


**KARELIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES**  
Degree Programme in International Business

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**A SOCIAL MEDIA STUDY: LUTHIERS' SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AND  
MATERIAL ACQUISITION IN THE USA. CASE STUDY: FLAXWOOD**

Thesis  
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	<p><b>THESIS</b>  <b>December 2017</b>  <b>Degree programme in International Business</b>  Karjalankatu 3  80200 JOESUU  FINLAND  Tel. 358-13-260 6800</p>
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<p>Title  A Social Media Study: Luthiers' Social Media Usage and Material Acquisition in the USA. Case Study: Flaxwood  Commissioned by Case Company Flaxwood Corporation</p>	
<p>Abstract</p> <p>The digitalization and development of social media have changed the characteristics of advertising and business activities. For businesses digital marketing strategy is an inseparable part of their marketing strategy, especially with smaller businesses that need to find cost efficient ways of promotion. Reaching even the smallest niche-group is now possible with little costs, if the right tools and platforms are applied.</p> <p>The thesis addresses digital marketing strategy tools and social media marketing strategies. The thesis was conducted by request of the Flaxwood Corporation, a micro sized guitar-and instrument component manufacturer from Eastern Finland. The objective of this thesis was to find proper digital marketing channels and platforms, where to reach the desired customer base and influencing them through those channels. The study is about luthiers' social media behaviour in the USA, so that Flaxwood can effectively reach and communicate this group and promote their products to them.</p> <p>Through qualitative research methods and interviews, social media channels and other platforms to influence luthiers were discovered. How to act in each of the platforms is suggested to the company in order to interact with luthiers and promote their products for them.</p>	
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introducing the case company Flaxwood

Flaxwood Corporation is a guitar and instrument-component producer founded in 2005. It is a small sized company located in Heinävaara, North Karelia, Finland, currently employing one full-time worker. The total turnover of the company has been varying between 75 000 – 300 000€ over the years, but Flaxwood estimates a high growth in the near future. Flaxwood USA Ltd was founded in 2010 in order to achieve more stable foothold in US markets, and to create a better supply chain. (Karppinen 2017.)

The idea behind Flaxwood originally was to create an innovative and high quality guitar, which is high performance and quality, and eco-friendly. The company achieved this by creating a new natural fibre composite material, which is a mixture of plastic and wood fibre. The density of this new material responds to ebony wood, a commonly material used in instrument manufacturing. By creating this composite material, Flaxwood was able to start manufacturing durable, eco-friendly guitars. The manufacturing process reminds more of a plastic moulding manufacturing, than traditional guitar manufacturing. Each part of the guitar is moulded by using specific machinery for injection moulding, and then the guitar is assembled by a professional luthier. Currently Flaxwood's product line consists of 11 guitar models, which 6 of them are standard models and 5 are custom models. There is also a possibility to order a MOF guitar building kit or separate necks for instrument building projects. Flaxwood is also producing instrument components for guitars, violins and clarinets. These instrument components will be the area of growth for the company, since the company is starting projects with large instrument manufacturers, such as C.F. Martin. (Karppinen 2017.)

The materials used in instrument manufacturing business are facing a transition phase in the near future. The so called "tonewoods" are slowly growing rare tree species and are about to disappear from the world due to over harvesting. Tonewoods are considered to be Ebony, Rosewood, Walnut, Mahogany and Maple. Some of these tree species are declared to be in critical state to disappear due to illegal logging. This major phenomena creates a need for a substitute of tonewood. (Schu 2016.)

In 2008, the government of USA amended the Lacey Act to include plants and plant products. (United States Department of Agriculture 2017.) The Lacey Act is a law, which bans the importing, exporting and trafficking of illegal wildlife and plants in the USA. Ebony and Rosewood, amongst other tonewoods was included into the Lacey Act in order to perceive the tree species globally. (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service 2017.) Since most of the major instrument manufacturers are operating in the USA, such as Gibson, Fender and Martin, they are facing difficulties in acquiring tonewoods as their raw materials. In 2011 Gibson faced a raid in their factory, since they were believed in using illegally harvested tonewoods. Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) did an investigation and proved, that Gibson knowingly was using illegally cut trees. Gibson managed to keep this away from the big public and keep the PR damage low. (NPR Music 2011.)

## **1.2 Aim of the Thesis**

The objective of this thesis is to find a way how Flaxwood can effectively influence general opinion about alternative materials and consciousness of its products and material it uses amongst luthiers located in the USA. This will happen by first defining target customers and users of Flaxwood, find out where do this target group exists in the web and which websites and platforms do they actively use, and determine the ways to influence in their opinions and knowledge.

The purpose of the acquired information, is that Flaxwood can use this information to be active on these websites and platforms, in order to spread word and positive image about the company and awareness of their products amongst luthiers and potential consumers. Thus the research question is: How should Flaxwood reach and influence target customer group through social media and other online platforms?

## **1.3 Methodology**

The study is conducted as a qualitative study by observing the forums and social media platforms, and by implementing a survey for luthiers located in the USA. The literature

part of the study has been collected from books and online sources. Theories, models and tools from digital marketing to social media optimization will be presented and later on applied into case company' situation.

#### **1.4 Structure of the study**

This thesis is divided into four parts. The first part introduces digitalization, digital marketing and social media marketing & management. The overview goes through development of internet, social media, and tools and models for digital marketing strategy.

The second part of the study goes through the method, what is the target group and how the research is implemented. It narrows down the target group for the survey and sets the objectives for the survey. The methods used for the survey are presented and the results the survey created are listed out.

The last chapters of the study presents the results of the study and gives suggestions on what actions the case company should do. Suggested actions are based on models and tools presented in the theoretical part. Finally a summary of the research is presented.

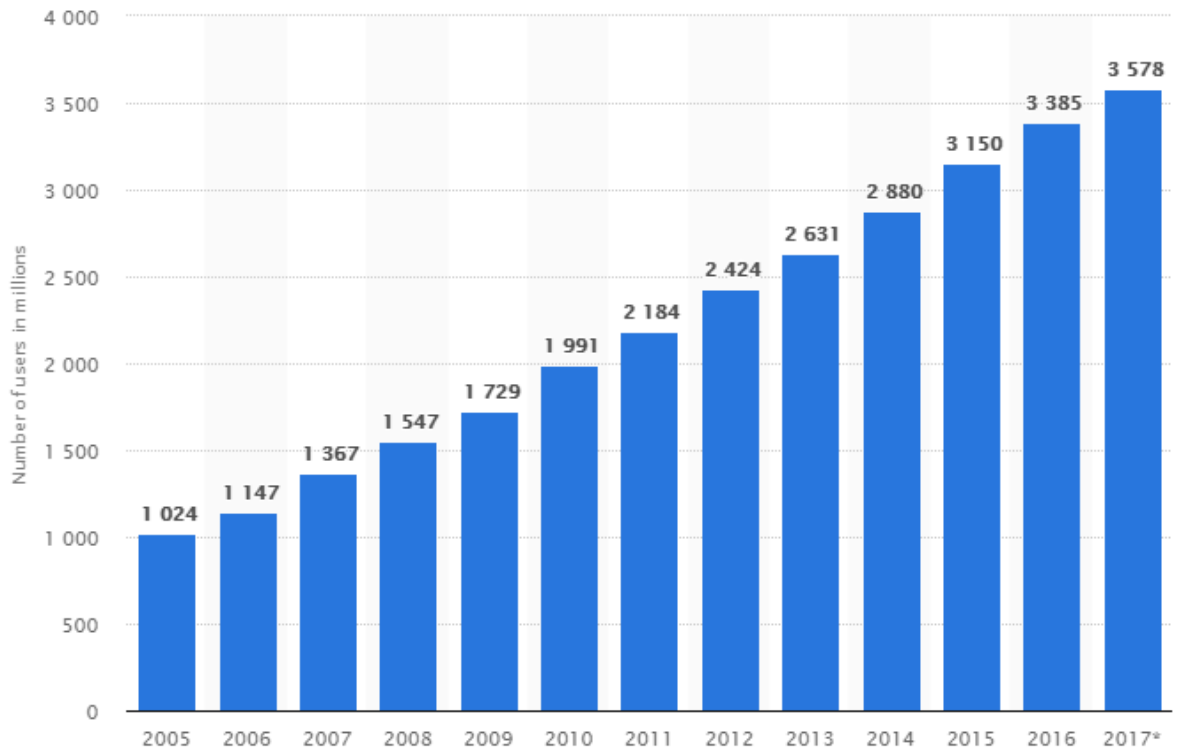
## **2 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING**

This theoretical part focuses on digital marketing, digitalization, social media development and social media marketing. Various models, tools and theories are presented to be later on applied into case company's situation.

### **2.1 Digitalization and development of Social media**

The remarkable growth of World Wide Web, the Internet, began in the early 1990s, when hypertext technology started to develop and enabled creating readable online pages. The so called Web 1.0 consisted of pages that users were able to read and surf from page to another. At this point the internet was unidirectional and the flow of information was from web page writers to readers. (Dijck 2013)

After the millennium the technology developed and started to reshape the characteristics of Internet. The characteristics of the web started to change at the same time, when Tim O'Reilly started to speak about Web 2.0 in a conference held in 2004. O'Reilly spoke that the Web 2.0, as we know internet today, will consists of pages and platforms where interaction, and user created content and communities are the key point of interest in maintaining relationships and sharing information. (Fuchs 2014) The basic need of the humans to be in touch and communicate with other humans has greatly supported the development of the Internet, creating countless social sub-groups and services available for everyone online. (Juslén 2011)



Graph 1. Number of internet users worldwide from 2005 to 2017 in millions (Statista 2017).

The internet has seen stable growth during its existence (Graph 1). Every year millions of people gain access to the internet and being able to create content in there. Ever since the social media platforms started to develop the number of users of social media has seen a stable growth. The number of social media users in 2010 in the world was 0.97 billion users. Compared into today's number of users, 2.46 billion, the number has nearly tripled in just seven years. The estimates are that number of social media users will reach three billion in 2021 and the growth is not slowing down. (Statista 2017)

## 2.2 Digital marketing

Digital marketing is the key element of digital business. The concept of doing business via Internet started when the online platforms started to develop from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0. The boom of business activities online in 2000 created new terms such as e-commerce, e-prefix, e-marketing and e-business. These terms all mean the transactions and purchases done online. Later on came a broader term "Digital marketing", which not only



refers to transactions between buyer and seller, but also to understanding and creating additional value to consumer, and marketing activities implemented in Internet. Briefly said, Digital marketing is marketing online. (Chaffey & Smith 2017)

A company has to have vision and mission, otherwise it has no purpose. Once the company has these determined, it is crucial to set clear objectives how it can fulfil its purpose. Setting up objectives applies to Digital marketing as well, without clear objectives marketing activities have no aim and desired outcome will not be achieved. (Kotler 2013)

In terms of Digital marketing, Chaffey and Smith narrow down five objectives for the digital marketing strategy. The five objectives are: grow sales, add value, get closer to customers, save costs and increase profits on transactions, and extend the brand online. These objectives are also called “The 5S: sell, serve, speak, save and sizzle.” By setting up objectives for each of the five categories, it creates a base for the company’s digital marketing activities. Once all the five objectives are defined, planning actions how to reach these objectives becomes much easier and concrete. First objective is to ensure sales through online platforms. Determining the correct channels online to sell products is the first step. Second objective is to advantage internet as a customer service tool. The third objective is to use the internet as a communicational tool. Unlike second objective, the third objective means listening customers and providing content for the potential customers to consume. The fourth objective is to reduce costs. Switching some actions to online can be cost efficient and save money. The fifth and last objective is to use internet for brand building. Internet can be easily used to enhance image and creating additional value for the brand. By setting up these objectives and carefully implementing actions for them, it creates a comprehensive digital marketing strategy. (Chaffey & Smith 2017)

### **2.3 Strategies to apply: Marketing mix, SOSTAC, Niche-markets**

The marketing mix was created as a conceptual framework to help in planning how to approach each market. Marketing mix has been in use for a long time. Now that digital markets are as common as regular markets, traditional marketing mix has slightly changed in this digital environment. The 4p’s or the expanded 7p’s still apply, but there should

also be emphasis on message delivery, active participation in social networking and managing relationships. For example the place has changed drastically, it is not anymore a certain location, it is more about on which device and which platform. One way to review digital activities is via the 4C's: Customer needs, cost to the customer, convenience, communication. Each of the C's can be compared to traditional 4 P's of marketing, but how each aspect is seen slightly differs. The 4 C's focus on the customer point of view and how the customer journey is seen online. There are other theories as well, such as 4 I's, but the key point in digital marketing remix is to keep in touch with the customer as close as possible, listening them and supplying efficiently. (Chaffey & Smith 2017)

SOSTAC- model was developed in 1990's by PR Smith, to offer a planning model for marketing planning, or for digital marketing. It can be applied into whole marketing strategy or into a smaller parts of marketing strategy, such as SEO- plan. SOSTAC- model comes from words: Situation, Objectives, Strategy, Tactics, Action and Control. When a strategy is formed by following this model, the strategy will determine the current situation, what is the desired outcome or future situation, the strategy how to reach the desired outcome, what tools and tactics are needed to reach the future situation, what are the concrete actions to make and finally, was the desired outcome reached. By applying this model into planning or forming of a strategy, the strategy or plan will be broad and cover all the necessary aspects that need to be taken into account. The figure represents a more accurate and detailed phases of the SOSTAC-model and what tools can be used for example for each of the steps. (Chaffey & Smith 2017)

# The SOSTAC® Planning System

## HOW DO WE MONITOR PERFORMANCE?

**Optimising through:**  
 5 S's, KPI's and web analytics  
 User experience review  
 Conversion rate optimisation  
 Frequency of reporting  
 Process of reporting and actions

## WHERE ARE WE NOW?

**Marketplace SWOT:**  
 5 S's performance and other KPI's (& trend)  
 Customer insight (who, why, how?)  
 Market Trends  
 Competitor analysis  
 Internal capabilities and resources

## WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?

**5 S's objectives:**  
**Sell** - customer acquisition and retention targets  
**Serve** - customer satisfaction targets  
**Sizzle**- wow factor (added value)  
**Speak** - engaging customers  
**Save** - quantified efficiency gains



## THE DETAILS OF TACTICS

**Who does what and when:**  
 Responsibilities and structures  
 Processes and systems  
 Internal resources and skills  
 External agencies

## HOW EXACTLY DO WE GET THERE?

**Marketing mix:**  
 8 P's  
 Incl. Communications Mix  
 Content Plan  
 Contact Plan

## HOW DO WE GET THERE?

**STOP & SIT:**  
 Segments  
 Target markets  
 Objectives  
 Positioning (OVP)  
 &  
 Sequence (Trust, Try, Buy...)  
 Integration (CRM & D/Base)  
 Targeting and segmentation

Created by PR Smith, SOSTAC® is a simple yet powerful planning system, which is easily applied to help create the perfect plan. SOSTAC® is a registered trade mark with SOSTAC® eBook, workbook, webinars & workshops by PR Smith: [www.PRSmith.org](http://www.PRSmith.org)



Figure 1. The SOSTAC Planning System (Smart Insights 2017).

According to Juslén (2011), the most effective strategy in the internet is to focus on small enough segment and be the best of the world in it. In other words, focusing on a niche-market and offering the best service or products for that specific segment seems to work the best online. Niche-markets are a small target group, who have unitive problem, interest or a need. These groups usually have groups or communities online, where they can communicate and share content with each other. Creating content for these communities to share and discuss about will result in a well targeted messages for the correct target group. (Chaffey & Smith 2017)

## **2.4 Social media platforms**

Social media is often understood as social media sites, such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Social media as a term refers to a website or platform where users are encouraged to interact and share content with each other. Social Media Marketing Radar, created by Chaffey and Bosomworth (2012), divides social media into eight categories. (See Appendix 1.) These eight categories are: social networks, social streaming, social search, social knowledge, social blogging, social customer service, social publishing and social bookmarking. The closer to the centre of the radar a website is placed, the more important the role of it is for the company. A website or a platform can be placed into multiple category, since some of the platforms enable multiple activities. A good example is Twitter, which serves as a social networking site, but also as a social customer service site.

Social media sites and platforms are new alternatives for traditional media. Like the traditional media, social media sites can be categorized into three types of media: Paid-, earned- and owned media. (See Figure 3.) Each of the media types should be included or noted while forming a digital marketing strategy. Owned media represents the media the company has total control in, how and what to publish. (Cuthill 2013) Usually this is the company's own website or social media channel. Paid media is considered often as advertising. This can be a paid ad in someone else's website or an article which promotes company's products or services. Earned media refers to online word of mouth, where other users or parties promote and spread ones content. These can be blog posts, videos or press releases about the company, in which the company itself cannot affect. (Titan Growth 2017)

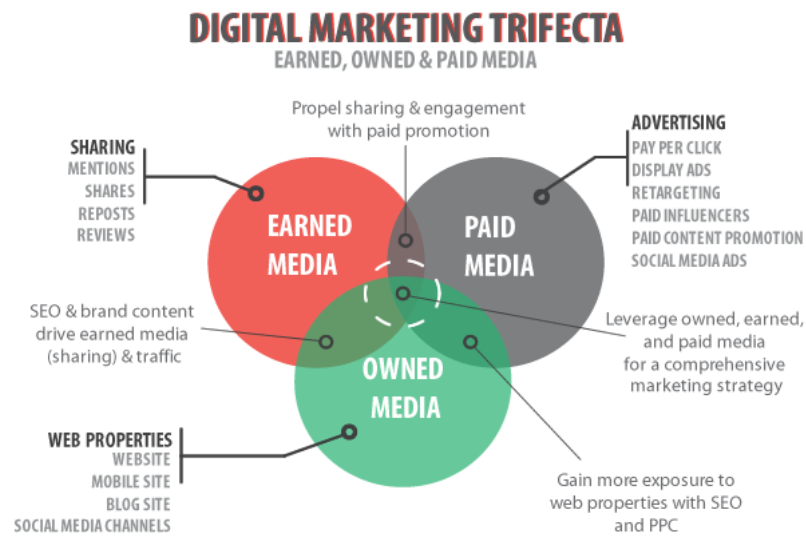


Figure 3. Digital Marketing Trifecta (Source: Titan Growth 2017).

## 2.5 Social media marketing strategy

Businesses set a digital marketing strategy or social media marketing strategy (SMM-strategy), to determine what goals to achieve by online activities. The main point behind of social media marketing strategy is to enhance business activities by utilizing internet. (Chaffey 2017.) “The value proposition influencing the core marketing strategy must be truly customer orientated and accurately focused.” Mediocrity does not work in social media. The key to success is to create and share content which is interesting, differentiates from others and correctly focused. When marketing strategy is created around these frames, it will create interest amongst the target group and enhance traffic on company’s websites and increase sales. (Juslén 2011.)

Social media strategy can be divided into six core activities, which all together will form a solid social media marketing strategy. These six activities are: Listening and managing reputation, transforming the brand through social media, acquiring new customers, increasing sales to existing customers, delivering customer service, and harnessing insights to develop the brand using social media optimization (SMO).

Listening through social media can be done by various methods, but the key is whom to listen. Determining the audience will help to understand who they are and why do they

act in a certain way. Listening will also give realistic and direct feedback from consumers. Transforming the brand through social media simply put means benchmarking, setting procedures and making one or few persons to be in charge of the social media actions. Acquiring new customers should be planned by using PRACE-model. (See page 15) Increasing sales to existing customers can be implemented by giving content for existing customers, which reminds users of the brand. Enhancing customer service should be done by providing customer service through several social media platforms, such as Twitter customer service channel or online customer service chat via Facebook. The last activity is to measure these actions and think how the brand can be developed through these actions. (Chaffey & Smith 2017)

Determining the target group or target market is significant for marketing strategy in order to be successful. The target group or target market can be determined in two ways, product- or customer-orientated determination. Product oriented means that the target market is only certain type of products, which solve a specific problem the same way. In this definition the competitors are those who offer similar products to solve the same problem. Customer oriented determination on the other hand means that the target market is created by a certain need of a customer. This way target market is larger, since the need or a problem can be solved in various ways. (Juslén 2011)

## **2.6 Social media communication strategy**

Big part of social media communication strategy (SMC-strategy) is publishing own content in internet. However there are some general rules applying when publishing content online, no matter of the business field. While creating content to be published, the content should always be addressed to crucial target group. Users of internet and social media often consumes the content alone with their computers, phones and tablets. Thus the content created should be written in a personal style, creating the user a feeling that the content is made and focused just for him. The content should also differentiate from the other content in internet. Different forms of content can be articles, blogs, pictures, videos, reviews, podcasts, guides, and many more to count. (Juslén 2011.)

In order to implement a social media marketing strategy (SMM-strategy), a SMC-strategy must be determined. If this is not done the SMM- strategy will not be synergistic and coherent. (Chaffey & Bosomworth 2012) To have control in SMC-strategy, Chaffey and Bosomworth suggest a PRACE model to be implemented, while determining how to interact with users and focus on right activities in social media. The PRACE model arises from words: Plan, Reach, Act, Convert and Engage. Planning phase can be considered as managing phase, in which the to be published content is determined. It also includes how the strategy to be implemented is managed. Reach refers to how to spread the content and message as wide as possible. Act can be understood as how the user is encouraged to interact with the content, whether it is watching, clicking, playing or sharing the content. The hardest part of SMC-strategy is “Convert” part, meaning how the social media content converts into more sales. Engaging means keeping constantly in touch with the consumers, providing content frequently in order to expose them to the brand regularly. (Chaffey & Smith 2017)

The potential of internet and social media is because of word of mouth. In this case it is called Electronic word of mouth (E-WoM), since it takes places in the internet. People are like to share stories, pictures, videos and experiences through social media. Giving people something to talk about and to share can influence potential customers greatly. Once the buzz starts, the message through created content can easily reach thousands of people, with a very little costs. This is the true power of social media marketing. (Safko 2012)

## **2.7 Social media marketing tools**

This chapter will list some of the most useful tools in digital and social media marketing. These tools can be used to attract more potential customers, to follow the right media, and ways how to interact with potential customers more effectively.

Search engine optimization (SEO) is one of the basic tools of e-marketing, but still one of the most important and efficient one. Search engine optimization means how well the webpage has been optimized to show up in any of major search engines, such as Google,

Bing, Yahoo!, or Ask. The importance of findability from the web cannot be underestimated. How easily potential customer can find the company's website can be the turning point between success and failure. The optimization process consists of multiple techniques, which combined result in appearing high on search results in relevant searches. Some of these techniques are adding right keywords into metatags, ensuring relevant words in content, URL keywords, keywords in subdomains and title tagging. Besides all of these technical improvements, one key aspect is to have fresh and current content. The information presented about the company, products or services should be accurate and up-on-date. Moreover, this updating should be done frequently in order to rank higher on search engines. (Safko 2012)

Search engine marketing (SEM) can be understood as paid advertising in search engines. It means that the search engines lists a paid advertised website before the highest match found, depending on the relevancy of the search. This means that it is possible to pay for search engines in order to receive a better visibility in searches. It is a commonly used marketing strategy, known as CPC (Cost-per-click) or PPC (Pay-per-click). A good example of this is Google's AdWords service. SEM works simply by deciding keywords for the SEM plan, usually those the customer is like to type in the search when trying to find your company. The search engine will rank said company first when those relevant keywords are being used in a search. (Safko 2012)

Social media optimisation (SMO) is optimizing the content shared in social media. The point of SMO is to engage users to like and share created content, this way generating e-word of mouth about the products and company. Social media optimisation should be done as much as SEO, to gain the maximal advantage out of social media. SMO key points are: "Test effectiveness of sharing and content types on business outcomes, review how well your content marketing supports SEO, Review preferences of different audiences using different social media platforms to convert and share different types of content and offers, optimum frequency for initiating sharing, best methods for identifying influencers and seeding content, and finally approaches to integrate sharing of content through different social platforms, web, mobile and email channels." (Chaffey & Smith, 2017, 285.) Active participation in each social media platform is crucial. While the content created follows these points, the content created will be more efficient to attract more customers. (Chaffey & Smith 2017.)



Really simple syndication (RSS) is a tool to follow certain media and social media sites. RSS is an XML-formatted text in a website, which an RSS reading program can read. This program, also known as RSS aggregator, can track multiple websites by reading their XML- text files and then list them in a user tailored news feed. This feed will then update and alert the user if new post or news is posted into the followed website. (Digital Trends 2016) RSS reader is a simple tool for following multiple website, news sites, forums and other social media platforms. RSS readers can be used for free, the most popular being Feedly. RSS is a useful listening tool of social media, since most of the websites support it. (Safko 2012.)

Creating content is active participation in social media platforms. Different content can be generated for different platforms in order to share information to users in diverse ways. There are several forms of content, but the most common ones are videos, pictures, podcasts, presentations, e-books, news, online-seminars, documents, applications and reports. Choosing the correct forms of content for the target audience depends on the desired reaction of the audience and goals of this specific content. Each type of content has advantages and disadvantages, so using multiple types of content ensures that audience receives the correct message. (Juslén 2011)

## **2.8 Measuring tools**

Without measuring, improvements cannot be done. Measuring activities on company's website will show have the marketing activities executed online made any result. Several things can be followed and measured in the web, such as number of users, where these users came from, in which region are they from etc. Acquired data will give an insight into visitors and may help to develop digital marketing strategy. This data acquisition and analysing process in order to enhance marketing efficiency is called Web analytics. (Juslén 2011)

One of the easiest and free tools in measuring web analytics is Google analytics. It tracks the number of users visited on the website daily, current number of users, how long did the users spend time on the website, from which geographical location is the user from,

and many more options are available. In other words what Google analytics does is website monitoring. This data can then be analysed and to draw conclusions if a specific marketing activity resulted in a desired outcome. The advantages of the program, besides it is completely free to use, are that it can track multiple conversions at the same time, and form reports out of them, what the users actually did on the website. This helps to optimize the websites so that it generates desired outcomes as much as possible, whether it is spreading information or closing a sale. (Juslén 2011)

ROI of Social media means the Return on Investment of social media marketing campaign. It is important to define ROI for a social media marketing campaign, otherwise the success of the campaign or activities cannot be measured. With ROI, CCA (Cost of Customer Acquisition) is often also determined. This gives an insight how much it costs to acquire one new customer, and whether it is worth of it. According to Social media bible, ROI of Social media should be considered just like ROI of marketing. Setting goals for ROI and then inspecting which ways of social media marketing activities create the greatest ROI, should be the focusing point of actions. CCA for each of the social platforms should be calculated, so that discovering and determining the most effective social media platforms becomes easier. (Safko 2012)

Segmentation of visitors gives an insight what kind of users visit a website. Visitors can be segmented in several ways, one of them being segmenting groups based on number of times visited on website. Several programs tracking Web-analytics can track if a user visits the website second or third time. This way tracking number of new contacts becomes easier, the timeframe between user revisiting website can be determined, and other useful data can be determined in order to enhance website performance and offering. (Juslén 2011)

Since the social media has become an important channel in marketing and customer relationships management, it requires great attention. With various tools directing the advertisement to the correct customer can be achieved, and maintaining customer relationships can be done on a daily basis. Creating content and interacting with the customers regularly requires time and effort, but creates additional value and improves the image of the company.

### 3 SURVEY AMONG LUTHIERS IN USA

#### 3.1 Determining target group

A target group is determined, so the digital- and social media marketing activities can be allocated to correct persons. The idea behind determining target group is that the right potential customers receive information about the company's products and activities, and are more likely to make a purchase.

In Flaxwood's case the products are string instrument components made out of wood-composite material. These products are designed for instrument builders, Luthiers, who craft two to 20 instruments a year, and repair and maintain instruments for users. The products are also aimed for larger instrument manufacturers, such as Fender or C.F. Martin. Approaching larger manufacturing should be done face to face, so the online marketing activities should not be targeted to those. Thus the target group will be narrowed into a niche-market, more specifically professional Luthiers in Northern America. This is because Flaxwood already has operations Northern America and language- and other barriers are low. Karppinen (2017) also specifically asked to focus on the markets in Northern America.

Influencing target group can be understood as directing the digital marketing activities to Luthiers and exposing them frequently to company's content. Depending on what are the best platforms to reach the target group, content should be created based on theoretical models for creating the content and then shared in these platforms. When the target group receives content frequently, they start to discuss and share this content forward. Also depending on the type of content, it will slowly have an influence on receivers thinking.

The aim of influencing the target group is to create more positive image about wood-synthetic- and natural fibre materials. The assumption is that the instrument manufacturing business prefers and values traditional ways of instrument crafting and manufacturing, and as a material they use exotic woods, which have been used for hundreds of years. Positively changing the opinion towards synthetic, composite and natural fibre materials, is a slow process.

This is why the influencing should be planned and implemented in a longer term and continuous affection.

### **3.2 Objective of the Survey**

The objective of the survey is to gain useful information from luthiers. This information can then be used in planning a digital marketing strategy and approaching techniques towards the target group through online platforms. The objectives and desired information was determined and agreed with the case company, so that the information gained will be accurate and useful for the company's purposes. (Karppinen 31.10.2017)

The main questions and objectives the survey tries to find answers are as follows:

- Social media platforms - What are the most used platforms for luthiers and luthier associations and what is the purpose of using those platforms?
- Material acquisition – Where do the luthiers acquire their material for necks, bridges, fretboards and nuts, and what type of materials these are? (Focus on rainforest woods: Ebony and Rosewood)
- Willingness. Are Luthiers interested in using alternative material for instrument construction, and are they keen in environmental aspects of the material acquisition?

The survey also tries to find out other relevant information to understand luthiers better and to gain a broader insight of their characteristics. The additional information the survey tries to discover includes the following:

- How long the respondent has been a Luthier
- Time - How much time do Luthiers spend in Social Media?
- Lacey Act – Have Luthiers heard of Lacey Act and has it influenced in their operations anyhow?
- Associations – Do Luthiers belong into any associations and what benefits do they gain through them?

### 3.3 Method

The survey was conducted as a semi-structured interview, where information is gathered via open questions. This is because the interviews were conducted by phone and to give the respondents enough time to answer each of the questions. The target number of interviews for the survey was 10 -20, so that there are enough answers to create a viable general opinion and habits. The assumption is that the respondents do not want to spend too much time on answering surveys, so the survey was aimed to last from five to 15 minutes. Based on this the questions will be narrowed into seven questions, so that the respondent has enough time to openly answer to each of the questions. The interviews will be recorded via an application called “Call Recorder” for later on analysis. The questions are designed according to Pasanen’s (2017) Quantitative research guide.

A test interview was implemented with a Finnish Luthier in November 2017, in order to test if the interview create results which respond the objectives of the survey. The interview lasted nearly 20 minutes, which was much more than the desired time for a one interview. The interview was a success and granted broad answers for each of the research questions. Since the test interview succeeded, the actual survey for American Luthiers was conducted via the same approach.

The actual survey was conducted between in November 2017. A total number of 45 luthiers were contacted, and out of them 11 resulted in a successful interview. (See appendix 3) The response rate was 24,5%, which can be considered relatively good. The biggest issue with the survey was to find the contact information of the luthiers, and actually get them to answer to the phone. Most of the luthiers contacted did not answer despite of several calls. On the other hand, those who answered for the call, over half of them were willing to answer for the survey, once the topic was introduced to them. Overall participants were willing to give and share information about their work and business and talk about the topic. The semi-structured interview can be found in Appendix 2.

### 3.4 Results

Luthiers participating had been a professional luthier from 17 to 60 years, average time as a luthier being around 40 years. Based on this the age of luthiers is around 40-70 years experienced craftsmen. All of the luthiers had been building different types of acoustic guitars, 5 out of 11 build electric guitars, and 3 of them builds other string instruments, such as mandolins and violins.

<b>Sample of luthiers for the survey: 11</b>			
Does not use online platforms for professional purposes: 1		Uses online- and social media platforms for professional purposes: 10	
<b>Uses Social media platforms for professional purposes: 10/11</b>			
Facebook: 8	Forums: 3	Instagram: 3	Twitter: 1
<b>Uses online stores for material acquisition: 10/11</b>			
StewMac: 7	Allied Lutherie LLC: 3	Luthiers Mercantile International: 5	
<b>Currently belongs into luthier association</b>			
Belongs to luthier association: 6		Does not belong to luthier association: 5	
<b>Has heard of natural fibre- or other alternative materials: 11/11</b>			
Has used alternative materials: 2		Has not used alternative materials: 9	

Figure 4. Sample of luthiers for the survey, results summarized.

Six of the participants belong into one or few luthier association, most common ones being Guild of American Luthiers and Society of String Instruments. The remaining five participants had earlier belonged into associations, but currently do not belong into any. The most common reason not to belong into an association was that it was too much time consuming to participate events and activities.

All of the luthiers, except one, used social media for professional purposes. Each of the participant had their own web-pages for the business, some of them updating the website more actively than others. Eight out of 10 had their own Facebook page to promote the business, and three of them used other social media platforms for promotional purposes,

such as Instagram, Twitter and Podcasts. All of the participants, except the one who did not use social media at all, told that they had realized the importance of the internet and social media sites for the business, even though some of them were not so active users.

Nine out of 11 belonged or followed some sort of luthier social media group. The most typical way of using social media for professional purposes were the following:

- Following and reading content related to instrument building or topics that related into the field somehow.
- Promoting their own business through various social media platforms.
- Active participation in social media into topics related to luthier.

These three ways using social media were the most typical for all of the luthiers. Most used platform was superiorly Facebook and own websites, followed by luthier forums and Instagram.

For all of the Luthiers, material acquisition occurs through two ways. Main source of wood for bigger parts of the instruments, such as body and neck, was raw wood supplier. This covers common woods such as Mahogany, Maple and Spruce. These materials are easy to acquire from any wood supplier and are not that expensive. The second way of acquiring material was through online stores. Ten out of 11 bought their material for necks, bridges, fingerboard and other smaller parts online. This was because these parts are usually made out of Ebony, Rosewood, Pau Ferro or Cherry, which are rare and denser wood species. These parts are commonly bought premade, since crafting these parts is hard, time consuming and require extreme accuracy in order the tone to be perfect. All of the luthiers, except one, used StewMac for acquiring premade component parts, and the other most common online stores used were Luthier Mercantile International and Allied Lutherie.

Regarding the Lacey act, all of the luthiers are aware of it. They knew about the illegal harvesting of the exotic woods and the general opinion was that it needs to be stopped and the exotic woods need to be preserved. All of the luthiers had noticed that acquiring material is becoming much harder due to legislation issues. This can be seen as overall increase in prices of exotic woods, Ebony, Rosewood, Cherry and Pau Ferro. In addition, the quality of the Brazilian and Indian Ebony, and also Rosewood has declined noticeably.

Even though luthiers are aware of the current situation of the materials and harvesting of exotic woods, they still want to use these materials as long as it is possible. The demand for the exotic woods comes from the customers' side.

All of the luthiers had heard of alternative materials like wood-composites and synthetic materials. The general opinion seemed to be against them. Most of the luthiers did not believe that an alternative material can perform as well as traditional exotic woods. Two of the luthiers had used alternative material due to customers request and said that they turned out to be okay and they had nothing against the material. Still they preferred traditional materials over new experiments.

To summarize the characteristics of a luthier, they are elderly male who have been professional instrument builders for a long time. They use social media to some extent, mostly for advertising own products and consuming content related to instrument manufacturing, luthier communities and wood as a material. Materials are acquired through larger wood suppliers, domestically and internationally, and through online stores, such as StewMac, Luthier Mercantile International and Allied Lutherie. Because of Lacey act the materials have become more expensive and the quality has decreased. Opinion towards alternative synthetic material is sceptical, but to some extend willingness to try them exists.



## **4 RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR DIGITAL MARKETING**

### **4.1 Objectives of the actions**

Influencing luthiers is simply not enough, since those luthiers who had used alternative synthetic material for their component parts had had a request from their clients. Because of this the advertising should be done for, luthiers who craft the guitar, and to guitar players who eventually buy the complete guitar. The image what is wanted to create for luthiers should be designed in a way, that the natural fibre composite responds the traditional exotic woods in terms of quality of tone, outlook and density, and is a viable alternative for exotic woods. For the guitar players the content should focus more on the brand of the company, how ecological and innovative it is. The following suggestions will focus more on how to influence luthiers, since the survey was implemented on luthiers.

### **4.2 Suggestions for actions**

To spread information and create a more positive image of the company, content for the target audience should be created. The content should be planned according to PRACE-model to ensure the content will be effective, and which content suits for the best for the platform and audience of that specific platform. For example in Facebook effective content are videos, articles and pictures. By creating informational content about their products and operations, and directing it to the target audience, the company will gain more publicity amongst the target group and spread awareness about themselves. One concrete example is to create a video of the manufacturing process of the instrument parts, and show how it endures compared to parts made out of traditional exotic woods.

To be more visible and available for the target group Flaxwood should advertise, or start selling their products on the most popular online stores for Luthiers in USA. By starting this kind of operations the products are available for the most luthiers and they are more likely to try them out. As the survey revealed, the three most common online stores amongst luthiers were StewMac, Luthiers Mercantile International and Allied Lutherie. Placing a banner advertisement in these webstore would expose luthiers into Flaxwood's

products, and would create awareness about the company. Selling Flaxwood's products through these three online stores would increase the availability of the products for the luthiers and most likely increase sales. Before starting the sales through online stores, online advertising and online content should be generated, in order to create a demand on the market.

Search Engine Optimization should be implemented in order to ensure that the customers who are looking for type of products Flaxwood produces, they will find Flaxwood's website. If target audience gains some information about the company or the products, but cannot find further information regarding those, it is likely that they will ignore the product completely. This is when SEO steps in. Flaxwood should optimize their websites to appear higher in search engines like Google and Yahoo! when a potential customer tries to find more information. Currently if a potential customer searches for substitute material for string instruments with various search keywords, Flaxwood does not appear on the list. With various keywords like: Wood composite guitar, alternative instrument material, composite bridge, alternative tonewood and other related search keywords did not find a result linking Flaxwood. Only one combination of keywords, natural fibre guitar, listed Flaxwood's name in search results. Flaxwood should take advantage of SEO, so that larger amount of keywords in searches will create a match with their website. Outsourcing SEO to a company which is specialised in digital marketing is recommended.

Taking Search Engine Marketing as a part of digital marketing strategy would be beneficial. With SEM Flaxwood could advertise their websites for luthiers, who are searching component parts for their guitars. Especially when luthiers are starting to look for alternatives for Rosewood and Ebony, they would run into Flaxwood's website advertisement and become aware of this kind of material and components. This is a cost-efficient way to advertise Flaxwood's brand and products for those, who are searching for similar matter. Flaxwood should start using Google AdWords for starters in order to include SEM as a part of their digital marketing strategy. With Google AdWords it is easy to design a paid search result for Google's search engine and determine the costs per month put into SEM.

By initiating the use of Web Analytics, Flaxwood can track the traffic in their website and gain a better idea what the visitors do in there. By using web analytics the company can follow if a certain online marketing activity creates results and is it worth to continue.

For example once Flaxwood starts SEM and audiences start to see advertises directing them to Flaxwood's homepage, with Web analytics it can be traced where these visitors do came from. In addition, Flaxwood can compare efficiency of online marketing activities. Web Analytics can be done completely free, for example via Google Analytics. It is important to monitor if online marketing activities create useful results, other vice they are just a waste of resources.

Listening luthiers can help the company to understand what the luthiers think and what the demands are. This is where the RSS technology comes in hand. By downloading and initiating an active use of RSS software Flaxwood can subscribe to follow several forums and social media groups, where the luthiers actively participate. RSS software will assemble all these platforms into one place, where they are easier and less time consuming to follow.

Those luthiers who had tried alternative composite materials, had received a request from the customer to use that specific material in their guitar. It means that spreading knowledge for guitar players about the company and their purpose is also important. One potential solution for this is to pay for a Flaxwood's professional guitar player to write an article about the guitar and its performance. Another topic for an article could be the way of the guitar from moulding process into the hands of the professional guitarist on stage. This article could be published in Flaxwood's website, guitarist social media channels or guitar related magazines, such as Premier Guitar or Guitar World.

### **4.3 Platforms where to act**

Based on the survey luthiers do not spend too much time on the web for professional purposes. The average was 1-2 hours in a week and the platforms they were using were mainly online stores, Facebook and to some extend discussion forums. Flaxwood should aim their online actions and advertising into those sites. A list of platforms the luthiers mentioned to be using the most can be found in Appendix 4.

Facebook will be the main platform of action. Nearly all of the luthiers used this platform to be connected with other luthiers and consume instrument related content in there. The

main activity in here is to create content for target group to consume, so that they would frequently expose to company's cause and more likely share the content with other users. The material can be anything from videos, pictures of the manufacturing process, into articles related to environmental issues, such as diminishing natural resources, as long as it supports company's brand image and is produced actively. Luthiers have created groups for each other, so joining into these communities and then sharing content in those communities will reach the target group directly.

The second platform of interest are the online shops. Luthiers spend a lot of time on these platforms, the second most of all platforms when searching for new materials and parts for their projects. By starting to sell their products in the three most used online stores used by luthiers, Stewmac, Luthiers Mercantile International and Allied Lutherie, Flaxwood will reach the target group straight away. Once the luthiers see the product, some of them might try them out and some most likely will search for more information regarding the product and the company.

Forums or discussion platforms are not the key point of interest, but should be taken into account. Based on the survey only some of the luthiers use these platforms, and do not spend that much time in there. Following and participating in conversations in these forums might give a hint where the trend with instrument crafting is going. Placing a banner advertisement on one or two most common luthier and guitar player forums would also receive audiences' attention.

Instagram should be kept as a promotional site for the brand, targeted for guitar players, not for luthiers. Only one of the luthiers was using Instagram and it was for promotional purposes. This means that the luthiers are not using this platform to search for information or ideas for their own crafting. Since this platform is targeted for guitar players, the content shared should be about guitars and the brand only. Sharing content in Instagram is important, since pictures and videos give for guitar players an idea what the brand stands for. The content should be stylish pictures of guitars, Flaxwood's players.

#### **4.4 Desired outcomes**

The aim of this thesis was to help Flaxwood to gain more out of their social media marketing and figure out what platforms luthiers use and why. The survey revealed what platforms do the luthiers use and what is the reason to use these platforms. By applying the suggested actions into marketing strategy and implementing them, company will reach the target audience more effectively, spread correct information into target group and ultimately gain more conversions on their website and increase sales.

#### **4.5 Monitoring**

Once the recommended actions are started it is vital to monitor the results. Monitoring the actions will give important information if the action implemented was right and useful. Monitoring can be done several ways, the easiest one being simply following conversions, meaning new contacts on the website and if they have resulted in a profitable contact. Digital marketing activities can be measured with digital tools, for example with Google analytics. Once monitoring is done on regular basis, focusing on the right actions for shorter- and longer term is easier.

## 5 SUMMARY

Digitalization has shaped the world drastically. Everything is available 24 hours a day, every day of the week. Over hundred million new persons gain access to the internet every year, connecting the world more and more. The development of technology from Web 1.0 into Web 2.0 enabled the possibilities of the internet to expand further than just sharing information from writer to reader. Now the internet serves as a learning platform, entertainment centre, source of information and a market hallway, and it does not seem to stop there.

Thanks to the development of Web 2.0, social media platforms were able to be created. Enabling the reader to write, reply to writer and share content to other users has resulted in an enormous growth. Just in seven years, from 2010 to 2017, the number of social media users has nearly tripled, from 0.97 billion into 2.46 billion. This comprises nearly one third of the world's population. The possibility to reach one third of the world's population with just few clicks is an opportunity, which cannot be missed.

For business purposes the development of social media is a dream come true. Keeping connected with customers, selling products, spreading information about a company has never been so convenient and time-efficient as it is now. Delivering the right message and advertisement for the right customer, even for the tiniest niche-group, can be ensured in a cost efficient way. Formerly selling products internationally required large amount of resources and was available only for the larger corporations. Now even the smallest companies and entrepreneurs can sell their products online across the world, and ship the products with ease.

Crafting instruments can be traced far back in history. Luthier business is one which has used same techniques and materials for hundreds of years. Individual luthiers are usually been interested in instrument manufacturing from young adulthood and they have built instruments for most of their lives. There are luthiers from extremely traditional craftsmen into a modern experimental instrument manufacturer, but they all still share the same vision of that perfect sound. Despite the diminishing exotic tonewoods, which the Lacey Act tries to control in the US, the luthiers still want to use these woods. They all are aware

of the issues with illegal harvesting of Ebony and Rosewood, and have noticed a decline in the quality of the exotic tonewoods, but still prefer using them. The opinion towards new materials is sceptic, can they achieve in creating that perfect sound which has been found from exotic tonewoods?

Even though luthier is a traditional and old profession, luthiers today are in social media as any other business. Nearly all of them have their own webpage and Facebook page and they use several social media platforms for professional purposes. They are taking advantage of digitalization, in order to increase reputation and succeed in what they want to do doing. Luthiers are staying in touch with each other through several social media groups and channels to, share their work, experiences, opinions and to gain new ideas and aspects. Acquiring materials has changed to some extent, since some parts of the instruments are ordered premade through online stores, which previously were crafted individually. Luthiers are very strict with the quality they buy, with both raw material and pre-made components. With a proper online activity even a small company from a distant country can serve this niche-group. It requires competent skills in digital marketing, correct tools to use and a quality material to provide.

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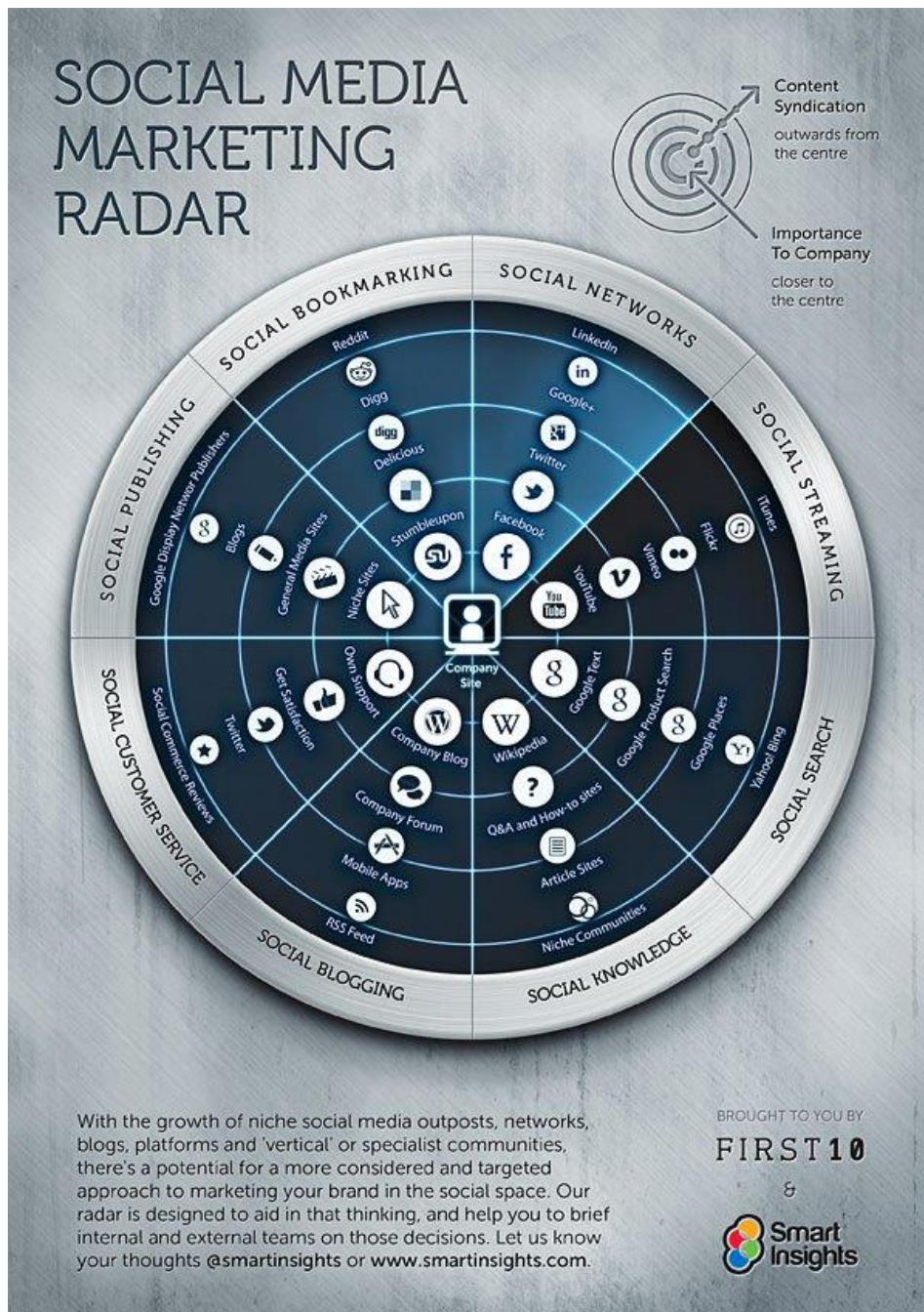


Figure 2. The social media marketing radar (Chaffey and Bosomworth 2012).

## **Survey of Luthiers Professional online routines and component material acquisition**

Interviewers' template for phone survey.

Hello, my name Panu Purtoola. I am calling from Finland and I am conducting a Survey about **Luthiers professional online routines and component material acquisition**. The survey would take from 10 to 15 minutes and it is fully confidential. The aim of this Survey is to give an insight into Luthiers online and social media usage from a professional point of view, and how the material acquisition occurs. I would be grateful if you would participate in this survey.

The Questions:

1. How long have you been a Luthier and how did you get into this field.
2. What are the instruments you build and most common materials for smaller parts, such as fretboards and bridges? (Guitar, Violin, other.)
3. Do you belong into any Luthier association or Luthier social media groups?
4. Do you use Social media or follow certain web pages or other media, such as magazines, for professional purposes?
  - a. Follow up if yes: Which media's or sites and what is the purpose of it? Also how much time do you spend in social media in a week?
  - b. Follow up if no: How do you maintain professional relationships?
5. Do you use online stores or other online sources for material acquisition?
  - a. Follow up if yes: Which websites or platforms and why those specifically?
  - b. Follow up if no: What are the alternative and traditional ways to acquire material?
6. Is the Lacey Act familiar to you and have you noticed any changes or difficulties in material acquisition, more specifically with the tone woods Ebony and Rosewood?
7. Have you heard of alternative materials for necks, bridges, fretboards, etc.?
  - a. Follow up if yes: What materials and how did you run into them? Have you already used them in instrument building?
  - b. Follow up if no: Are you interested in trying alternative materials for component parts?

This is the end of this survey, do you have anything to add or to ask? If not, thank you for your participation and have a nice day

Finnish luthier Contacted:

Korpi instruments - Test Luthier from Finland to see if survey questions answer for objectives of survey. 8.11.2017

Interview 1. William Nesse summary, 5 min:

15 years, 1972 first guitar, builds classical guitars. Ebony and Rosewoods. Belongs into Guild of American Luthiers, Society of string instruments, Colorado Luthiers association. Has his own webpage and doesn't spend that much time in the web, nor uses Facebook. Uses online stores for material acquisition: Stewmac. Has heard of Lacey act and noticed increase in prices but tries to avoid all the legislation issues. Has not heard of alternative materials, is willing to try them but says that the demand has to come from customer's side.

Interview 2. Michael Bashkin summary, 8 min:

Luthier over 20 years, started because had interest in guitars and woodworks. Builds Steel strings, acoustic guitars, materials mahogany, rosewood, spruce. Belongs into Guild of American Luthiers, Facebook Luthier social media groups. Uses Facebook, Instagram, podcasts and own webpages to promote his business, 1-2 hours in a week. Most of the suppliers are online stores: Luthiers Mercantile International, Allied Lutherie LLC, Stewmac, uses them because has used them for over 20 years and are trusted suppliers. Has heard of Lacey Act, everything much more difficult. Shipping is more difficult in terms of material acquisition and transporting the finished guitar. As an alternative material has used several other wood species, but also has used epoxy as a fretboard material.

Interview 3. Thomas Prisloe summary, 8 min:

Luthier 27 years, was a guitarist and built his first guitar in high school. Builds Classical guitars, 9 strings. Materials he uses are spruce, high quality European spruce, Rosewoods, Maple, and Cherry. Does not belong into Luthier associations right now. For material acquisition uses his own woods, for smaller parts Stewmac, Luthiers Mercantile International. Has heard of Lacey Act, is worried that the tree species are not wiped out, but has

not noticed any changes in supply of rainforest woods. Has heard of synthetic and other alternative materials but doesn't use them or believe in the performance of alternative materials. Also customers ask for traditional woods in their guitars.

Interview 4. William Kraus summary, 10 min:

Luthier for 45 years, got into it in art school in college. Builds guitars and other custom ordered instruments, such as violins, flutes etc. Materials used: Maple, mahogany, rosewood, and exotic woods, customers ask to use exotic woods. Does not belong into any luthier associations or social media groups, but promotes his business through Facebook, Instagram and occasionally uses forums and Facebook to be in touch with colleagues. Uses Luthiers Mercantile International, Stewmac, Jescar, Northwind Tonewood. Has heard of Lacey act, has not noticed changes in material supply, but shipping it has become much harder. Has heard of alternative materials but has not used.

Interview 5. Joe Veillette summary, 7 min:

Fixed his own guitar and ended up as a Luthier, 45 years as a professional Luthier. Builds acoustics as 2/3 of his work, electric guitars and basses. Uses Mahogany, Spruce, Ebony, Rosewood and Pau Ferro. Belongs into American association of Instrument artisans. Posts on Facebook to advertise his guitar shop, what they do and other promotional stuff. Material acquisition occurs through smaller wood suppliers and wants to keep them for himself, because they are small entrepreneurs. Has heard of Lacey Act, got himself the importer and exporter license (has gone through the paperwork) and searches alternative woods. Material acquisition more time consuming but not that big of an issue. Has heard of alternative material, has nothing against them and some of his customers has asked already for those materials for parts.

Interview 6. Christian Mirabella summary, 10 min:

Luthier for 60 years. Builds archtop guitars, Flattops, mandolins. Materials he uses are: European Maple, German and Italian spruce, Ebony. Belongs into Luthier Facebook groups, follows social media communities for professional purposes and realizes how important they are. Does not use online stores for material acquisition, instead of uses

wood supply companies and has very personal relationship with them. Is although actively going through online stores on what is on the market. Has heard of Lacey Act, and noticed difficulties in material acquisition. Has had some issues with acquiring material for his Flattops. Has heard of alternative materials, but his customers ask for more traditional exotic woods, such as Ebony. He has done some experiences for few customers, and has noticed some changes in customer demand, but only in a small percentage of customers.

Interview 7. Greg German summary, 8 min:

Luthier for 17 years. Does guitar repairs and builds acoustics, electrics, archtops, and Jazz instruments. Spruce and Maple for tops, Ebony and Pau Ferro for smaller parts as a material. Does not belong into any associations right now, but is a member of private Facebook luthier groups. Uses these groups for reading, occasional posting and luthier to luthier talk. Has his own Facebook page to promote own guitars. Purchases wood from Allied Luthier, Luthiers mercantile for smaller parts, avoids StewMac. Uses also smaller wood suppliers. Prefers local wood as much as possible. Has heard of Lacey Act, and has started to build guitars without materials which might cause issues with transportation. Has noticed an increase in prices in general. Has heard of alternative materials such as wood composite similar to Pau Ferro, but has not tried them. Says they look fine but is sceptic can the sound be the same as in real wood.

Interview 8. Tim Reede summary, 11 min:

Luthier for 50 years, started as a guitar player and was interested in woodworking, so combined these interests. Builds Sg and Om shaped acoustics, ukuleles and electric guitars. Materials he uses are, Mahogany, Rosewood, Spruce and Cocobolo. Belongs into few associations through Facebook, does not consider to be active user. Uses social media a lot for professional purposes, mostly advertising own guitars in Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Most of the materials he buys are from online stores: StewMac, Hidden Hardwoods, Old world tonewood, eurotonewoods. Has heard of similar act to Lacey Act and has noticed that ebony, cocobolo and rosewood is more expensive and harder to acquire. Has heard of alternative carbon materials and used them once by request. Thinks that some composite materials are good for building, but still prefers alternative or traditional

woods for component parts.

Interview 9. Robert Dixon summary, 11 min:

Luthier for 20 years, was a guitar player at first and also woodworking enthusiast. Builds mostly electric and archtop acoustics. Materials used: wants to use local material, uses Rosewood, Ebony, Mahogany, Maple and Chestnut. Does not currently belong into any associations, but used to. Has his own websites and uses some chat boards. Feels that is not an active user and could be more active. For materials uses local wood supplier for most of the woods. Buys fingerboards and some exotic woods from online stores. Has heard of Lacey act and scarcity of exotic rainforest woods. Has had issues with transporting instruments across borders. Has noticed that acquiring some exotic woods is harder nowadays. Has heard of alternative materials but feels like he is more of an old-school builder and prefers traditional materials.

Interview 10. Tim McKnight summary, 5 min:

Been luthier for 25, and started because wanted to be a guitar player, couldn't afford the guitar so build one for himself. Builds acoustic guitars, materials Rosewoods mostly. Belongs into Guild of American Luthiers. Does not use social media for professional purposes. Advertising occurs through word of mouth. Buys material online and from shows. Has heard of Lacey act and has noticed decline in quality of Brazilian Rosewood due to overharvesting. Has heard of synthetic alternative materials but does not use them. Thinks there is a difference between composite and regular wood guitar.

Interview 11. David Vincent summary, 6 min:

Been luthier for 39 years and attended school to study guitar building. Builds Mandolins and acoustics out of Spruce, Maple, Mahogany, Indian Rosewood and Cherry. Belongs into Facebook luthier groups, has been a member of Guild of American Luthiers and Association of String Instrument Artisans. Uses Facebook for advertising and spreading information about his guitar building school, and has own websites. Acquires some material online, but mostly uses familiar local suppliers, but online uses Luthiers mercantile, StewMac, Allied Luthieri, Gillmore woods. Has heard of Lacey act, material is much

more expensive and quality has declined significantly. Has heard of alternative materials for component parts, but has no opinion on them.

**Contacted luthiers from USA**

- +1 314 631 1435 – Tom Bills St Missouri (Did not answer)
- +1 612 338 1079 – Hoffman Guitars (Questions send via e-mail by request)
- +1 970 495 1011 Michael Bashkin **Answer 8 min 2.**
- +1 303 944 4813 Greg German **Answer 8 min 7.**
- +1 970 330 7183 William Nesse **Answer 5 min 1.**
- +1 386 585 4800 Larry Breslin (Did not Answer)
- +1 803 331 0677 Chris Brinson (Call after 1 hour 19:24)
- +1 864 848 9510 Darrell Guinn (Answered, but didn't work)
- +1 864 497 2895 Walter Johnson (Answered, but didn't work)
- +1 803 883 5587 Lewis Price (Did not Answer)
- +1 970 361 8577 Michael Anthony (Questions send via e-mail by request)
- +1 720 987 9444 Stanley Plant (Answered, but didn't work)
- +1 585 902 8663 Bernie Lehmann (Call again, did not answer second time)
- +1 631 277 3620 John Monteleone (Did not work)
- +1 315 630 4010 Randy S. Muth (Did not answer)
- +1 845 269 8275 Chihoe Hahn (Call again, did not answer second time)
- +1 631 842 3819 Christian Mirabella **Answer 11 min 6.**
- +1 845 235 7589 Vail Guitars (Not willing to answer)
- +1 845 278 8847 Brad Goodman (Not willing to answer)
- +1 716 665 4490 Jim Holler (Did not work)
- +1 518 695 5382 Kim Griffin (Did not answer)
- +1 607 387 3875 Thomas Prisløe **Answer 8 min 3.**
- +1 716 735 4047 William Kraus **Answer 9 min 4.**
- +1 845 684 5566 David Schneider (Didn't have time)
- +1 845 679 6154 Joe Veillette **Answer 6 min 5.**
- +1 518 483 7685 David R. Nichols (Did not Answer)
- +1 845 246 1369 Martin Keith (Didn't answer)
- +1 845 679 7138 Harvey Citron (Was not a good time)
- +1 607 749 2594 Robert MacBlane (Answered, didn't answer second time)
- +1 740 223 6114 Tim McKnight **Answer 5 min 10.**
- +1 740 777 5050 Steve Weber (Did not want to participate)



- +1 216 496 0994 Jon Hill (Did not answer)
- +1 216 227 2886 Kurt Wright (Did not answer)
- +1 440 826 4276 Bob Kushner (Did not answer)
- +1 614 457 2194 Tony Cochran (Did not answer)
- +1 740 591 2415 Dan Brooks (Did not answer)
- +1 330 825 5526 Rick Penta (Did not answer)
- +1 612 721 8032 Tim Reede **Answer 11 min 8.**
- +1 612 840 3967 Robert Dixon **Answer 12 min 9.**
- +1 651 301 0873 Ben Manning (Was not willing to answer)
- +1 651 380 0566 David Vincent **Answer 6 min 11**
- +1 218 329 0443 Nik Gruber (Answered, didn't answer second time)

### List of online stores, forums and luthier social media sites

A Theoretical model of Written Text on Facebook for Improved PR Communication.

[http://usir.salford.ac.uk/38019/1/Dissertation\\_Gust\\_fine.pdf](http://usir.salford.ac.uk/38019/1/Dissertation_Gust_fine.pdf)

Association of Stringed Instrument Artisans. <https://asiartisans.org/content/>

Delcamp Classical Guitar. <http://www.classicalguitardelcamp.com/>

Guild of American Luthiers. <http://www.luth.org/>, <https://www.facebook.com/GuildofAmericanLuthiers/?fref=ts>

LuthierTalk. <http://www.luthiertalk.com/>

Musical Instrument Makers Forum. <http://www.mimf.com/phpbb/index.php>

Official Luthiers Forum. <http://www.luthiersforum.com/>

Telecaster Discussion Page Reissue. <http://www.tdpri.com/>

The Gear Page. <https://www.thegearpage.net/board/index.php>

Ultimate Guitar. <https://www.ultimate-guitar.com/>

List of Luthiers in USA. <http://www.4allmusic.com/selection-luthiers-pays/luthiers-usa/93-guitars-luthiers-usa/97-listing-guitars-luthiers-usa>

Online stores:

Allied Lutherie. <https://alliedlutherie.com/>

Luthiers Mercantile International Inc. <http://www.lmii.com/>

Steward MacDonald. <http://www.stewmac.com>