kotler & Armstrong 2014, 178). For a game company both the game process itself as well as the end product affect how the customers feel once the game is finished. If a customer is satisfied they could potentially recommend NordicEdu's services to other people.

3.2. Decision making

As explained in chapter 2.2.1 one defining character of B2B industry is that the number of people making the decision is higher than in consumer markets. According to two different research the average number of decision makers involved in B2B were 5.4 and 2.5 (CEB 2017; Buyersphere 2015). This number is likely to be affected by the size of the organization as well as the size of the purchase. However, both results are in line with the earlier statement that there are several decision makers involved in the process of B2B purchase decision.

The decision making unit was divided into these six categories by Webster and Wind

- Initiators
- Gatekeepers
- Buyers
- Deciders
- Users
- Influencers

(See Blythe, J. & Zimmerman, A. 2014, 18).

While initiators are the one starting the process, the influencers and gatekeepers are the groups that have an important role whether or not the purchase will be made. Gatekeepers are the individuals that gather information and either share it with the other decision makers or control the flow of information when they believe it's not relevant. Influencers are the people who have, as the name suggests, a strong influence on people making the decisions. The person could be working inside the organization or perhaps an outsider who has a good relationship with the CEO. (Blythe, J. & Zimmerman, A. 2014, 18).

The actual end users of the game are unlikely to be involved in the purchase decision making process for an educational game. They usually only join in during the planning or testing phase. The role of the initiator largely depends on their position in the customer organization. A motivated teacher might not have a lot of resources behind them whereas a marketing manager is more likely to be able to be heard.

The stage where the consensus was hardest to reach was the identifying a solution phase, not choosing the right supplier (Schmidt et al. 2015). That means it would be more important for NordicEdu to make potential customers see educational games as a solution to their marketing, communications or educational needs instead of simply focusing on trying beat their competitors. This should done in a way where the different concerns and expectations of different potential customers will be met. Some of the customers might focus on minimizing the cost while others might focus on finding the most reliable company to work with.

3.3. Customer groups for NordicEdu

The four most important categories for existing and potential customers are:

- public administration and governmental organisations
- companies
- organisations and associations
- educational institutions.

While the general buyer's decision making process follows the same path, these different groups also have some differences. For example the buying process is strictly controlled for governmental organizations whereas companies might be having a bigger budget compared to associations which also means a bigger risk. The importance of different channels for information varies as well as the motivation for the game process between the different categories

Companies use educational games as a promotional material as well. Even though the aim of the game itself is to offer information for the end user, the motivation behind developing the game itself is to have one more tool to attract customers and share information of the product/services.

For educational institutions such as elementary schools or universities the most important aim is to educate or raise awareness about something. Governmental institutions are similar in the way that the aim of the game is not to gather more customers but rather to share information about a topic or share knowledge.

Associations fall somewhere in between. Although the main motivation would be information and education, it is also to possibly gather more members or followers for their cause. Both smaller associations and educational institutes differ from companies in the way that their aim is not to gather profit.

For all of the groups finding the influencers would be the top priority. However, it might not be easy to identify that person. For that reason the core marketing message has to be unified for all of the people involved to make sure everyone's on the same page. However, a CEO might need different focus and language than say a lead programmer.

The buying process is not simple or linear. It's important to provide information for all steps of the buying process. The channels will be introduced in more detail in the next chapter, but it's good to mention that the educational organizations' representatives seem to be more active on social media, engaging in discussion and sharing content related to educational material (including edugames).

4. CHANNELS

This chapter talks about the marketing channels that are already being used or that could be added to the case company's marketing plan. The focus as mentioned in introduction is on online channels that are cost effective but where the customers are as well. The chapter starts with social media channels and information on when to post and what kind of content to use. Second part concentrates on marketing around the web page, including SEO, blog and a newsletter.

4.1. Social media

Defining social media is not straightforward as the way we use it and the platforms we use keep changing. In this thesis the definition used is "Social Media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content (Kaplan. A, & Haenlein, M. 2010). The SSNs (social networking sites) listed below present the sites that are now viable options for a B2B edugame company. The situation might change in a few years as new SNNs emerge and some of the old ones lose popularity.

In 2015 58% of Finnish people followed some social media platforms. For people in the age groups of 25-34 and 35-44 the percentages were 86 and 70. (Tilastokeskus 2015.) As time goes on, most of the people responsible for decision making in companies will be using some social media platforms so companies should be where their potential customers are as well.

According to research conducted by Statista the most used social media applications are Youtube, Facebook (and Facebook Messenger), Whatsapp and Instagram. 83% of the respondents said they used Youtube, 75% used Facebook and 22% LinkedIn. (Statista 2016.) While LinkedIn isn't the top pick for the general public it is the platform that's widely used for B2B (Linkedin B 2017). The popularity of the platform doesn't necessarily mean it's the best choice for all types of companies.
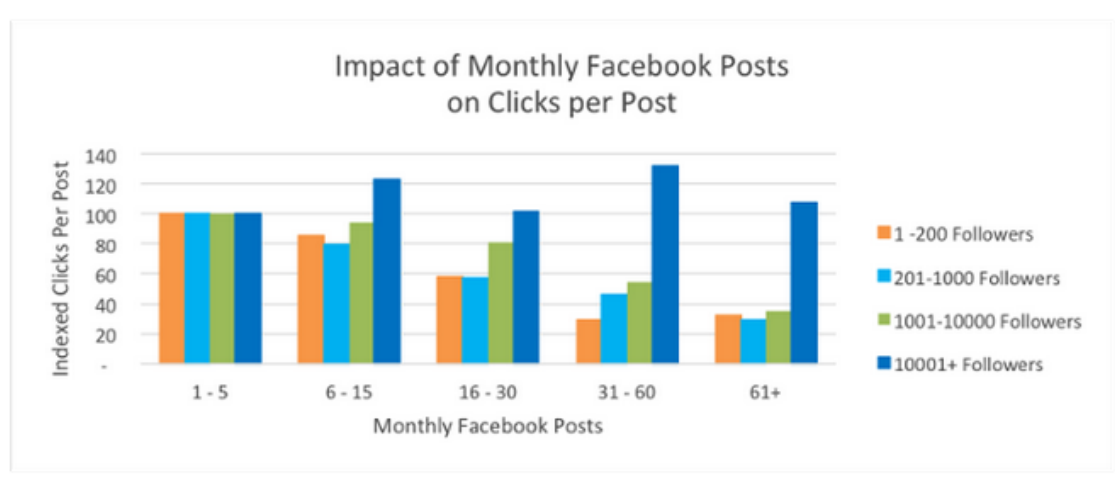
Facebook

Facebook is a social networking service. It was launched in 2004 and it had on average 1.23 billion daily active users in December 2016 (Facebook A 2017). The most important

features are profiles, news feed, messenger, groups, pages and events (Facebook B 2017). The posts users see can be found either through organic reach or paid reach. **Organic reach** measures "how many people you can reach for free on Facebook by posting to your Page" (Facebook C 2014).

While organic reach seems tempting, the reach for a post can be as low as 2% (Hubspot B 2017). Facebook representatives have explained that the reason why organic reach has been declining for the past years is simply because of the amount of posts is increasing and Facebook wants make sure the users see the content most useful for them (Facebook C 2015).

The suggested optimal amount of posts per day or week varies between different outlets. However, there seems to be somewhat of an agreement that 1-2 posts per day is enough to stay in touch with the followers and get likes. (Business2Community 2016; Forbes 2016; Buffer 2014; Coschedule 2016.) A more detailed approach by HubSpot looks into the amount of followers a page has and how the frequency affects the amount of likes. The research was done among the users of the Hubspot platform.

Picture 1. Impact of Monthly Facebook Posts on Clicks per Post. Taken from: Hubspot C 2015.

As seen from picture 1 above, for a company with some hundred followers posting several times a week means less clicks per post. However, this does not take into account the general traffic to the company's Facebook page. (Hubspot C 2016.) However, as the aim for NordicEdu's Facebook posts is to either make people visit their page or share the content in relevant forums the amount of people simply visiting their page is not the most important measurement.

Video continues to be the best type of content for getting engagement (Locowise 2017; Econsultancy 2016). A survey done among 5000 pages showed that in February 2017 videos reached 13.4% of the audience, pictures 13.1%, statuses 4.8% and links 4.3%. The engagement rate of 5.5% was also highest for videos compared to other type of posts. (Locowise 2017.) In general sharing content with something visual works better than simply plain words.

Twitter

Twitter is an online news and social networking site where people communicate by using "tweets", messages that are maximum 140 characters (Twitter A 2017). Twitter started its operations in 2006 and in June 2016 had approximately 313 million active monthly users (Twitter B 2017; Twitter C 2017). Twitter has become a sort of second screen, it can for example be open on phone while watching television (Tulos A 2015). As a fast paced platform it also serves well as a news outlet. Events can be recorded and shared as they happen.

On average a tweets high point is at 18 minutes and after that the likes and retweets began to decrease. Tweeting often also reduces the amount of engagement for each individual tweet. (Moz B 2012). This isn't necessarily a bad thing as the way Twitter works is different than say Facebook or a blog. It can be used to let the followers know when the company is in some trade fair or when a new game is live. Retweeting is also a good way to share interesting content fast. However, if a company wants to reach more people with the certain message they might want to consider posting the same tweet several times in one day, just at different times.

There was no general consensus about the optimal amount of tweets. Some sources said around 2-5 times a week is enough while others opted for 14 or up to 40 times a day. It does seem tweeting is supposed to be more active than posting on FB. It also depends if the company is looking for higher engagement per tweet or more total responses. The sources did not state if the research was done among B2C or B2B so that could possibly also affect the results. (Business2Community 2016; Forbes 2016; Buffer 2014; Fronetics 2016; Coschedule 2016.)

To put it another way, if a company tweets a lot they get more general engagement (retweets, likes) but every individual tweet gets lets attention. For tweets with links it means less people will actually click the link. An article from Fast Company suggest trying to post actively but mixing content (Fast Company 2014). Some of the tweets can

be retweets from others or some interesting news while some can be links. This way the other posts won't reduce the amount of clicks from the tweets the company wants audience to see.

As for the content, the optimal length is around 70-100 characters. This leaves space for the possible retweeter to add their own comment as well. Older articles recommend using several hashtags (#) to gain better response but more recent research suggest that the optimal amount of hashtags is 1-3 and that using more than that decreases the engagement. (Sumall 2015; Fast Company 2014.) Many events and such have their own hashtags that can be used for the audience to easily find the company's tweets.

The way to get more followers is to follow more people and interact with them. By checking who their followers follow a company can find new, influential people or organizations to follow as well. Another way to interact is like or retweet tweets made by other people. Studies show that tweets that mention someone (@), have a picture or a strong CTA such as "please retweet" generate more engagement, (Fast Company 2014; Salesforce Marketing Cloud 2013). Interestingly, tweets that contained a link worked best when there was nothing else to fight for the reader's attention – no hashtags, mentioning someone or a picture (Fast Company 2014).

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the world's largest professional networking site (Linkedin B 2017). It can be used for companies and job seekers to connect, for marketing products or services, tracking sales opportunities and for professional development with e-learning materials (Linkedin C 2017). It starter operating in 2003 and currently has over 467 000 00 registered members (Linkedin D 2017). The amount of Finnish people using the site was over 900 000 in 2016 (iProspect 2016).

As LinkedIn is more purely for business than the other channels the optimal time to post is during weekdays. The suggested posting schedule is once a day or once every weekday (Business2Community 2016; Buffer 2014; Coschedule 2016). The pace is not as fast for Linkedin Bnd the usefulness of content is more important. The content can also be different, some users also share articles related to their area of expertise. For example the CEO of LinkedIn, Jeff Weiner, has shared some longer articles related to Linkedin Bnd business life in general (Linkedin E 2017). In Facebook and especially in Twitter the aim is to keep the content short and easily consumable.

If other SNSs are more about moving potential customers down the funnel from need recognition to brand awareness, LinkedIn is also aimed more at generating actual leads. Especially for a company that focuses on getting only some dozen deals per year instead of mass selling, it is useful to find the people who show interest. LinkedIn's own statistics show that 80% of B2B leads come from LinkedIn (Linkedin F 2017). While this piece of information might not be fully compatible with NordicEdu, as their customers are not necessarily other businesses, it can be taken as a sign that there is potential.

Being active is important in Linkedin Bs well. An article from Smart Insights recommends finding 3-5 groups and being active there, as time is limited it's better to use it to be consistently active in right places instead of trying to divide the attention everywhere. Another tip they offer is to see who has visited your page as they've shown first sign of interest in your company. (Smart Insights 2016.)

For Company Updates, which are bit like Facebook status posts, it is recommended to have a clear CTA as links generate more engagement. Again, posts that include visuals do better than just plain text (Linkedin G 2017). The picture could be a graph, an in-game screenshot or for example a video of some interesting game or education related topic. The update should be "snackable", meaning it should be short and clear enough to be understood quickly but also valuable enough to be shared. (Linkedin G 2017.)

4.2. SEO

About 90% of the people under the age of 54 had used Internet to search for information about goods of services (Tilastokeskus 2015). Having information about a company's products or services online is becoming more of a necessity regardless of the type of the business. SEO stands for Search Engine Optimization and it is "the practice of increasing the quantity and quality of traffic to your website through organic search engine results"(Moz C 2016). Quantity simply means the amount of visitors whereas quality refers to getting the right people to find your page. Organic results mean results that the company has not paid for.

To have a well optimized page means ranking higher. This means that the page will show up high on Google's or other search engines search result page. The very basic principle of SEO is to create a web page and content with the user in mind. As the algorithms are becoming better at spotting sites that are actually useful for the person doing the search,

there's no point in creating content that won't be used. Duplicate pages, repeating the keywords all over or spamming forums with links to the page will most likely not improve the rating of the page. Instead making the content that the customer or visitor wants to see or share is vital for getting a better rank. Making quality content also matters as search engines look into how many people left the page instantly (Moz D 2015). If people stay on the page longer it is an indicator for the search engine that they found content matching their search query.

However, with SEO the marketers can help search engines find the information easier. As there are billions of pages online, with good SEO a marketer can improve the chances of ranking higher in search results. As there are many factors that affect the rating, they will not all be covered in this chapter. However, an easy to read guide for the factors search engines look at will be provided in chapter 6.2. Some of the top factors the algorithms look for are searched keywords, links and structure of the page (Search Engine Land 2017).

The site should contain the keywords the internet users are looking for and in the right places, specifically in the titles and as the image names. It is therefore important to know what words are used to search for what the company offers. This can be done by checking for example Google AdWords or Google trends. As search engines do not see pictures as humans do, it is important to give the visuals used names that well describe the content of said picture or video. (Moz D 2015.) The image names are referred to as alt text, and that text also shows in case a picture is not loaded.

The amount of links from outside the page directed to the page is one success factor. It is measured by both amount of links as well as quality of links, meaning that they come from sites that rank well themselves. An active social media presence could help with getting more referrals and links pointed at your page from outside (Moz E 2016). That in turn could help climb higher in organic search results.

The page structure should be kept well organized, with no duplicate pages and as little content hidden behind log in pages or forms as possible (Moz D 2015.) Again, a good rule of thumb is to think about the end user when creating the web page layout. If the page or content doesn't serve any purpose to the visitor or doesn't help answer their questions it is not needed.

A survey showed that half of the respondents said results on the top of the page were more trustworthy but also most of them trusted organic search results more than paid

ones. (Zarrella 2013, 46). Paid results could however potentially bring more organic visitors as well. People look most at the short page description when deciding which link is worth clicking (Zarrella 2013, 50). Therefore it is important to plan carefully not only the title but the page description as well. It should clearly indicate what the visitor will find if they open the page.

Moz's list of big updates and changes to the Google algorithms shows that while most changes are small, sometimes the core algorithm changes so much it can cause notable change in ranking (Moz F 2017). It's good to keep an eye on the ranking and see how it fluctuates over time. In general the best way to see what works is to keep testing and tweaking the SEO of the page.

4.3. Blog and newsletter

The definition of a blog varies between sources but they have common features. A blog is an online platform, usually related to a specific topic, with entries made by one or more individuals. Blog can be an effective way for a company to establish themselves as the thought leader by providing meaningful and well written content. It also helps the web page to rank higher in search results and works to turn the webpage from simply an overview of the company into a more if an in-depth platform for company news, discussion and sharing information. (Halligan, B. & Shah, D. 2010, 35.)

Blogs offer marketers a way to use SEO by thinking carefully about the titles of the blog posts (Halligan, B. & Shah, D. 2010, 39-40). If possible, make them include relevant keywords but only if they actually match to what you're writing about. Misleading titles will turn away the readers. The titles should also be fascinating enough so that the readers will want to click it if they see it in social media or search results. As NordicEdu's blog is WordPress based, there are plug in tools that could help with SEO. There's a link to a plugin called Yoast and their guide in the Appendix 2.

The results of Orbitmedia's third annual survey among bloggers showed that the trend in 2016 was longer posts, with more media and less frequent posting schedule. An average blogger in 2016 posted monthly and spent 1-3 hours to write a blog post of 500-1000 words. (Orbitmedia 2016.) As there is a surplus of content all over the Internet, marketers are now more concerned with the quality rather than the quantity of the content. While posting frequently is important it is more important for blog posts to be

useful and well written.

The content should answer some question or worry that the customer has or deepen their knowledge about something. It is important to know why someone is looking for a certain topic and then provide some kind of solution to their question (Content Marketing Institute B 2016). If a person is searching for a "good edugame company", explain to them what a professional company does for the customer and what can be expected from a game project.

A blog post doesn't always necessarily have to be in typical text format. A blog post can also focus around an infographic, a slideshow of some interesting topic or a video. Most bloggers used images in their posts and the ones who also used video were most satisfied with their results. Social media was the most popular way of promoting blog posts but paid marketing gave the best self-reported results. (Orbitmedia 2016). Images should be named as explained in the chapter about SEO so that search engines can find them. Other good practice is to link related blog posts so that the reader will continue their say after the initial first read is done (Content marketing Institute C 2016).

A newsletter is one effective way of promoting new blog posts. The CTA (call-to-action) to subscribe to the newsletter should be, like everywhere on the page, made tempting for the visitor. It should be valuable, action oriented, easy to use and prominent. For a visitor to be willing to leave their information online they should feel like they are getting something from it. That could be for example access to a guide or a webinar. Another point made is that the visitor, a potential customer, should not have to look for the CTA button but it should be clearly accessible and look attractive. (Halligan, B. & Shah, D. 2010, 131–133.)

To get more people to open your newsletter, it should come from a sender that they recognize. The title of the email should be kept under 50 characters but capture the reader's attention. Testing different variations will provide most valuable information about what works best with the company's subscribers. (Tulos B 2016). A newsletter should always also contain a link to unsubscribe and link to information about what the company does with the personal information such as names and email addresses.

5. MARKETING ANALYSIS

The second part of the thesis is divided to two main sections. First part analyses the data from the web page and social media sites and interviews with NordicEdu's marketing representatives. Second section is about providing suggestions on improvement and discussion about what already works well.

The research is done as a case study. As the research is done about and for a specific company the focus of the research will be on qualitative research. Qualitative research is usually used to gain a more deep understanding of a specific topic. The aim is to understand meanings and different sides of a limited amount of cases or events. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009, 136, 160-161.) The results of this thesis' research are meant to be used by the case company instead of being generalised for the use of a bigger audience so the qualitative approach is suitable for this type of research.

In the research both primary and secondary data will be used. Primary data is data collected specifically for the research whereas secondary data has been collected for other purposes. Secondary data can either be raw data or data that has already been analyzed and summarized. (Saunders et al. 2016, 316.)

Primary data is from interviews with two people from NordicEdu. They were chosen to be interviewed as they have biggest responsibility over marketing. Due to the small size of the company they do not have a separate marketing team but marketing is part of the workload of the creative director and one of the programmers. The results from the interviews are supported with secondary data collected from NordicEdu's web page, social media site and search engine results. Combining the views and opinions from the interviews with numeric data gives a more comprehensive understanding of the situation.

Interviews as a research method were chosen to understand how the marketing staff feel about NordicEdu's marketing as they are the ones deciding what marketing actions to undertake. The interviews were structured. A structured interview consist of a set of questions that are asked in the same order from each person (Saunders et al. 2016, 391). The two person interviewed for this thesis had the opportunity to read the questions beforehand and prepare their answers for the actual interview.

All of the data was retrieved from the web page, server and social media sites on 3.4.2017. The data will be, where needed, compared to the goals and data presented in

NordicEdu's Marketing plan for 2016. It's a private document that the author has access to.

5.1. Webpage and blog

In their marketing plan for 2016 NordicEdu set goals for their page and social media sites. The goal for cumulative amount of page visits was set to 3000 (it had been 680 during 2015). As the page was under maintenance for a part of the year the comprehensive data for 2016 is not available but during the last three months the individual page views were 3647. This means NordicEdu did meet their goal even during that short period of time.

The goal for the average time spent on the site was 1 minute and the actual time was 1 minute and 27 seconds. The amount of returning visitors in last half of 2016 was 18,5%. From 1.1.2017 to 3.4.2017 the amount of returning visitors rose to 22%. In 2015 the number of returning visitors had been 3,7 % so there has been a significant rise. There's a contact form on the page but since the beginning of 2017 only four people have contacted NordicEdu through the contact form. Most contact is done by either phone or email.

NordicEdu opened their new web page last year. The layout and content came from Kokkonen but the site was programmed by an outside company. When searching for NordicEdu in Google, the top results shown for the author are these:

nordicedu.com - NordicEdu - Opetuspelit ja pelikokemukset
[Mainos] www.nordicedu.com/ ▼
Suunnittelemme ja toteutamme hyödyllisiä pelikokemuksia ja innostavaa oppimista.
Palvelut: Pelien ideointi ja konsultointi, Käyttäjälähtöinen suunnittelu, Toteutus ja testaaminen
Ominaisuudet: Ratkaisukeskeinen asenne, Monipuolinen osaaminen, Vahva ammattitaito

NordicEdu: Suomalaiset hyötypelit tulevat | Tekes
https://www.tekes.fi/tekes/tulokset-ja.../nordicedu-suomalaiset-hyotypelit-tulevat/ ▼
NordicEdu: Suomalaiset hyötypelit tulevat. 11.2.2016. NordicEdu tekee pioneerityötä opetus- ja hyötypeleissä. Markkinat ovat vielä pirstaleiset, mutta kasvavat ...

Molla ABC | NordicEdu
www.nordicedu.com/molla/ ▼
Molla ABC on esiopetusikäisille suunnattu suomenkielinen oppimispeli tekstauskirjainten ja numeroiden piirtämisen harjoitteluun. - mahdollisuus harjoitella ...

Picture 2. Google search results for "NordicEdu". Retrieved on 21.4.2017.

The first result is as expected the company's page but it has the "advert" box next to it, indicating that it is a paid result instead of an organic one.

Picture 3. Google search results for "NordicEdu". Retrieved on 21.4.2017.

The address for the company in Google results is currently not the address of the office but rather the billing address. The information box also does not have any relevant information about the company such as a link to their page or what the company does.

NordicEdu is currently using AdWords to rank higher in search results. The competition for serious and edugame related words is not yet high so they are trying different kind of words to see which bring the best results. The data for the keywords is from 1.1.2017 to 3.4.2017. From the keywords they are currently paying for, the most click-throughs to their webpage came from oppimispeli (learning game) and e-learning. The keywords more commonly used in the industry, opetuspeli (edugame) and hyötypeli (serious game) did not bring as much traffic to the site. Hyötypeli only brought about 1, 5% of all paid traffic but had a considerably lower rate of instant exit from the site.

This could indicate that those people had already done some research and were further along the buying process. Hyötypeli as a word is not so familiar to people who are not familiar with the industry. The number of people visiting the site using words hyötypeli

(16) and e-learning (299) was much lower than for oppimispeli (686). However, as the exit rate was lower and the amount pages they visited was higher those are the people who are more likely to be actually looking for edugames instead of for example a game teaching mathematics for their children.

Below are screenshots taken from Google's search results with some of the keywords NordicEdu is currently paying for in AdWords. The picture is taken from the first result that has NordicEdu's name or their product name on it. Two of the four results are not linked to NordicEdu's own page.

Picture 4. Screenshots from Google search results with search words "oppimispeli", "hyötypeli", "e-learning" and "opetuspeli". Taken on 7.5.2017.

NordicEdu's own social media channels only brought a small fraction of the visitors. Most

came either through direct, paid or referral. Direct includes writing the address in the browser directly or having the page bookmarked. The highest amount of referrals came from Facebook. The list of top referral sites included surprising sites such as a Spanish company called Aulaplaneta. However, although it was a popular referral site the bounce back rate was high. The immediate exit rate was considerably lower for visitors from Serious Gaming Cluster (SCG) and Neogames. The average amount of time a person referred from SCG spent on NordicEdu's page was 4.5 minutes versus the average of 1.5 minutes.

Looking at the way people entered the page and how they interacted with it, around 70% of the visitors landed on the front page. Some hundred people came straight to a blog post. The most popular steps after the front page were the page about the games NordicEdu has done and the About page. Biggest exit rate was after the first initial page viewed, after that around 35-45% of the visitors exited after every new page they opened.

 The five most popular blog posts and their visitors between 1.1.2017-3.4.2017 were:

- Hyvän opetuspelin kriteerit osa 1: 826
- Työn pelillistäminen: 805
- Hyvän opetuspelin kriteerit osa 2: 538
- Hukkaputki nuortenlinkki tarinapeli valinnoista: 229
- Ikäihmisten pelaaminen: 226

There is only one case study among the results, which is about their game called Hukkaputki. Rest of the posts are guides or cover some general industry related topic. Some of the blog posts were also shared in Facebook forums for teachers and that explains why they got much more traffic than the other posts. There are clear spikes in amount of visitors to NordicEdu's page every time they've published a new blog post.

An interesting tool to use is Hubspot's Website Grader. It gives an overview of the strong and weak points of the page. It can be used to test the usability and user-friendliness of a page.
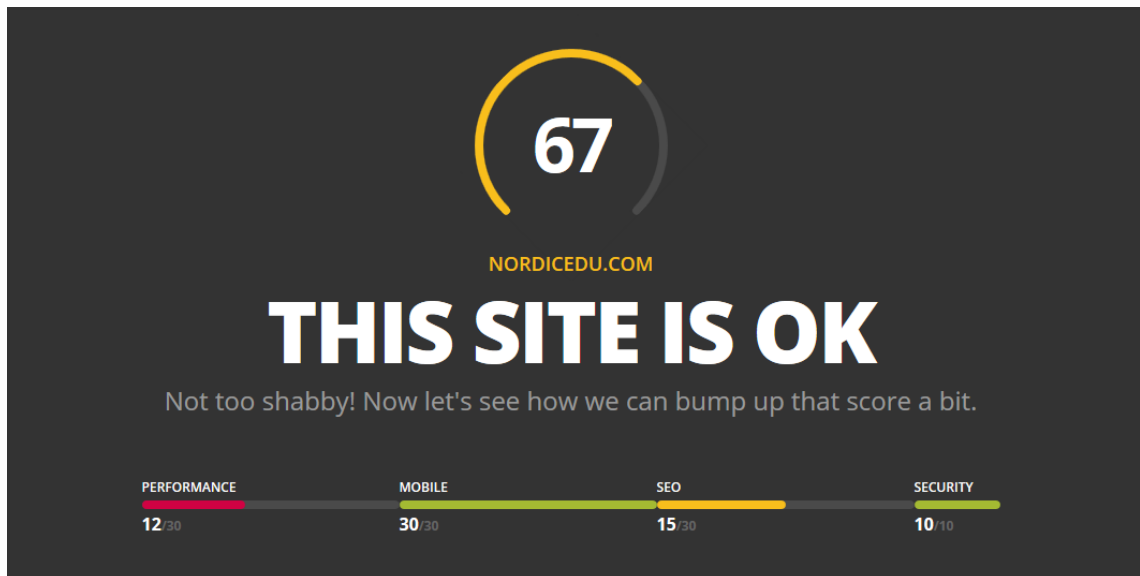
Picture 5. A screenshot of NordicEdu's Website Grader score. https://website.grader.com/results/nordicedu.com. Taken on 21.4.2017.

NordicEdu's site scores high on mobile friendliness and security but there score for performance and SEO is only moderate. The performance score is low because of the amount of time it takes to load the page (12.5 seconds) and the amount of HTTP requests the page makes (67). NordicEdu updated their page last year and it should still be worked on to resolve the remaining issues.

5.2.   Interviews

The interviews were conducted as face to face interviews. The interviewees were the second owner of the company, Mrs. Kokkonen, who is also responsible for the graphic design and one of the programmers, Mr. Puolakka, who also helps with marketing, mostly with their blog. Both interviewees had the chance to look at the questions a day before to prepare their answers. The questions were open questions as the aim of the interview was to get a general idea of how the marketing personnel feel about their progress and goals and their attitude towards the areas of improvement and success. The interview form can be found as Appendix 1.

NordicEdu's turnover in 2016 was 160 000 and the planned marketing budget was 14 200, but the actual spending was between 16 000 and 20 000 depending on how it is calculated. According to Kokkonen NordicEdu's marketing goals set for 2016 were to start writing content that would position NordicEdu better in comparison to its competitors and create more visibility for them. Naturally the aim behind all of the marketing is to get leads and generate sales.

The more specific marketing actions planned were a new web page, a blog, starting a newsletter, creating a downloadable guide and being more active in social media to create a stronger social media presence. Some of the plans couldn't be carried out due to delays in opening the new web page. The blog opened late in 2016 and started operating actively from 2017.

According to Kokkonen the marketing content they produce at the moment is working well. It's produced on time and customers have given positive feedback. Some have even mentioned reading a blog post while searching for a company to work with. NordicEdu wrote their first comprehensive marketing plan in 2016 so Kokkonen also mentioned that writing it helped them put thought into who their customers are and which channels they want to use. They created customer profiles and a customer journey map to go through the process from the eyes of the customer. Puolakka also agrees that their blog content has been well made and has also been shared in some social media platforms.

As for improvement, a stronger presence in social media was mentioned by both interviewees. Sharing NordicEdu's own content and thereby getting more visitors to the blog and page. Kokkonen also pointed out that they should focus more on measuring the marketing efforts and paying closer attention to which channels bring the most visitors and share the marketing efforts accordingly. For now NordicEdu is experimenting with different kind of content and activity until they've collected enough data to start analyzing it and making decisions based on that.

Customers find NordicEdu through different channels, however they most important ones are by recommendations from others, Serious Gaming Clusters' page, search engines and by seeing blog posts shared and clicking the link. The blog is currently the most important online channel for NordicEdu and social media platforms support leading visitors from SNSs to their blog and web page. SCG is an umbrella organization for Finnish serious and educational game companies and they have a list of the member

companies on their web page.

The channels they use are a mix of ones they've had for a while (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) and new ones (Instagram, blog, Google+). They have updated their Google+ profile to test how it affects their search engine ranking. They're planning to be more active in Linkedin Bs it's where potential business customers might see them. They're trying to write blog posts that cater to all of their different customer groups, so a mix of education related posts, guides and serious game related topics.

According to Kokkonen and Puolakka the most time-consuming marketing actions is content creation. They need to plan the blog posts, write and proof-read them and in case of case studies they also need to be in contact with their customers to get the needed information and comments.

Measuring the marketing is still in an early phase. NordicEdu follows the development in social media followers, blog post readers and other metrics but it's not carefully documented or analyzed yet. Kokkonen explained that their plan is to start tracking the numbers more carefully in the future especially when they launch their newsletter and can start following the number of leads (contacts) they get.

Metrics they follow already:

- contacts via webpage versus contacts by other means
- results of AdWords campaigns
- social media engagement
- web page visitors and blog post readers
- how work hours are divided between different marketing actions

NordicEdu tried using a feedback form as a way of doing after marketing but it was hard to motivate customers to fill in the online form. They've had more success by writing case studies and asking for referrals from customers. This way they will stay in touch even after the project is done. The employees also recognize the importance of good customer service as even if a project has to be discontinued there is a chance of positive word of mouth if the impression NordicEdu made was positive.

NordicEdu is aiming to double their turnover during year 2017. As they are looking for strong growth they are also investing in marketing. For year 2017 their marketing budget is 45 000. They're doing an experiment with printed media marketing and investing

resources in content production as well as being more active in social media by following more people and liking and commenting in groups.

5.3.   Suggestions for improvement

NordicEdu have gone through the process of identifying their customers with the use of personas and customer journey mapping, benchmarked their competitors as well as written their first proper marketing plan in 2016. This all creates a good base for their marketing and a place to grow from. They have also decided to invest in marketing as they are looking for strong growth during 2017. This investment includes working hours spent on creating content and measuring the results but also some new marketing actions. If 2016 was spent on doing ground work then 2017 is more about experimenting and trying to find out what works for NordicEdu in relation to time and money.

This section is divided under sections channels, search engine marketing, content, web page and measuring. Under each segment there will be given practical suggestions on how to improve.

Channels

Now that the blog has opened and there's more to share NordicEdu should start using LinkedIn more seriously. They've updated their profile there so the next step would be to establish a regular schedule for updating. At the beginning it can be once a week to test how it works and if there's any more traffic to the site. After some months NordicEdu could also try paid marketing in Linkedin Bnd compare the results. However, then it is important to stay active during both testing periods. '

For a better social media presence NordicEdu could use the advice of being active in a few carefully selected groups. To achieve that it is needed to actually schedule time for liking, commenting, sharing and following people. Engaging in conversation and with other people's posts could potentially direct more traffic to NordicEdu's own social media sites and from there to their page. Sharing the content other have created also relieves pressure of making own content.

NordicEdu's blog posts have been occasionally shared in Facebook groups for teachers and that has driven traffic to their site well. They could try to recreate the same in some more business related groups as well to see if they could reach the customer base that

could potentially have more funding behind them. NordicEdu has to decide which groups are active and big enough and could have interest in educational games.

They also need to decide how much time they're willing to use on being active and engaging with others in social media platforms. At the moment the blog seems to be working best and social media is rather just the beginning of the funnel leading to an actual lead. It could be a good experiment, after they've created the newsletter, to use some paid marketing in some of the social media sites and see if there's any difference in the amount of subscribers.

The channels are different so the content shared can be different as well. More light, visual posts work well in Facebook and Twitter is good for quick updates. In LinkedIn they could potentially see who's looking at their page and try to do some direct selling by approaching those people especially if they've already met NordicEdu in some fair or event.

Search engine marketing

At the moment as the competition for the AdWords NordicEdu is using is not high it could make sense to keep investing money there to rank higher on search results. The focus should be especially on keywords like "hyötypeli" or "opetuspeli" as they were the words that brought visitors who seemed to find what they were looking for based on lower bounce back rate and longer time spent on the page. If the cost is low, it is okay to keep paying for the less industry-related keywords as well as not all of the customers know exactly what they are looking for at the beginning of the buying journey.

When writing the descriptions that are shown in search results they should be careful on what words to use. For example the word ohjelmointi, programming, is not a very casual term and might make it sound more IT- than edugame-related. They could also test different kind of CTA lines, instead of prompting the reader to check out previous work maybe instead ask them to read more "lue lisää" and see which one brings better results. Keeping the description short but relevant works better than trying to add all kind of possibly searched for words. For example writing "laadukkaat opetuspelit" could be enough instead of adding "opetuskokemukset" there as well.

One suggestion is to try to figure out which keywords Neogames and SCG use as there's relevant amount of traffic from those sites. A person who comes to NordicEdu's page from SGC's company listing is more likely to be a potential customer than one simply

searching for educational games in general.

Content

One thing to add to their social media posting is experimenting with different kind of content. At the moment they usually share a link to their blog post, or a link to some article. Pictures are used but they're just visuals instead of having importance of their own. Below is a picture taken from one of NordicEdu's blog posts. If the text was easier to read it could be used as an infographic of sorts and shared on its own in LinkedIn or Facebook.

NORDICEDUN KRITEERIT HYVÄLLE OPETUSPELILLE:

1. OPETUKSELLISEN SISÄLLÖN JA PELILLISYYDEN YHDISTÄMINEN SAUMATTOMAKSI KOKONAISUUDEKSI.

2. RAKENTEEN, SÄÄNTÖJEN JA TAVOITTEIDEN SELKEYS,

3. AKTIVOINTI JA VAIKUTTAMISEN MAHDOLLISUUDEN TARJOAMINEN,

4. PELAAJAN HAASTAMINEN JA ERIYTETYN OPPIMISEN MAHDOLLISTAMINEN,

5. TOISTOJEN JA EPÄONNISTUMISILLE TURVALLISEN YMPÄRISTÖN HYÖDYNTÄMINEN SEKÄ,

6. JATKUVAN JA KANNUSTAVAN PALAUTTEEN ANTAMINEN

7. PELAAJAN MOTIVOINTI JA INNOSTAMINEN,

8. SEKÄ LAADUKAS JA HIOTTU TOTEUTUS.

Picture 6. A screenshot of a visual list taken from NordicEdu's blog. From: http://nordicedu.com/hyvan-opetuspelin-kriteerit-osa-3?utm_source=facebook&utm_campaign=kriteerit%203&utm_medium=blogi. Taken: 4.5.2017.

As posts with visuals get more engagement it could increase the amount of likes and shares. Other option is to post visuals from the game when it's in progress or just finished. If they have time, experimenting with video content is one way to mix up the type of content they use. Instead of a text based blog post they could use footage of one of their talks in events or shoot a short video like the one taken for Creve (http://www.creve.fi/palvelut/videot/=).

The blog posts are a way of position NordicEdu as a company with strong knowledge of topics related to their industry. The best posts can be shared again after a while and

turned into visuals to be shared in social media. Interviews with customers or being a guest writer in some other company's blog can also help with visibility. NordicEdu has a lot of knowledge and skills that might not be found in other companies and some marketing or communications professional could provide them with interesting material. Many popular blogs also gather together the best bits from events and fairs. NordicEdu could also make notes and take pictures or video to collect some of the best bits from the events and make a blog post about them.

The soft CTA, subscribing for a newsletter, will be a good step in getting people to visit again and collecting leads. On top of the booklet they are making for newsletter subscribers they could think of what else could they use as a reward. As they have an understanding of the different customer groups they could try to provide different options for different needs. Teachers or a CEO of a big company might be looking for very different kind of information. NordicEdu could provide a more detailed version of one of their top blog posts or a downloadable check-list of what to prepare before a game project starts. If they believe their expertise is enough they could also consider some more business-related topics such as games as a marketing tool.

Webpage

The focus should be on the people that actually are looking for NordicEdu's services, the small but important group that stays longer, visits several pages and comes to the page with right keywords and from the important sources. When the newsletter and guidebook are ready NordicEdu is a step closer in getting to know who these people are and communicating more to their direction.

At the moment the site loads way too slow. The SEO could also be checked to make sure it lands as high as possible in organic results. A table of important SEO features can be found in the last chapter. The Google search results now have the postal address so that should be fixed as well as writing a short bio about the company. The page also doesn't have any search function and blog posts can't be searched by category.

Blog posts take a lot of time to write but it seems to be paying off. Customers have actually read them and they have been supporting their decision to work with NordicEdu. The blog posts are linked well to previous parts or to some other part of their page. One idea once they have more posts would be to have this "related posts" part after the blog post to keep people on the page longer.

Measuring

As NordicEdu is trying things they haven't done before such as launching a newsletter and trying printed marketing it is important to measure the effect of them to know how well they worked. Measuring should start before the actions even take place so there is data to compare to and so that they can decide which metrics to use. For the printed ad, they could look for any possible spikes in amount of visitors after the printed ad comes out and ask for new contacts whether or not they had seen the ad. For newsletter, measuring should be long term and analyzed regularly.

On top of Google Analytics and SNSs' own inbuilt analytics there are free tools to use for measuring marketing efforts. It might come in handy later but at the moment the most important thing to focus on is setting the right metrics and making a routinely collecting and analyzing data. NordicEdu could start setting step goals instead of simply having yearly goals. This would allow them to make changes during the year if they see they're not meeting their goals.

For example: Case study blog posts do not get so many views so a goal for a new post like that could be 400 views. However, for a post that's more like a guide or provides some list, the goal could be 850. If it seems the goal won't be met they could consider sharing it somewhere or using paid marketing in LinkedIn or Facebook.

Examples of metrics to use:

Newsletter

- number of subscribes

- how many unsubscribe (find what is not working)

- how many opened the newsletter

- how many followed the link to a blog post/web page

Blog

- views per blog post

- where do people come to the blog from

- engagement

Social media sites

- engagement based on type of post

- organic reach vs paid reach

- how many people follow a link

Webpage

- for any downloadable content, amount of downloads over time

- average time spent on site

- new vs returning visitors

6. CONCLUSIONS

The last chapter will conclude the findings of the research and evaluate the reliability and usefulness of the results. After that there will be discussion about the thesis process and how well the author met her goals.

The first research question was about what about NordicEdu's current marketing is working well. According to the research their new website is bringing in more visitors who are staying longer than some years ago. The blog has been attracting visitors since it opened. The blog posts have gotten positive feedback and have been shared in social media by people who are not connected to their company.

They have begun to work towards being recognized as a thought leader in their industry. They've covered different kind of topics that their potential customer groups might be interested in. Their posting is more frequent now and in general they have a more organized approach to marketing thanks to the ground work they did in 2016. The employees also recognize the importance of WOM so all customers are treated as well as possible as there is the possibility of them recommending NordicEdu to someone else.

Second research question was about which part of their marketing they could improve. Their web page requires some fixing as the loading time is currently very long. They could also focus more on SEO as the competition is still low. They haven't fully optimized their SEO as seen in chapter 5. As organic results are seen as more reliable they should try to mix that with their paid marketing.

The content they produce at the moment is not very versatile. Experimenting with different kind of content and topics is important to see what works the best. They want to have a stronger social media presence and it's going to require being active in chosen channels on frequent basis. At the moment the channels are used generically but in the future when they measure more they should find a better focus.

As for the marketing measuring in general they need to pick the most relevant KPIs and establish a routine of measuring and analyzing the results. When they have the newsletter and the booklet on their page they should also have a plan on how to measure the effectiveness of them. As they do not have same resources as a big company they need to be even more careful about where to invest their money and work hours. The

decisions should be based on data instead of just a feeling of "this seems to work".

Reliability and validity

Reliability in research means whether or not the research could be recreated and if the results would be the same. Validity means if the method used actually measures what it is intended to measure. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009, 23.) As amount of visitors and other metrics fluctuate over time, the exact same results couldn't be achieved if the research was done a month or a year later. However, if the numbers were retrieved by a different person during the same day they would have been the same. In this sense the reliability of the research is good.

Marketing efforts can be measured in different ways and by using different metrics. The method chosen for this research accurately measured a part of the case company's marketing actions. All of the areas of their marketing were not covered but the aim was to look for a more general understanding of the situation. Research like this, even though it's based on data and research, still represents one person's point of view. However, as the author has worked in case company previously and had access to all the numbers and reports needed it is based on a good understanding of the current situation. As explained in chapter 2.1. Marketing is always a continuous process so there is need to re-evaluate marketing again after some time. This thesis can serve as a starting point and a documentation for future reference.

Thesis process

The thesis process itself went mostly well. The author had personal motivations for choosing the topic. It was interesting to see how the marketing goals set in 2016 were met and how much the marketing had already developed in just under a year. The thesis process took the author's understanding of social media marketing further as the research was done from a more scientific point of view instead of being based on own experiences.

The theory part took longer to write as it was occasionally difficult to decide which approach to take. There would have been a lot more to cover and it felt like some of the topics covered were only discussed shortly. Marketing is a huge subject but the research had to be limited so that the thesis wouldn't grow too much in size and take too much time to finish. The author's own interest in variety of marketing topics also sometimes caused the research to go into sidetracks as new possible research topics surfaced

during the research process. Writing the thesis was an educational process that resulted in practical improvement suggestions for the case company. In that sense it can be said that the research was successful.

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Appendix 1. Interview form

Interview form

1. Goals set for 2016

- Did you meet the goals?

- Were they realistic?

2. What kind of after-marketing have you done?

3. Which parts of your marketing seems to work? Why?

4. Is there something you'd like to improve? Why?

5. What takes most of the time?

6. How do your customers find you?

7. How do you measure your marketing?

8. What plans do you have for 2017?

Appendix 2. Useful resources for NordicEdu

LinkedIn – Secret Sauce pdf

Hubspot blog

Buffer blog

Moz Clog (especially Beginners Guide to SEO)

Search Engine Land SEO table http://searchengineland.com/seotable

Yoast WordPress SEO plug in guide - https://yoast.com/wordpress-seo/