What is the online marketing communications plan that helps AdLaunch grow its number of online users?

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The author's employer, AdLaunch commissioned this study. AdLaunch is building an online video editor with free materials including videos, photos, and music. AdLaunch's target customers are companies who desire to create more video ads on social media.

The study objective is to propose an online marketing communication plan to help the company grow its number of online users. The outcome includes a situation analysis, an objective, a strategy, an action plan and a measurement method. More specifically, the author attempted to identify the right key message and detailed action plan to communicate it online efficiently.

The research approach in the study was case study and qualitative methods. The author used brainstorming and interviewing method to collect data. The study involved both the CEO of AdLaunch and potential users in Finland. Different analyses including SWOT, PESTEL were also conducted to support creating the plan.

After studying collected insights, the author proposed the key message is "AdLaunch enables every company to make videos quickly and affordably for social media". Also, the action was presented in a step-by-step order and it included different elements such as website, SEO, online advertising, public relations, social media. At the end, essential suggestions for further studies to minimize the risks when executing the plan are provided.

Keywords: online marketing, social media, communication plan, B2B, key message, AdLaunch.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Marketing communication is essential for all types of businesses. It is the way customers perceived products or services in the market. A company may develop terrific products and has a great management team, but that business is not warranted entirely to succeed. The author believes that growing a business mainly depends on the ability to sell. The first step to sell is to communicate the right message to customers so that they understand why they should buy a specific product rather than others

Today, customer behaviors are changing along with the history. The world is transforming with the development of the Internet and new technologies. Many available reports indicate that millennials prefer to buy products online and spend more time on the Internet than ever before. Old generations step by step adapt to the new lifestyle when the television is not the only source of information. Advertisements about different products appear on a mobile screen of their social media just like millennials.

According to Statista, an estimated 1.61 billion people worldwide purchase goods online in 2016. Global e-retail sales amounted to 1.9 trillion U.S. dollars and are expected to grow up to 4.06 trillion U.S. dollars by 2020. In the Asia Pacific, e-retail sales contributed to 12.1 percent of retail sales in the area.

With those changes, companies nowadays spend more resources on increasing their brand awareness and communicating their messages online. Customers can be approached via many online channels such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter. Each online channel has its nature of contents; therefore, companies have to adjust their contents with different messages to maximize performance. Consequently, integrated marketing communication is even more crucial to any businesses. It is a simple concept which ensures that all forms of media and messages are carefully linked together while ensuring the efforts of every stakeholder are aligned to the changing requirements within any marketplace (ENI Marketing, 2017).

The Internet has opened the door for SMEs and startups to compete with big corporations in a segmented market. The role of online communication is shifting from creating contents with a giant budget for mass audiences to deliver the right message at the right time. The conversion rate in many cases is now more important than reach rate in online marketing campaigns.

Following the changes in customer's behaviors are the adjustments in company's products. The number of software as a service (SaaS) based companies has been growing recently. Businesses who used to build solely downloaded software are shifting to on-demand web-based solutions. Better Buys stated that 78 percent of companies plan to use more SaaS solutions

over the next three years, which increases the average number of applications used from three to seven.

SaaS businesses mainly reach, nurture and convert their customers online. In a recent decade, many SaaS-based companies are burning enormous resources on advertising on some particular platforms such as Google, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The online competition is getting more extreme. Therefore, companies, especially SaaS-based companies, need a comprehensive plan for their online marketing communications. Otherwise, they come back to the point that they have a great product, but they cannot sell it.

1.1 Case company - AdLaunch

AdLaunch is a SaaS-based video ad creation in Helsinki, Finland. The company was founded in 2015 by Joel Hypen. Its mission is to enable everyone makes good looking video ads for social media in minutes. The company launched the beta version of its product in October 2017. AdLaunch has received supports from Tekes and Collider UK - one of the most prominent European ad-tech startup accelerators. Recently in December 2017, AdLaunch got into top 3 final at Slush 100 pitching competition.

The product is a combination of an online video editor and pre-licensed stock materials including videos, photos, and music. Users can easily create video ads online with four easy steps including getting started with AdLaunch's suggested video ad templates, then customizing contents with provided online materials, then inputting messages, logo, call to action to the video, and finally picking the best music that fit the video. The competitive advantages of the product are the easy-to-use user interface and affordable pricing models.

AdLaunch's target customers are mainly startups or small and medium enterprises from different industries who are interested in creating more video ads for their social media channels. The people who are directly using AdLaunch's video creation tool are social media marketers and content creators.

Because the Finnish market is still small, AdLaunch is now expanding internationally. Being a SaaS business, the scope of potential customers is enormous. However, with a limited budget, having the right messages to reach the right people at the right time is a substantial challenge. Thus, an online marketing communications plan is significant for AdLaunch to communicate its product efficiently.

1.2 Objective of the study

This study is conducted to address the following concern: "What is the online marketing communications plan that helps AdLaunch grow its number of online users?". More specifically, the study aims to generate insights to identify the key message and action plan to deliver it

efficiently to potential online users. The goal of this plan is to attract potential users signup and try the AdLaunch's video creation tool.

The author conducted this study at the time AdLaunch launched its product for seven months. Regarding the applicable possibility of the plan, the author has conferred strategies and ideas with the CEO of AdLaunch, Mr Joel Hypen throughout the research process.

- What will not be focused on or covered in this study

Target customer persona: The author assumes that AdLaunch has defined its customer personas correctly. The online marketing communications plan will be built on the foundation of given customer personas.

Budget in detail: Budget to execute the plan will be decided depending on the quality of the research and the action plan. The author is free to suggest the budget; however, as a startup, AdLaunch only has a small budget for marketing.

Follow up and revision: A measurement plan will be included in the study; however, the scope of this study is not including implementing the plan. AdLaunch will decide if they will perform it after receiving the final research paper.

- What will be focused on or covered in this study

The key message: AdLaunch is struggling to position in the market. Thus, a consistent key message linked between the company's online channels is essential for its marketing activities.

Situation analysis: Understanding the market and AdLaunch current performance are crucial for the author to make write an effective plan.

1.3   Structure of the study

This study consists of six main chapters as follows:

Chapter 1 introduces general information about the study background, defines objectives and scope of the study. The research question is also mentioned in this chapter.

Chapter 2 undertakes literature review addressing the topics of marketing communications in general, developing effective key messages and online marketing communications plan.

Chapter 3 presents in detail research approach and methods for this study.

Chapter 4 illustrates case company analysis in the current market.

Chapter 5 discusses the process of collecting and analyzing interviewee's data.

Chapter 6 suggests an online marketing communications plan for the case company.

Chapter 7 concludes the study with the researcher's findings, overview evaluations and discusses limitations of the study process. Finally, suggestions for further study are provided.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The author provides in this chapter knowledge backgrounds related to marketing communications, essential elements of online marketing communications, a process of developing effective key messages and an online marketing communications plan.

2.1 Concept of marketing communications

The term marketing communications was defined and analyzed in the twentieth century; however, its activities had been applied in practice long before. In the past, the definition of marketing communications often linked with advertising. Due to the evolution of printing press, advertising was the most visible form of marketing communications. Manufacturers determined mass media as a vehicle to drive mass consumption. During that period, the foundation of mass media were newspaper and magazines.

However, the roots of modern marketing communications change with the evolvement of an industrial revolution. Over the past few decades, newspapers and magazines are not the only visible form of marketing communications. Consequently, advertising is now part of the modern marketing communications.

With the establishment of the new Internet era, traditional online marketing communication is moving into online marketing communications. Even though online marketing communications is a new model evolved recently, its development speed is remarkable. Many SMEs and startups are now competing with big corporations in the online market. Corporations who do not adapt to this trend are now observing the decline in sales. As a result, the new strategy to complement online principles into marketing communications activities is highly crucial nowadays.

2.1.1 Marketing and marketing communications

Marketing is a process by which companies engage customers, build strong customer relationships, and create customer value to capture value from customers in return (Kotler, 2017, 29). In another word, marketing is a process of getting potential customers interested in company's products or services. The process involves researching, analyzing, planning, executing and measuring all activities related to acquiring customers.

Meanwhile, marketing communications is one part of marketing activities. Marketing communications is the means by which a supplier of goods or services represent themselves to their target audiences with the goal of stimulating dialogue leading to a better commercial or other relationship (Egan, 2007, 1).

In another word, marketing communications managers are responsible for communicating products or services to the public. Meanwhile, chief marketing officers have to begin with product conceptualization and development, product pricing, packaging, and distribution. Generally speaking, every marketing activities fit into one of these four categories including product, place, price, and promotion. Although marketing and marketing communications have many differences, people frequently use those terms interchangeably.

2.1.2 Developments in marketing communications

Industrial revolution leads to the changing in market circumstances and customer behaviors. Therefore, marketing communication activities have to adapt to better reach and deliver key messages to potential audiences. Over the last decade, there are three significant developments in marketing communications. The author summarized them in the table below.

Developments in marketing communications	
Perceived movement from mass communication	Perceived movement to targeted communication
Selective communications tools	Integrated marketing communications
Dominated by consumer goods	Recognition of importance of service and business-to-business (B2B) sectors

Figure 1: Developments in marketing communications (Source: Egan, 2007, 13)

The first development is the transition from mass communications to targeted communications. Television advertising is no longer the most effective tool and medium to reach potential customers. However, both types have their advantages and disadvantages. De Pelsmacker et al. (2001, p.6) noted the comparison in the table below.

Personal versus mass communications		
	Personal Communications	**Mass Communications**

Reach big audience		
Speed	Slow (personal selling) Fast (direct marketing)	Fast
Cost per customer	High	Low
Influence on individual		
Attention value	High	Low
Selective perception	Relatively lower	High
Comprehension	High	Moderate/Low
Feedback		
Direction	Two-way	One way (generally)
Speed on feedback	High	Low
Measuring effectiveness	Accurate	Difficult/Impossible

Figure 2: Personal versus mass communications (Source: De Pelsmacker et al. 2001, 6)

The second development is the shift from selective to integrated marketing communications. Integrated marketing communications (IMC) is, in theory, the process of using promotional tools in a unified way so that communications' synergy is created (Semenik, 2002, 8). IMC helps companies to have a holistic approach to communications and evaluate total impacts of all communications activities at one time. In spite of its benefits, IMC is usually not fully adopted in companies because of its difficulties to implement. Indeed, many marketers can only communicate in their specialist field.

The third development is the changing from the domination of consumer goods marketing to-wards the total market orientation including business-to-business and services, which firmly connects with relationship marketing. Gronroos (1994) explained relationship marketing as

"to identify and establish, maintain and enhance and, when necessary, terminate relationships with customers and other stakeholders, at a profit so that the objectives of all stakeholders involved are met; this is done by mutual exchange and fulfilment of promises".

The driver of this development is the recognition of the importance of all organization's relationships, not just customers and suppliers. For example, the point when customers interact with employees can decide whether a business can win or lose.

2.1.3 Marketing communications tools

Marketers use different tools or even mix these tools to communicate with their target audiences. According to Egan (2007, 16), marketing communications tools are the process by which marketers develop and present an appropriate set of communication's stimuli. On the other hand, channels like television and Internet are defined as a media tool. It is important to notice the clear distinction between marketing communications tools and media tools.

There are five dominate characteristics of marketing communications tools which are advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations and direct marketing. Those definitions are illustrated briefly below by Egan (2007, 19).

Marketing communications tools' characteristics	
Advertising	A non-personal form of mass communication.
Sales Promotion	The use of incentives to generate a specific (usually short-term) response.
Personal Selling	An interpersonal tool where individuals, often representing an organization, interact "in order to inform, persuade, or remind an individual or group to take appropriate action, as required by the sponsors" (Fill, 2002, 16).
Public Relations	The art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organizations' leadership and implementing planned programmes of action which will serve both the organization's and the public's interest.

Direct Marketing	Seeks to target individual customers with the intention of delivering personalized messages and building a relationship with them based on their responses to direct communication.

Figure 3: Marketing communications tools' characteristics (Source: Egan 2007, p.19)

Each tool has its strengths and weaknesses. The choice of which marketing communications tools to use is considered by different factors below.

Key factors of major marketing communications tools					
	Advertising	Sales Promotion	Public Relations	Personal Sales	Direct Marketing
Communications					
Ability to deliver personal message	Low	Low	Low	High	High
Ability to reach large audience	High	Med	Med	Low	Med
Level of interaction	Low	Low	Low	High	High
Credibility given by target audience	Low	Low	High	Med	Med
Costs					
Absolute costs	High	Med	Low	High	Med
Cost per contact	Low	Med	Low	High	High
Wastage	High	Med	High	Low	Low
Size of investment	High	Med	Low	High	Med
Control					

Ability to target particular audiences	Med	High	Low	Med	High
Ability to redeploy as circumstances change	Med	High	Low	Med	High

Figure 4: Key factors of major marketing communications tools (Source: Fill, 2002)

2.1.4 Life cycle effects on marketing communications strategy

The importance of product life cycle on marketing communications strategy has been discussed over the years. Product life cycle is "a concept that suggests products go through a cycle that includes a period of introduction and growth, a maturity phase and ultimately decline unless the product brand can be reinvented" (Egan, 2007, 41). No single marketing communications strategy is valid throughout the process of product development. The characteristics of products or services in a particular life cycle period have to be taken into consideration. Not only the strategy but also the tools change depending on whether marketers wish to gain attention, create interest or generate action. Detail explanation is described below.

Life cycle effects on marketing communications strategy				
	Introduction	Growth	Maturity	Decline
Marketing objectives	Help early adopters adopt	Quickly gain market share	Expand market share and build customer / distributor loyalty	Maintain dominant market position and consider brand extensions
Marketing communications objectives	Create awareness, interest / desire among innovators	Strengthen brand preference (with customers and distributors). Encourage wider trial and use	Increase frequency of use and / or suggest possible new uses	Minimize promotion but retain brand values. Perhaps create specialist niche

Marketing communications strategy (tools in order of priority)	Public relations / publicity, personal selling, advertising, sales promotion	Advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations / publicity	Advertising, dealer promotions, sales promotions, public relations / publicity	Reduce media expenditure, sales promotions, public relations / publicity

Figure 5: Life cycle effects on marketing communications strategy (Source: Smith et al. 1997)

2.2 Essential elements in online marketing communications

Marketing communications is one part of marketing that also includes both online and offline activities. Notwithstanding, in this study, the author wanted to focus on online marketing communications for business-to-business customers as it was related to the study outcome. Therefore, five elements including a brand image, owned media, online advertising, public relations, and business-to-business communications were studied in this section.

2.2.1 Image and brand management

A company with an excellent brand image can win the market over its competitors. There are five definitions of branding listed below.

Definitions of branding	
Wells, Burnett and Moriarty (1995)	Branding: the process of creating and identity for a product using a distinctive name or symbol.
De Chernatony and McDonald (1998)	A successful brand is an identifiable product, service, person or place augmented in such a way that a buyer or user perceives relevant, unique added values which matches their needs quite closely.
Kotler (2000)	A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol or design or a combination of these intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers to differentiate them from their competitors.
Pickton and Broderick (2001)	Branding is not just a case of placing a symbol or name onto products to identify the manufacturer, a brand is a set of attributes that have

	a meaning, an image and produce associations with the product when a person is considering that brand of product.
Egan (2007)	Branding is a collection of actual and emotional characteristics associated with a particular identified product or service that differentiates that product or service from the rest of the marketplace.

Figure 6: Definitions of branding (Source: Wells, Burnett and Moriarty, 1995; De Chernatony and McDonald, 1998; Kotler, 2000; Pickton and Broderick, 2001; Egan, 2007)

A brand is merely a product of an organization; thus, it should have a strong identity to be easily recognizable. Three critical aspects of a brand's identity are design elements, slogans, and application.

Design elements include a logo, graphics, typeface, symbols, and colors that stimulate the recognition and remembrance of a brand. Among those elements, color is the one that brings the first impressions to the audiences. Each color has its implications for the brand which is described in Picture 1 below.
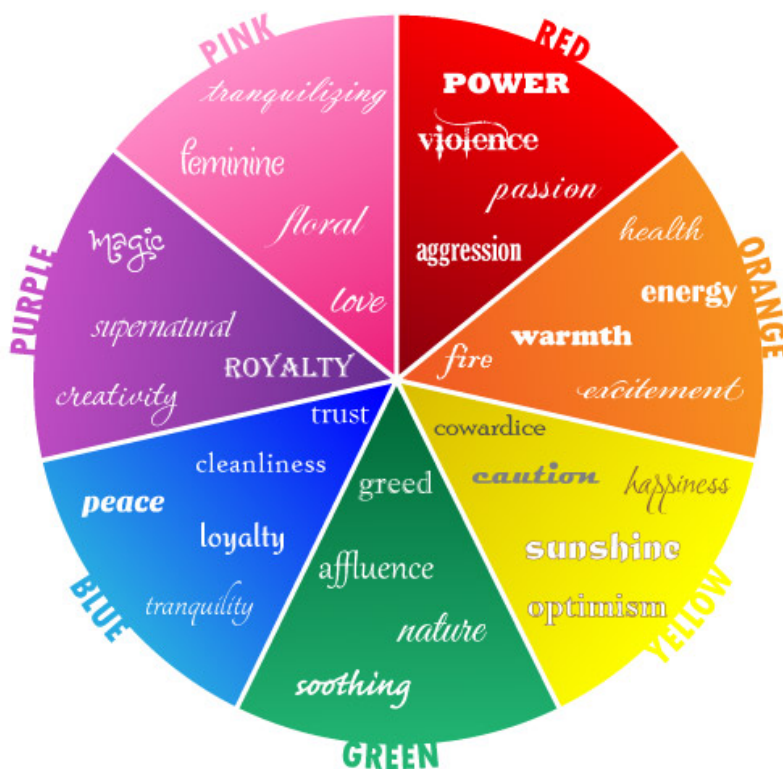
Picture 1: Themes commonly associated with particular colours (Source: creative bloq staff)

However, logo and color palette do not cover the whole brand identity. According to Butler (2016), outstanding brand identity is well thought-out to make it: distinct, memorable, scalable, cohesive and easy to apply. Indeed, the process of building a brand identity starts with research on audiences, existing brands, and even competitors.

Slogan is a statement that should be distinctive as a brand itself. The phrase is hugely crucial for consumers to understand a company's market position and feel loyalty to the brand. As the slogan of Apple is "Think Different", customers believe that there are innovations and something creative in every Apple's products.

The application refers to corporate advertising, stationery, etc. (Egan, 2007). It is important to remember that all company's messages can influence its potential customers on how they perceive the brand. Today, the influence of planned communication to audiences with advertising and public relations is being questioned. Most of the social media accounts including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube contain a lot of advertisements and company's news. Social media users tend to skip or even block advertising contents, except those contents, come from the companies they truly follow or bring real added value.

Like products, brands should also be positioned properly in the market; otherwise, companies will lose their competitive advantages to other competitors. Kotler (1967) defined that positioning is "the act of designing the company's offering and image so that they occupy a meaningful and distinct competitive position in the target customers' minds". Most of the designing activities are related to marketing communications.

There are three levels of positioning which are benefit positioning, user positioning, and competitive positioning. Benefit positioning means customers differentiate the brand by benefits of using it. User positioning is how specific types of customers perceive the brand. These customers often come from a particular background or lifestyle. The last level is competitive positioning which emphasizes on the unfair advantages of the brand over its competitors.

2.2.2 Owned media - websites and social media

Owned media is all forms of media that a company has full control. In this study, the scope of studying owned media will be narrowed into website contents and social media posts. With a limited budget for marketing activities, these media seem to be critical for startups like AdLaunch to communicate the messages with their target audiences.

A website is the most fundamental source for potential customers to search and access a company's information. Smith (2016, 4) explained that the single most important reason for having a website is to help customers or stakeholders. In the context of attracting new website visitors to sign up to become free users, SEO and conversion rate are two main criteria determining the quality of a website.

SEO stands for search engine optimization which means the methods of optimizing the websites on specific criteria so that the website ranks higher in a search engine. The leading search engine at the time this study started is Google. Based on the article of Carolina from Lander (2017), the author summarized ten significant approaches to SEO for a company in the figure below.

Ten major approaches to SEO	
Domain history	Check if the domain previously existed and had negative SEO, it could impact the ranking results of the site in the future.
Avoid duplicate content	Duplicate contents not only create a poor experience for visitors but also make the sites be penalized by search engines.
Outbound links	Offering extra reading on the subject increases people's understanding of the topic and improve SEO because readers receive additional values.
Update content regularly	Up-to-date contents influence positively SEO results. Search engines frequnely crawl for new content. Even if a company does not update full site all the time, a new page or a blog provides search engine with new material to index.
Internal links	Providing users with links to other related pages on the website where they can learn more is necessary. It increase time users spend on the site, which also validates that the site provides quality contents.
Image optimization	ALT tags provide more information for the photo. Captions are a great place to include keywords and descriptions which also positively impact on search engine results. In addition, Google prioritizes page loading speed in website ranking and larger images often take longer time to load. However, shrinking images down as much as possible will not positively influence search results. Indeed, graphics need to be light and user friendly.

Keywords and phrases	Keywords are one of the critical building blocks of SEO. Long tail search phrases are becoming more significant. However, Google will drop sites further down in the rankings when the site has too many repetitive keywords.
Building relationships	Creating partnerships with high-ranking sites can be mutually beneficial for SEO results. Referral links still make a difference for SEO, but the quality of the sites matters.
Mobile usability	Responsive design keeps the experience consistent for all visitors. Any new website must be designed with a mobile-friendly experience to achieve a good ranking.

Figure 7: Ten major approaches to SEO (Source: Carolina, 2017)

While SEO means for increasing traffic to a website, conversion rate shows how effective that website in converting online visitors to take action on the site. In this study, the action is to sign up to use AdLaunch's video creation tool. According to Smith (2016, 542-543), there are ten actions that a site owner should do to increase a site's conversion rate.

Ten actions to increase conversion rate for a website	
Action 1	Apply the four basic satisfiers which bring visitors back to the website. They are relevance, navigation, fresh content and download speed.
Action 2	Develop credibility and reduce customer anxiety. Customers are nervous to give personal data and money to someone they do not know.
Action 3	Create clear online value proposition. Visitors only spend a couple of seconds to decide whether they should stay longer on the site.
Action 4	Build tailored landing pages. When prospects click on a company's ad, they expect to land on a page that contains relevant information rather than a home page.

Action 5	Test multiple tailored landing pages by split testing.
Action 6	Add incentives to call to action so that visitors feel the need of acting now.
Action 7	Include "See", "Try", and "Buy" options. Many visitors want to trial the product before buying it.
Action 8	Have an effective range of prices so that anyone with any budget can always buy something.
Action 9	Simplify buying processes, particularly in form filling.
Action 10	Capture visitors' email. Visitors can be converted to customers even after they have left the site. Making a purchase is just the start of what it is hoped is a lifetime relationship.

Figure 8: Ten actions to increase conversion rate for a website (Source: Smith, 2016)

In addition to websites, social media channels are the place where most of the customers and target audiences interact with the company. Hudson (2017) clarified that "social media is a series of websites and applications designed to allow people to share content quickly, efficiently and in real-time". At the time this study started, there are a thousand of websites and apps defining themselves as a social network. However, the largest social network is Facebook with 2167 million active users, followed by YouTube with 1500 million active users in January 2018 (Statista, 2018).

Companies find more and more difficulties to reach their target audiences. In the Internet era, audiences commonly receive tons of contents from family, friends, and companies posted on social media channels. As a result, company's posts must be able to engage audiences to earn their interactions such as positive comments and shares. Indeed, those interactions are similar to word-of-mouth activities. According to Nielsen (2013) - a leading global provider of information and insights into what consumers watch and buy, 84% of consumers around the world say they trust word-of-mouth recommendations from friends and family, above all other sources of advertising.

For startups, creating engaging posts on social media requires a lot of planning and creativity. Here are six steps to start building engaging contents for startups.

Six steps to start building engaging contents for startups	
Step 1: Define purposes of contents	For example, more conversions, more sign-ups, social shares or better SEO. Set goals is the only way to measure success of the contents.
Step 2: Research target market	Send out surveys to target customers. Do not make assumptions. Use feedbacks to develop in-depth buyer personas. Select the right social media channels.
Step 3: Research compet-itors	Find out what content others are producing. Create contents which are unique and address your customers problems from a new point of views.
Step 4: Draw the buyer journey	Buyer journey varies as the changing nature of startups Plan contents for each stage to maximize their performance.
Step 5: Research existing contents	Find out what sort of articles are popular and engaging in a company's niche. Do not copy exactly the existing contents.
Step 6: Map out the pro-motion process	Plan for publishing contents on owned media and sharing them on social media channels. After the planning process, it is time to start writing contents.

Figure 9: Six steps to start building engaging contents for startups (Source: HakiReview, 2017)
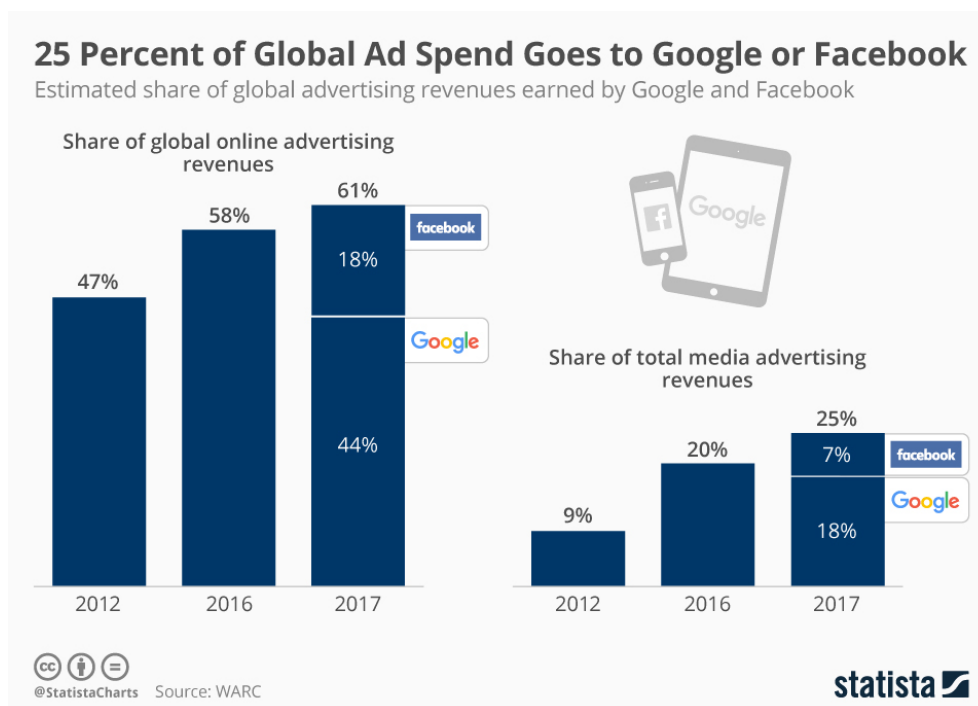
2.2.3   Online advertising

The importance of advertising is recognized by manufacturers long time before the Internet era. In the past, advertising connected all form of promotional activities. However, Egan (2007, 193) defined advertising as "paid-for, a non-personal form of mass communication from an identified source, used to communicate information and influence consumer behavior". The definition implies that advertising is paid activities, which makes advertising different from public relations.

Advertising uses messages to influence potential buyers. In order to deliver the right messages to the right audiences, advertising today requires creativity. In this context, creativity means "the ability to attract and hold the attention of the target audience through the manner and composition of the advertisement" (Egan, 2007, 204). This is an art and not a science, even though technology today like big data and machine learning can predict sufficiently the results of advertising campaigns. It is also important to notice that great advertising campaign does not come from only great designers. In fact, a successful campaign takes place when creativity meets the commercial objectives of a campaign.

The main benefit of advertising is to get messages out to large audiences quickly. It is great to build brand awareness rather than to build trust and close sales. In another word, message credibility is less than that of PR or social media (Smith, 2016, 373). Sanders from The Business Journal (2017) reported that the average American sees or hears 4,000-plus ads per day. There are a ton of messages consumed every day; consequently, customers' attention is scarce and become one of the most valuable assets for companies.

Advertisers in the twenty-first century are seeking ways to utilize data technology for online advertising. Smith (2016, 340) stated that "data environment has opened up with vast and varied data sets providing all sorts of deeper audience insights and contextual user information". Advertisers are trying to collect audiences' information on location, history, demographics and other sources. That information allows advertisers to serve the right ad, to the right audience at the right time, which increases return on investments for ad campaigns.

Google and Facebook are two most powerful platforms that equip advertises with advanced online targeting systems. As a result, Google and Facebook account for more than 60 percent of global online ad revenues (Statista 2017).

25 Percent of Global Ad Spend Goes to Google or Facebook

Estimated share of global advertising revenues earned by Google and Facebook

Share of global online advertising revenues

Share of total media advertising revenues

@StatistaCharts   Source: WARC

statista

Picture 2: Global Ad Spend on Google and Facebook (Source: Richter, 2017)

2.2.4   Public relations

Public relations plays a vital role in online marketing communications where the messages are distributed rapidly throughout the Internet. Jefkins (1994, 7) expressed the definition of public relations as "the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics". The word "publics" in this context means "those people, internal, and extend to the organization, with whom the organization communicates" (Jefkins, 1994, 7). In short, public relations is a communication process to build mutual benefits between organizations and publics.

In the Internet era, viral marketing is among the top desired technique for public relations. Companies, especially startups, are attempting to maximize the effect of this technique to the public. In practice, viral marketing has a low barrier to enter but is demanding to achieve excellent results with limited budgets.

Many types of marketing materials can go viral on the Internet. Some examples can be videos, TV ads, cartoons, funny pictures, a game or even a social update. The most fundamental element of these viral materials is that it has to be amazing which makes people want to share it. Smith (2016, 390) declared five questions that forecast whether marketing materials can go viral. They are 1) it is good enough to make people pass it on? , 2) is it on trend with whatever is trending? , 3) does it create a shared experience? , 4) is it emotional or does it make

you smile/laugh/feel engaged/shocked/happy/sad/sentimental? , 5) does it have the wow factor?. The wow factor for going viral is the most unpredictable factor.

To achieve viral marketing, great creative materials with wow factors are not enough. These materials have to be appropriately distributed or seeded. Smith (2016, 391) described seeding as "identifying websites, blogs, and influential people and sending them the e-mail, or posting the viral on their Facebook wall to start the virus spreading". In another word, materials shared by influencers on social media have a lot better chance to become viral, as many of their followers will see it.

Public relations like other communications tools has its benefits and drawbacks. The main benefit of public relations is that it has higher credibility than advertising because information at least comes from third-party sources. With a good policy for corporate social responsibility, public relations creates great results for big organizations. Also, budgets for public relations are commonly less than advertising. Many organizations utilize public relations to generate awareness, build preference and overall brand building (Smith, 2016, 404). On the other hand, public relations has higher risks due to lack of control over the message. Editors, journalists, and bloggers can rewrite the words as they want. Besides, messages from public relations can spread beyond target areas and cannot close sales.

As part of communications strategy, organizations have to spend estimated budgets for public relations. The increase or reduction of this budget depends on how an organization evaluates the benefits and drawbacks of public relations activities.

2.2.5 Business-to-business communications

Business-to-business communications is affected by five main factors which are more extensive markets, fewer customers, higher spend, broader geographical spread, and complex buyer-customer interaction (Egan, 2007, 369). The complex interaction and the fewer but higher spending customers make personal selling become the primary tool used in getting new customers. However, this tool is expensive, and many companies also utilize other tools like advertising, public relation for lead nurturing, before assigning sale members to close sales with potential leads.

Marketing communications is different in a business-to-business and business-to-consumer sector. De Pelsmacker et al. (2001) indicated that business-to-business advertising tends to mention product characteristics more often and prefers to use rational appeals than psychological appeals. Besides, there are many decision-making units in business-to-business marketing, compared to a few in consumer marketing. In another word, a buying decision of a com-

pany depends on a group of key players including users, influencers, deciders, approvers, buyers, and gatekeepers. As a result, the length of time between recognition problem and making purchase is likely to be longer than in consumer markets.

2.3 Develop key messages for effective communications

In In a recent decade, online users are using actively different social media channels. Following the trend, companies have to present on various social platforms, which may lead to a scatter and inconsistent with an online brand image. To change that, well-established companies, as well as startups, need to form consistent key messages connecting a variety of their online channels.

2.3.1 Key message definition

A key message is the main product of marketing communications that a company want its target audiences to receive, understand, and importantly remember. Key messages appear not only in advertising but also in public relations and contents of owned media. Wendy (2017) defined that "key messages create a narrative for your company, which crystallizes business information, stimulates calls to action and solidifies public opinion". A company cannot control all relevant communications activities, but it can monitor its key messages.

There are two typical types of key messages which are positioning messages and dynamic messages. Positioning messages aim at helping a company to differentiate itself in the market, which functions similarly to brand messages. A company often has tailored positioning signals upon a specific industry or a product. However, companies should use them consistently to create a sense of repetition for audiences. Dynamic messages are more flexible than positioning messages. These words communicate with particular audiences about business concerns such as quarterly revenue releases, product launches or crises.

Developing key messages is crucial for a company to succeed in marketing communications. According to Wetherhead (2011), it can support a company to 1) prioritize and crystallize information, 2) ensure consistency, continuity and accuracy, 3) measure and track success in campaigns, and 4) stay focused when speaking with media or stakeholders.

2.3.2 Attributes of good key messages

Theoretically, Wetherhead (2011) elaborated eight attributes of good key messages in the figure below.

Eight attributes of good key messages

Concise	Each message consists one to three sentences in length or under 30 seconds when spoken. There should be optimally three key messages on the main page of a website.
Strategic	Messages emphasize and differentiate a company's unique value proposition.
Relevant	Messages are closely connected between what companies need to communicate and what their audiences need to know.
Compelling	Messages generate meaningful information designed for audiences to stimulate action.
Simple	Messages are created with easy to understand language; avoid using jargon and acronyms.
Memorable	Messages are easy to recall and repeat; avoid long sentences.
Real	Messages have active rather than passive voice. They should not be advertising slogans.
Tailored	Messages are tailored to effectively communicate with different target audiences; for example, adapting types of language and depth of information.

Figure 10: Eight attributes of good key messages (Source: Wetherhead, 2011)

2.3.3 How to measure the success of key messages

It is difficult for companies to identify good key messages due to many intangible metrics. The best way to evaluate them is to look at how consistently a company talks about its products and compare that with how its current customers talk about the product. Pono (2016) introduced in detail how a company should measure the success of key messages in the figure below.

How a company should measure the success of key messages	
Internal evaluation	Step 1: Gather members from different departments in one conference room.
	Step 2: Ask them to write answers of these questions: • 1 sentence company pitch (What we do?) • 1 sentence problem pitch (What problem are we solving?) • 1 sentence competitive pitch (How are we different from our competitors?) • 1–3 bullet points of values we provide for customers (Why should customers buy from us?)
	Step 3: Ask a specific team about the company vision—Why we do what we do?
	Step 4: Evaluate the consistency of key messages between internal departments.
External evaluation	Step 1: Decide whether to conduct interviews, surveys, or do both. Surveys are easier to conduct, but insights from interviews are more valuable.
	Step 2: Ask customers following questions to understand how customers perceive a company's products: • Why did you buy our product? • What problems were you looking to solve? • How do you use our product? • What do you like most about our product? What do you like least? If a company want to develop new messages, it is better to ask new prospects. It would be inefficient to interview a customer once for evaluation and again for designing the new messages.

	Step 3: During the interview, always pop up with "Why?" It is never about the feature of the product, it is about how this feature impacts the person in daily work and what value that product provides.
Compare results	After internal and external evaluation, a company has to compare these results and expose how far apart its internal messaging is from its customer perception.

Figure 11: How a company should measure the success of key messages (Source: Pono, 2016)

2.4 Online marketing communication plan

A plan is necessary for every business to help it achieve its objectives. As mentioned, the outcome of this study will also be an online marketing communications plan.

2.4.1 Principles for writing the plan

Planned marketing activities often achieve the highest return on investment for organizations. In term of marketing communications, Egan (2007) clarified that the plan's purpose is "to systematically set out an organization's communications objectives and devise strategies and tactics regarding how these might be achieved".

Marketing communication plan should be relatively brief, concise, focused, and reliable. Most plans contain a mix of writing style with paragraphs and bullet points. According to Ferguson (1999, 23), statements of objectives and key messages often appear in a bullet format. By contrast, background and issues are usually written in a narrative form. Bullet formats enable planners to update the plan without rewriting the whole plan efficiently. Narrative ways, on the other hand, make the plan more coherent for readers. Furthermore, a communication plan should not exceed ten pages if the planners want their colleagues to read and implement on a daily basis.

More specifically, Westwood (2011, 81-82) provided eight practical guidelines to write a clear and concise plan in the following figure.

Guidelines to write a clear and concise plan	
Guideline 1	Start each complete section on a new page

Guideline 2	When listing key points, it is better to use double spacing
Guideline 3	Do not present too many figures on one page
Guideline 4	Do not use small text size when texts are hard to read
Guideline 5	Use a reasonable font size in a document for printing
Guideline 6	Cut out unnecessary texts
Guideline 7	Do not use jargon that may not be commonly understood and expand any abbreviations to their full form at their first appearance
Guideline 8	Start a plan with a table of contents which will enable readers to quickly locate specific sections

Figure 12: Guidelines to write a clear and concise plan (Source: Westwood, 2011)

2.4.2   Situational analysis

Many organizations start the planning process with a strong mission statement. A mission statement is a statement that asserts the core business of an organization and its ambitions (O'Malley et al. 1999, p.37). Based on a mission statement, an organization starts conducting a situational analysis which is a comprehensive assessment of its performance internally and externally. Analysts have commonly used SWOT and PESTEL together to develop such reports.

SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. A SWOT is a strategic planning tool that helps organizations identify their strengths, weaknesses as well as new opportunities, undefiled threats. It usually appears as a square divided into four quadrants. The easiest way to start filling information into each quadrant is to answer a series of relevant questions.

Effectively utilizing data collected from these quadrants is another critical task for any organization. Once an organization understands how to compile its SWOT data and implement it strategically, SWOT analysis will be a tool that can be applied over and over to explore new opportunities and improve the current decision-making process.

In this study, the author used SWOT analysis to identify AdLaunch's core competencies in its segmented market. Developing communications objectives and strategies based on results from SWOT analyses will advance AdLaunch's competitive advantages among other competitors. This action will lead to the increase in profitability and help the company to survive for an extended period.

Another analytic tool for business is PESTEL. The word is a combination of the first capital letter from political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal. PESTEL analysis gives an overall view from many angles of the external environment where an organization is operating.

In this study, the case company AdLaunch is a new tech startup whose operational activities are not strongly affected by all these factors. The elements estimated that have the most significant effect on AdLaunch's marketing communications activities were economic, social, technological, and legal.

2.4.3 Objectives

After conducting situational analysis through secondary and primary sources, an organization can adequately position itself in the market. Then, it is time to set objectives for marketing communications activities. In a simple explanation, the situational analysis identifies where an organization is while goals indicate where an organization wants to go. Objectives should follow the principle SMART which is specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time specific. Besides, objectives have to be communicable and aspirational as they play an important role in communicating a more precise picture to all members of an organization.

There are three common types of communications objectives which are knowledge-based, feelings-based, and action-based (Egan, 2007, 108). Firstly, knowledge-based objectives aim at gaining interest and awareness from target audiences by demonstrations, scientific evidence or celebrity endorsement. One example of knowledge-based objectives can be increasing awareness from 35 percent to 50 percent within eight weeks of the campaign launch among college student communities in Finland. Secondly, feelings-based objectives involve either developing or strengthening a brand preference with emotion, attitudes and personality. For example, an objective is to position the service as the friendliest on the market within a 12-month period among 80 percent of heavy chocolate users. Thirdly, action-based objectives commonly increase sales; however, they also include building customer databases and other activities. Maintaining brand X as the preferred brand of photocopies among at least 60 percent of current US buyers is one typical example of sales-oriented objectives.

2.4.4 Strategies

Communications strategies are the ways an organization determine to communicate with its customers and other stakeholders (Egan, 2007, 116). Building marketing communications strategies is hard, especially for new businesses due to its prerequisites. They are four essential information including target audiences, the positioning of the brand, distribution channels, and competition.

It is important to notice that marketing communications objectives and strategies are defined by marketing objectives and strategies. For example, marketing objective is to increase sales by 5 percent, which determines marketing strategy to raise awareness of the brand. Consequently, marketing strategy outlines communications objective which is to increase awareness by 20 percent. Finally, the communication strategy is determined to develop advertising campaign and leverage through public relations campaign.

3 RESEARCH METHODS

After introducing theoretical background, the author mentions a position of the author in the case company as well as an appropriate research approach and methods for this study.

3.1 The role of researcher

There are external researchers and internal researchers defined by the role of researchers in the case company. In this study, the author is currently working in the case company; thus, the author adopted the position of the internal researcher.

According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2016, 208), an internal researcher has two main advantages compared to an external researcher. The first advantage is that an inner researcher easily negotiates research access. Indeed, he or she is often asked to research a particular problem by a case company. The second advantage is that an internal researcher can understand the complexity of what is happening inside a case company, the quick changes in startup environment in particular.

On the other hand, being inside the case company causes significant disadvantages for the researcher (Saunders et al. 2016, 208). Knowing the company well possibly prevents an internal researcher from exploring issues that would further develop the study. Besides, combining two roles as a researcher and an employee at the same time may lead to a lot of work.

3.2 Research approach

Following the scope of this study, the author focused on identifying the right key message and action plan to effectively distribute it online. Delivering these study outcomes requires studying many variables with the participation of both internal and external stakeholders. Internal

stakeholders are members of the case company while external stakeholders are current free users or potential users.

As the key message in this study will be used for business-to-business marketing activities to attract new users, it should show the benefits of the case company's product. Especially when AdLaunch is a new startup, a key message has to imply the product's unique value proposition. Besides, it should be designed for raising awareness according to the theory of product life cycle mentioned in Figure 5.

About the action plan, it should be in detail for the case company AdLaunch to execute. Internal and external factors that may affect the execution process have to be considered when creating the plan. Importantly, the budget and an exact timeline for executing the plan are not required in this study.

After consideration, the author decided to conduct case study as a research method to have an in-depth exploration of the key message. The first reason is that the author has advantages of being an internal researcher to access case company reports. The second reason is that the author is not limited to any one data collection method. It gains the ability for the author to acquire holistic views on the expected results of the key message, which increases the reliability of the outcome.

3.3   Research methods

The author decided to conduct two methods to collect data in this study. The author initially brainstormed with CEO of AdLaunch for generating case company analyses. With more knowledge about the case company, its product and its market, the author interviewed in-depth with potential users of AdLaunch.

In the brainstorming method, the author started with examining relevant reports or documents inside the case company to form a draft of company SWOT and PESTEL analyses. The goals are to help the author deepen understandings of AdLaunch in general and hidden factors that may affect its marketing communications activities. After that, these reports were sent to Mr Joel – CEO of AdLaunch to review. The CEO required the author to have preparations for the brainstorming session as he did not have a lot of time to support the author during the study process. The author and Mr Joel then have a short brainstorming to discuss and finalize these reports.

After brainstorming, the author was accountable for creating new reports of current AdLaunch's marketing communicatios activities. The CEO also supported the author by answering questions during the process. By benchmarking the present results with data collected from interviewing potential users, the author could propose what AdLaunch should improve or do differently in marketing communications plan.

Then, the author selected some companies that can represent the majority of AdLaunch potential users as research populations then interviewed them. The objective was to know precisely how AdLaunch should communicate AdLaunch's video creation tool with them online. By developing an action plan to reach these populations successfully, the case company will also be able to reach most of its potential users.

4   CASE COMPANY ANALYSIS

In this section, the author illustrated the results of two SWOT and one PESTEL analyses related to AdLaunch. In addition, the author also assessed current AdLaunch's online marketing communications activities through its online presence.

4.1   SWOT analysis

In this study, the author conducted AdLaunch's SWOT analysis and SWOT analysis for AdLaunch's product. AdLaunch's SWOT analysis gave the author an overview of the execution ability of the company and the macro trends in the market. At the same time, SWOT analysis for AdLaunch's product helped the author to deepen understandings of the product. The context or the market for these analyses were online video advertising industry in which advertisers frequently spend resources on two central platforms Google and Facebook.

After brainstorming with the CEO, the author summarized two SWOT analyses in the figures below.

AdLaunch's SWOT analysis	
Strengths	**Weaknesses**
- Team members have diverse backgrounds and importantly are leaded by an award-winning video director. - Good business-to-business branding in Finland. - Company is able to sell its video creation tool among the most affordable price in the market.	- Limited resources to develop and pivot marketing activities. - Have only one online marketer at the moment. - Finnish market which is currently the main market is too small.

Opportunities	Threats
• Chances to coporate with big companies and startups to deliver the solutions together. • Many companies are considering creating more video ads. • Speed of creating videos becomes a more important factor than the quality of stock footage when selecting the creation tool.	• Many new players come to this market with advanced technology. • Main competitors have more resources and an advantage of being the first players. • Internet users are increasingly using AdBlock, which makes small and medium companies lose interests in online advertising.

Figure 13: AdLaunch's SWOT analysis

From the AdLaunch's SWOT analysis, the author recognized that the ability to execute an online marketing communications plan is limited due to lack of human and financial resources. Moreover, the market has been changing fast due to new competitors with advanced technology. Therefore, the plan has to be practical and able to help the company quickly capture its market segment.

On the good site, the CEO who is leading the company has a strong background in video production industry. At the time this study conducted, the company sold its product with a subscription fee of 69 euro monthly and 420 euro annually. Meanwhile, hiring a production agency can cost thousands of euro and up to one month to make one video ready. Furthermore, AdLaunch achieved a massive exposure from getting to the final of Slush 2017 pitching competition. The company also actively participated in many industrial events related to marketing and advertising in Finland. In short, AdLaunch has a high potential in the market if the company successfully manages to sell the product globally with high volumes. Thus, AdLaunch's marketing activities have to target more international markets.

SWOT analysis of AdLaunch's product	
Strengths	**Weaknesses**
• Product can be used entirely online.	• Product is sometimes unstable.

• Stock footage, photos, music are provided together inside a video editor. • Product contains unique video footage captured by AdLaunch's team. • All materials inside the tool are free to use without any extra fee. • Users are able to upload their own materials from different sources. • Currently the only one online video editor that can show changes in real time.	• Product interface and its sign-up system have not been optimized on mobile. • Need more categories of video footage and advanced editing features. • Has not integrated to ad platforms.
Opportunities	**Threats**
• Able to implement artificial intelligence into the process of making video ads. • Product can be upgraded to automatically suggest video ads in the future. • New product's user interface will be released soon in the future.	• New technology enables competitors build similar product faster with smaller budget. • Scaling up the number of users may require upgrading the whole backend system.

Figure 14: SWOT analysis of AdLaunch's product

This SWOT analysis indicates many positive aspects of AdLaunch's video creation tool. There were three features that AdLaunch believed can differentiate its product in the market. They were 1) stock footage, photos, music, and a video editor are included in one online platform, 2) all supporting materials for making videos come with no extra fee, and 3) live video editor enables users to see results immediately after changing video components. In addition, the development roadmap of the product looks promising. AdLaunch focuses primarily on saving time and resources for its users when creating videos. The company believed that the upgraded version with Artificial Intelligence integrated would differentiate AdLaunch from other competitors in the market.

On the other hand, AdLaunch also has to improve its weaknesses. The weaknesses were primarily the results of unstable product performance and insufficient provided materials.

Therefore, the author advised that AdLaunch as a startup should not concentrate on communicating its product features when the product is not well-developed. The online communications activities should be about increasing brand awareness and building long-term relationship with potential users.
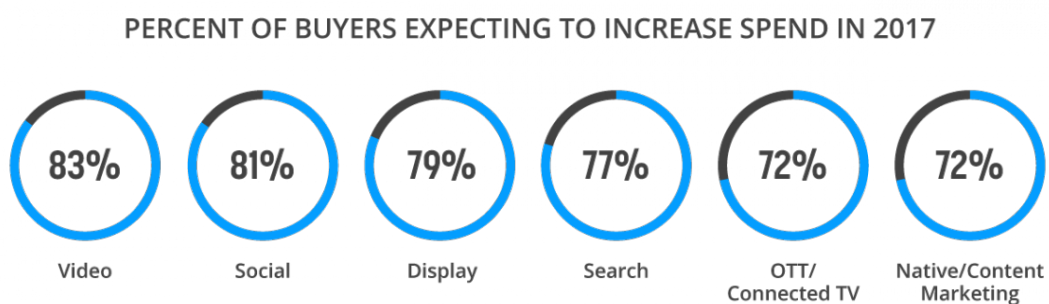
4.2 PESTEL analysis

The procedure of conducting PESTEL analysis was similar to SWOT analysis. The result of PES-TEL analysis for the case company is attached in the figure below. This analysis aims at identifying the external factors that may affect AdLaunch's marketing communications activities.

PESTEL analysis on online marketing communication of AdLaunch	
Economic	• The online video advertising industry was predicted to multiply in this decade. According to the research from Aol, 83% of advertisers planned to increase their video ad spend in 2017 which is higher than on any other media (more information in Picture 3 below). Furthermore, Aol also stated that 92% of Internet users watched videos online every day in 2017 and 88% of them watched more videos than they did a year ago (Source: Aol, 2017). • Rowley (2017) from TechCrunch pointed out that global digital advertising spending only belong to a few giant companies. In picture 4 below, Rowley also notified that venture capital investment into advertising technology startups has already peaked and started going down. Advertising tech startups like AdLaunch have to find their market niche to dominate without spending their precious resources on capturing high volumes of global market shares.
Social	• Millennial users were more willing to accept innovative solutions from new startups. • Buzzwords like AI, automation, ad-tech received a lot of attention from the press and publics.

|	
	• People were seeing ads on social media as annoying things, which might result in the decrease of small companies for spending resources on making video ads.
Technological	• New technology enables more tech startups to enter the industry of online video advertising. Being stand out from the crowd is more and more challenging.
Legal	• General Data Protection Regulation became the new important concern in this decade. Companies have to demonstrate that they have obtained the consent of users for using their data even inside the companies.

Figure 15: PESTEL analysis on online marketing communication of AdLaunch

PERCENT OF BUYERS EXPECTING TO INCREASE SPEND IN 2017

83%	81%	79%	77%	72%	72%
Video	Social	Display	Search	OTT/ Connected TV	Native/Content Marketing

Picture 3: Percent of buyers expecting to increase spend on ad in 2017 (Source: Aol, 2017)

Declining VC Deal Count In US Advertising Tech Companies

Based On A Count Of All USD-Denominates Deals Struck With Companies In Crunchbase's Advertising Categories
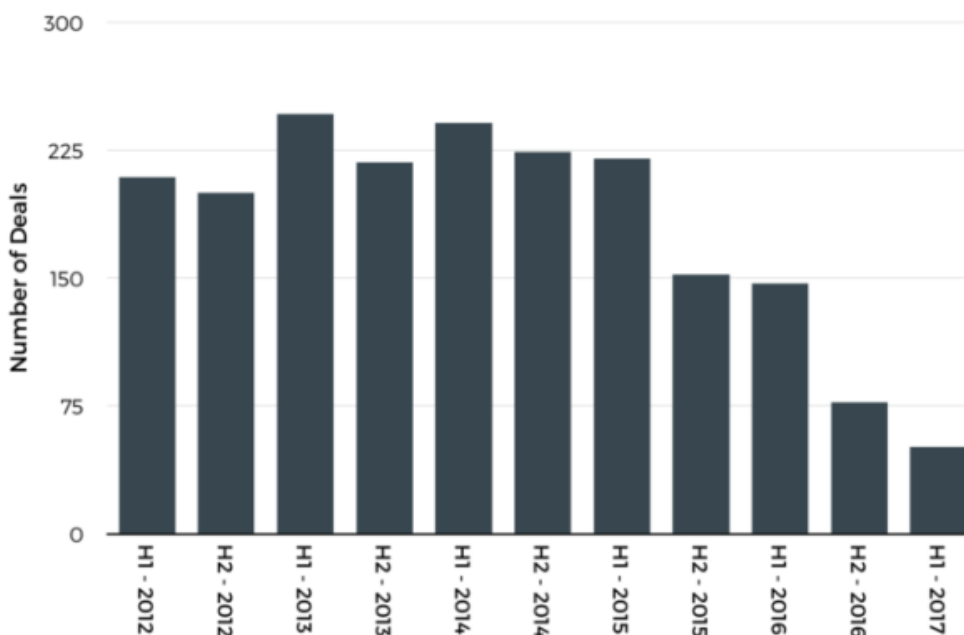
Picture 4: Declining VC deal count in US advertising tech companies (Source: Rowley, 2017)

From the results of PESTEL analysis, the author recognized four crucial points that affect directly to AdLaunch's online marketing communications activities.

Firstly, AdLaunch should spend more resources on marketing the products at this point because this market starts to be saturated and dominated by big enterprises.

Secondly, AdLaunch should not rely entirely on buzzwords to get the online attention. Many companies are doing the same thing so it is more challenging to be outstanding from the crowd.

Thirdly, the word "ads" were seen as something annoying, so AdLaunch should know how to build its image on a positive side of ads. Indeed, most of the Internet users still want to receive relevant and personalized ads.

Lastly, online marketing activities, particularly re-marketing may require AdLaunch to collect and store users' data. In fact, just 6 out of 200 respondents in Smart Insights study said their company is well-prepared for the GDPR implementation. Detail results are illustrated in Picture 10 below. From the results, being able to communicate it transparently is the new urgent factor gaining AdLaunch more accountability.

Is your company GDPR ready?
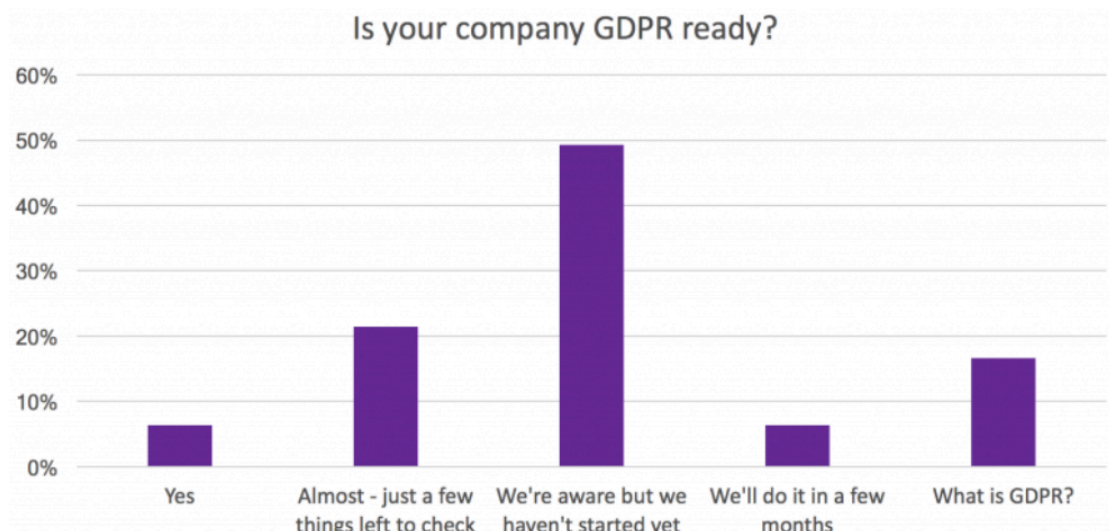
Picture 5: Is your company GDPR ready? (Source: Smart Insight)

4.3   Current marketing communications activities

At the time this study started, AdLaunch was in the Introduction Stage of Product Life Cycle theory in Figure 5. Consequently, the marketing objective is to help early adopters adopt new technology, while marketing communications object is to create awareness, interest, and desire among innovators (Smith et al. 1997). AdLaunch also followed those principles. Besides, the company often asks for feedback from its users to better develop the product.

After evaluating the elements of AdLaunch's marketing communications activities, the author summarized the results in the figure below. It is important to notice that all these elements can be assessed publicly through AdLaunch's online presence.

Evaluating elements of AdLaunch's marketing communications	
Image and brand	• AdLaunch uses two colors "black" and "white" interchangeably for the logo itself depending on the background. The background color used in roll-ups and social media channels is mainly "blue". The general impressions of the brand are trustworthy, clean, and loyal. • The logo is designed with a written name AdLaunch in bold and a flying rocket staying next to each other. This helps viewers easier to remember the brand.

Website and SEO	• Headline: Create video ads in minutes / Amazingly easy online ad maker and video editor. This highlights the company value propositions.
	• Meta tag: AdLaunch | Create video ads online in minutes.
	• Meta description: Create multiple versions of video ads in minutes. Easily customize contents online with thousands of free videos, photos, and music. Save time, resources on launching video advertising campaign for businesses. Get started for free!
	• The company ranked on the first page of Google when searching for "create video ads online".
	• In addition to the main page, the meta tags and meta description were not optimized on each page with relevant keywords.
	• Website was mobile-friendly.
	• Design of the website is not highly attractive.
	• AdLaunch should have privacy policy on the website and an action plan when users ask for modifying their data.
Social media	• Twitter: the company mainly used to share its journey and updates of the product.
	• Instagram: it was the place where the company uploaded its example videos and beautiful stock footage.
	• LinkedIn: the company has not updated contents regularly on this channel. The current contents were mainly company news.
	• Facebook: there were different types of contents and mixed messages on this channel.
Online advertising	The author did not get the permission to public these information in detail. However, AdLaunch did run different types of ads on Facebook and Google AdWords.

Public relations	• AdLaunch received the most publicity from Slush 2017 where the company got into top 3 winners of Slush pitching competition. • Besides, the company also got into the final pitching competition of TechChill 2018 at Riga, Latvia. • The company also presented with a stand in different big industrial events in Helsinki, Finland like Media Honeypot and NextM.io • Popular sites in the industry have not written about AdLaunch to their audiences.
Business-to-business communications	The researchers could not access this information. However, the CEO mentioned that the communicating process with big companies was quite long and complicated.

Figure 16: Evaluating elements of AdLaunch's marketing communications

5   COLLECTING AND ANALYZING INTERVIEW DATA

After finalizing case company analyses, the author conducted three interviews with potential users to know precisely how AdLaunch should communicate its video creation tool with them online. Thes results played a vital role in the process of making this study outcome. Interview questions are listed in Appendix 1.

5.1   Population

From two SWOT analyses mentioned in Chapter 4, the author realized that two unique value propositions that AdLaunch can offer to the customers are speed of creating multiple video ads and an affordable pricing model. At the same time, AdLaunch potential customers are companies who have a desire to create more video ads for their social media. Therefore, the author decided to interview community organizations and companies providing services. Firstly, these companies have to create contents regularly on social media to build and maintain their online community. Secondly, creating videos for social media are not their primary business so they would need an easy and affordable solution to quickly create videos. Also, the size of these companies has to be small or medium as big companies have enormous resources spent on hiring in-house teams or creative agencies to produce video materials.

The author managed to interview in-depth with two community organizations and one company providing services in Finland. The interviewees were people who are responsible for

creating contents for their company's social media channels. Importantly, they have not used AdLaunch's product before so their opinions would be fresh and neutral as potential new users. Detailed information was summarized in Figure 17.

Interviewees' information		
Name	**Position**	**Company Description**
Lam Nguyen	Social Media Marketer at LaureaES - (Laurea Entrepreneurship Society) Vice President at AMCA - (Aalto Management Consulting Association)	LaureaES is is a society which encourages students towards entrepreneurship. The organization is based at Laurea UAS in Espoo. AMCA is made for students interested in management consulting in Aalto University. Facebook channel: @laureaes , @joinamca
Lacey Nguyen	Marketer and Designer at Havain	Havain is an advertising agency that offers digital sales and presentation design services. The company locates in Espoo, Finland. Facebook channel: @havainoy
Nguyen Tran	Social Media Marketer at Kiuas (part of AaltoES – the Europe's largest and most active entrepreneurship community)	Kiuas is an incubator program that helps founding team build their startup from idea to first revenue. Three main programs are Kiuas Team Up, Kiuas Bootcamp, and Kiuas Accelerator. Facebook channel: @kiuas.start

Figure 17: Interviewees' information

5.2 Interview procedure

The interviews aimed at collecting five critical information from the interviewees. They were how interviewees would use AdLaunch, a key message for AdLaunch's marketing campaign, online channels to reach AdLaunch's potential users, interviewees' current solutions on creating videos for social media, and business-to-business buying process inside the interviewees' organization. Also, relevant information was collected during the in-depth interviewing process.

The author interviewed in both video call (Lacey, Nguyen Tran) and face-to-face (Lam Nguyen). In average, each interview session lasted around thirty minutes. The author began by introducing the purpose of the interview and showing interviewees AdLaunch's product demo video. The intention was to provide interviewees an overview of AdLaunch's video creation tool before asking them questions. During the interview, the author often asked follow-up questions to collect more insights. The interviewees also knew that the conversation is recorded for further studying purposes.

5.3   Analyzing interview results

In this section, the author summarized the main insights from three interviews.

An interview with Lam Nguyen - Social Media Marketer at LaureaES and Vice President at AMCA.

- How she would use AdLaunch's video creation tool:

She said that the majority of her community are young people and they often communicate via social media. Indeed, videos are the great way to communicate online. Therefore, she would use the tool to create video contents to communicate organizational activities to her online community.

LaureaES and AMCA mainly use Facebook as their main communication channel. Whenever there is a campaign, she would have to post contents for Facebook one to two times a week at the beginning.

- Her current solutions on creating videos for social media:

She used YouTube's video editor to edit videos because she did not want to change the platform when uploading the videos. Apparently, You Tube is the most popular platform for hosting videos on the Internet. Moreover, she admitted that she is not a technical person so she is affraid to try new tools on the Internet.

- A key message she suggested for AdLaunch's marketing campaign:

She suggested a slogan "AdLaunch – Your personality on social media – Feel free to express youself". She aimed at targeting young population.

- Online channels to reach audiences like her:

In her opinion, Facebook is the best channel. However, the advertising contents have to provide values and useful information. She saw that ads nowadays are often annoying. The second option is Google Display Ads. The next option is AdLaunch's poster in university. It is

interesting that she did not watch YouTube tutorial videos on creating videos because she thought the process of producing video is still difficult.

- Business-to-business buying process inside LaureaES and AMCA:

When she is interested in AdLaunch's product, she will ask for comments from other members in marketing department. Then, she will propose AdLaunch to head of organization; however, she is still the main decision maker.

She commented that AdLaunch pricing is affordable, even though she works for a student organization.

An interview with Lacey - Marketer and Designer at Havain

- How she would use AdLaunch's video creation tool:

As her business is currently getting customers regurlarly, she do not have to find new customers on Havain's social media. Particularly, Havain's main communication channel is LinkedIn, not Facebook. However, she would use the tool for her clients' video marketing purposes. For Havain, she would use AdLaunch's tool to create videos that summarize blog contents on website at this stage. She said that she is interested in using the tool more if she has new ideas.

- Her current solutions on creating videos for social media:

Currently, Havain is outsourcing to one freelancer to produce new videos. Still, she has to plan a video idea and detailed description of a video before contacting the freelancer. She admitted that the process is slow, not efficient but she has no other options.

- A key message she suggested for AdLaunch's marketing campaign:

She suggested that AdLaunch should mention its value propositions in the messages. Then, she gave three examples that she think they will apply for AdLaunch. Firstly, the tool is convinient to create videos. Secondly, output videos have small size so that the marketers feel easier to share. Thirdly, AdLaunch offer affordable price for small and medium enterprises.

- Online channels to reach audiences like her:

She recommended Google. If she searchs for tools on Google, she would visit a popular website with a title "10 best tools for creating videos on social media" because she does not want to waste time on trying different tools. Besides, she often read blogs from Buffer and HubSpot. She suggested that AdLaunch's product should be featured on these pages to gain

credibility. Furthermore, AdLaunch can reach her through LinkedIn ads because she is spending enoumous time there.

- Business-to-business buying process inside Havain:

If she is interested in using the tool, she will propose it to her CEO to make a final decision. However, the CEO only needs to know how the tool can benefit the company because she is using the tool. Thus, she is still the one who has the strongest opinion in the buying decision.

She would prefer to pay per video and the price €19 per video that AdLaunch is offering is acceptable.

An interview with Nguyen Tran - Social Media Marketer at Kiuas

- How he would use AdLaunch's video creation tool:

In Kiuas, the team usually create videos before and within a month after important events. There are around two to three videos in general and many short clips for Facebook or Instagram story. Even though he is the main person in charge of creating Facebook posts, he is not responsible directly for producing videos. The organization is outsourcing a freelancer to do it and the freelancer is doing a great job.

- His current solutions on creating videos for social media:

He used Webflow – a web builder, to edit short video clips. The reason why he works with Webflow is that the organization is already using it. For more advanced videos, the freelancer will responsible for doing it.

- A key message he suggested for AdLaunch's marketing campaign:

He suggested that AdLaunch should emphasize on the Free Trial feature. He personally want to experience and see the results of his videos before paying for the tool.

- Online channels to reach audiences like him:

He said Facebook and Instagram. As he is working closely with these platform, he is spending a lot of time there.

- Business-to-business buying process inside Kiuas:

At first, he has to calculate the budget for both campaign and the tool together. Then, he propose the detailed budget to his president and his team leader. Everything related to financial budget must get approved by them.

6   ONLINE MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS PLAN FOR ADLAUNCH

In this chapter, the author used generated insights from research to propose an online mar-
keting communications plan for AdLaunch to help the company grow the number of its users.

6.1   Situation analysis

In this section, the author used the understandings from case company analyses as well as
interview data to generate a SWOT analysis for AdLaunch's online marketing communications
activities. This SWOT created a strong foundation for the author to continue building the final
study's outcome.

SWOT analysis on AdLaunch's online marketing communications	
Strengths	**Weaknesses**
- The tool has features focused on speed of creating videos which a lot of potential users are interested in. - AdLaunch is able to offer affordable pricing and free trial without any period. - AdLaunch has good brand image in Finland. - AdLaunch team are able to technically run online advertising on Facebook and Google.	- AdLaunch believes the tool is used to create advertising videos; however, social media marketers said to use the tool to produce different types of videos. As a result, AdLaunch may not understand deeply its target users' behaviour or has not communicated the message clearly. - AdLaunch has limited budget for online advertising and has not run ads on LinkedIn. - Organic ranking of AdLaunch's website on relevent keywords is low. - AdLaunch has not been featured on popular sites in marketing and advertisign industry.
Opportunities	**Threats**

• AdLaunch has potential to attract users to try the product globally with product and pricing factors. • New product features with fresh user interface and artificicial intelligence intergration are expected to differentiate AdLaunch from its competitors. Thus, the messages should also be prepared and updated accordingly.	• More and more competitors with sufficient fundings in the market. They can burn enormous resources on many platforms to acquire new users. • Internet users are increasingly using AdBlock and many small and medium companies lose interests in online advertising.

Figure 18: SWOT analysis on AdLaunch's online marketing communications

6.2   Objectives

Among three common types of communications objectives which are knowledge-based, feelings-based, and action-based (Egan, 2007, 108), the author suggested to carry out feeling-based objectives. There were two main reasons for that suggestion. The first reason was that knowledge-based objectives are difficult to measure for the case company. For example, the company could not estimate precisely whether or not the brand awareness increased from 15 percent to 30 percent after the past six months. Besides, AdLaunch was on its way to find the product market fit, which means the company may change its market segment in next six months. The situation made evaluating the results after implementing knowledge-based objectives even more complicated. The second reason was that action-based objectives commonly resulted in increasing sales. This objective was not suitable for AdLaunch at this introduction stage in the company's product life cycle. In fact, the company was supposed to create awareness and interests among early adopters (Figure 5).

After reviewing AdLaunch's situation analysis, the author proposed the objective was to build AdLaunch's image as the quickest solution to create videos for social media in the next six months. Specifically, AdLaunch's brand awareness should be raised firstly in big cities in Europe and United States.

6.3   Strategies

The following section contains two main information which are the one key message and strategies to build up online communications activities around that message.

As a startup, the author suggested AdLaunch to select only one key message to keep the brand consistent throughout different online channels, particularly when the company does

not have sufficient resources to be active in all channels. The key message for AdLaunch's online communications activities in the next six months would be "AdLaunch enables every company to make videos quickly and affordably for social media."

There are three supporting points for this message. The first supporting point is that users can start creating videos entirely online with AdLaunch's templates or thousands of premium materials including videos, photos, music. Companies can create videos even without any of their footage. The second point is that users only need to pay from €35 per month or €19 per video which may cost up to thousands of euro when hiring a freelancer or a production agency. The last point is that AdLaunch will release soon its product features helping users speed up the process of creating videos. Thus, it is necessary for AdLaunch to build up the brand image toward that direction early. It is also worth mentioning that the key message should not contain the word "ads" as it often brings the negative feeling to the audiences. Also, from the interview results, potential users may use AdLaunch to create different types of videos.

Reminding about AdLaunch's customer persona, they are small and medium enterprises from different industries who are interested in creating more videos for their social media channels. From the interviews, the author proposed the main channels for AdLaunch to reach its target persona in the next six months are Facebook, industrial blogs and Google search engine. The author already considered the execution ability of AdLaunch in the proposal. The detailed strategy below shows how AdLaunch could maximize these channels for creating brand awareness as noticed in the objective.

Firstly, AdLaunch should use Facebook to build and maintain a community of social media marketers. In fact, social media marketers spend a lot of time on Facebook and they seem to be the most influencer in the buying process. However, the role of Facebook is not for selling but rather for building long-term relationships. Secondly, AdLaunch's product should be recommended in popular blogs where people who are interested in advertising and marketing often visit. Being featured in these blogs is difficult; however, AdLaunch should take action now and start with smaller-traffic blogs. Figure 4 indicates that public recommendations earn higher credibility from audiences than advertising. In business-to-business sales, credibility is the main factor contributing to the decision-making process. Last but not least, AdLaunch should produce high-quality contents with relevant keywords to boost its website ranking on Google. The materials can also be shared on Facebook and many platforms.

6.4   Action plan

In this section, the author proposed detailed action plan for AdLaunch to achieve its objective. The plan was listed in a step-by-step order in the figure below. However, AdLaunch CEO can decide whether to follow or not the suggested order.

AdLaunch's action plan for marketing communications activities		
Step	**Element**	**Description**
1	Website and SEO	Use Google Keyword Planner to identify relevant and high-volume keywords.
2		Optimize these keywords for a title and a meta description of each web page.
3		Imply the key message and its three supporting points on the home page of the website.
4	Social media	Make sure that desciption and visual branding of each AdLaunch's social media profiles (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube) deliver consistent message.
5		Start publishing posts more often on Facebook with engaging contents. Recommend one to two times a week. AdLaunch can use its tool to create video contents. The contents have to provide values and suit with young generation.
6	Website and SEO	Create blogs that contain keywords and provide values for AdLaunch's target audiences. Excellent articles often receive a lot of shares on the Internet, which will increase AdLaunch's brand awareness.
7	Social media	Publish these blogs to Facebook and other platforms. Also, AdLaunch should share the contents to existing community of social media marketers.
8		Ask the online community to share the articles. As AdLaunch is a new startup, it is hard to achieve organic shares at the beginning.
9	Online advertising	AdLaunch can spend small budget to promote the articles to potential online audiences on Facebook and LinkedIn. Running online ads is the faster way to reach new audiences compared to organic shares.

10	Public relations	Conduct case studies on current paid customers or potetial users, then publish them online to build trust with other users.
11	Social media	Maintain good content frequency on Facebook. AdLaunch can start creating more contetns for LinkedIn.
12	Public relations	Conduct "guest blog". It means AdLaunch can create blogs with other people in video or audio format. For example, AdLaunch could interview or do webinar with video marketing experts.
13		When having a good brand image, AdLaunch could contact journalists in the advertising and marketing industry to write articles about AdLaunch.
14	Online advertising	While waiting for responses, do A/B testing diferent kind of ads on Google AdWords, Facebook, and LinkedIn. The ad performance will help AdLaunch define better communication channels.
15	Website and SEO	Continue creating great contents on a regualr basis.
16		Consider changing new web design with attractive user interface so that users stay longer when visiting. This time spent on site is important factor for Google to rank the website.

Figure 19: AdLaunch's action plan for marketing communications activities

Even though the author provide a detailed action plan to accomplish the objective in the next six months, the author still recommended AdLaunch to keep track with the action's performance and modify if needed.

6.5   Control and evaluation

After six months implementing the plan, there are two criteria for AdLaunch to measure the effectiveness of the online marketing communications plan. The first one is the consistency of key messages communicated among internal and external stakeholders. The second one is the amount of AdLaunch's website traffic in Google search engine, particularly referral, social, and organic traffic.

For the first criteria, AdLaunch can measure by surveying internal team members and users inside the platform. The detail steps are listed in the figure below.

How AdLaunch can measure the consistency of key messages	
Internal measure	Step 1: Gather key members inside the company (around 5) in one meeting room.
	Step 2: Ask them to write answers of these questions: • 1 sentence company pitch (What we do?) • 1 sentence problem pitch (What problem are we solving?) • 1 sentence competitive pitch (How are we different from our competitors?) • 1-3 bullet points of values we provide for customers (Why should customers buy from us?)
	Step 3: Ask every member about the company vision—Why we do what we do?
	Step 4: Evaluate the consistency of key messages communicated between internal members.
External measure	Step 1: Ask some paid customers for in-depth interviews as well as send questionnaire to other users.
	Step 2: Try to answer the following questions in the survey to understand how customers perceive a company's products: • Why did you buy our product? • What problems were you looking to solve? • How do you use our product?

	• What do you like most about our product? • What do you like least?
	Step 3: Customizing the process For the interview, always pop up with "Why?". It is never about the feature of the product, it is about how this feature impacts the person in daily work and what value that product provides. For sending questionnaire, keep the questions short and open. The company can tailor the questions depending on the areas which the company want to know more.
Compare results	After internal and external measurement, a company has to compare these results and then notice how far apart its internal messaging is from its customer perception.

Figure 20: How AdLaunch can measure the consistency of key messages

For the second criteria, AdLaunch can measure the website's traffic by using Google Analytics. There are many other online search engines such as Bing, Yahoo, Baidu, DuckDuckGo; however, Google totally dominates the global industry. To some extent, it is hard to identify the exact amoutn of traffic AdLaunch need. Therefore, the author recommended that AdLaunch should measure the growth rate of website traffic and pay more attention to the traffic medium. In the next six months, organic search, referral, and social like Facebook will be three significant medium for AdLaunch. Besides, AdLaunch can use other free tools and premium tools on the Internet including Check PageRank, SimilarWeb, NeilPatel to evaluate the deeper assessment on the website performance.

7 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter summarized the author's findings as well as evaluations of the entire study. Suggestions for further study was also mentioned.

7.1 Summary

This study intended to create an online marketing communications plan to help AdLaunch grow its number of online users. More specifically, the aims were to identify the key message and suggest a detail plan to communicate the message online successfully. The study results

were drawn from the answers of potential users in interviews and insights from different case company-based analyses such as SWOT, PESTEL, and situational analysis. Also, the author worked closely with the CEO of the case company as an internal researcher in this study.

Both internal and external stakeholders involved the process of collecting data, which certainly increases the reliability and validity of this study. Mr Joel, the CEO of AdLaunch represented an internal stakeholder while potential users served as an external stakeholder.

The online communications plan of AdLaunch contains five main parts. They are situational analysis, objectives, strategies, action plan, and measuring procedure. Beginning of the plan, situational analysis part provided an overview situation of AdLaunch's online marketing communications activities. The objective was decided after the author acquire sufficient understandings of AdLaunch in general through company case analyses and situational analysis.

After that, the author composed the strategy for AdLaunch to achieve the objective. The suggested key message was also listed in the strategy as it determined the following action plan. For the case company AdLaunch, the author recommended the action plan with step-by-step orders. Finally, the author illustrated how AdLaunch could measure its online communications activities after six months given in the objectives. Control and evaluation will play a vital role in the developing process of the case company.

After finalizing the study report, the online marketing communications plan was submitted to the CEO of AdLaunch for assessing the execution ability.

7.2 Limitations

The author faced two major limitations when conducting this study.

The first limitation came from the background of the author. In the context of an international student, the author experienced many difficulties in setting up in-depth interviews with AdLaunch's target users in Finland. These target interviewees are entrepreneurs or social media marketers who desire to grow their business with online video advertising. Importantly, they have not used AdLaunch's video creation tool before. In the end, the author managed to conduct three in-depth interviews.

The second limitation was the uncertainty in AdLaunch's operational activities. By the time this study was conducted, AdLaunch was still a new tech startup. The product was in beta version and the company's strategy was changing within a few months based on users' feedbacks. Nevertheless, the author used the advantages of an internal researcher to keep track with the company operation when producing the final plan. To some extent, the online mar-

keting communications plan could not cover all the aspects in detail and guarantee the success in getting the high number of new users. The ability to achieve the objectives can only be verified by implementing the plan after a given period in a real business environment.

7.3   Suggestions for further study

A detailed plan is essential for every company to achieve its goal. For a new startup like AdLaunch, the steps have to be also flexible and easy to adapt to new market changes. Therefore, the company has to frequently update and optimize the plan according to a company's situation and new collected insights.

From the author's point of view, AdLaunch should conduct a further study in all elements of online marketing communications suggested in the plan. In fact, the goal of this action was to propose additional activities on the action plan to ensure its success in practice. The further study was demonstrated in the figure below.

Suggestions for further study on the action plan	
Website and SEO	Further study on: • How to get more backlinks to the main webpage? High number of trustworthy backlinks can dramatically increase website's ranking. • How to find the right keywords to use? Explore data to support the decision on why choosing those particular keywords. • How to run user experience testing to find how new users react when they see the page for the first time?
Social media	Further study on: • How to map out the user journey and understand how each social channel plays its role in the journey? • What are the best types of contents that can engage potential users?

Online advertising	Further study on: • What are the right user personas for targeting on ads? • What advertising platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Google, LinkedIn bring the highest returns on investment? • How to optimize results of ads on each platform with limited budgets?
Public relations	Further study on: • How to get bloggers on the Internet to write about AdLaunch? • How to write effectively case studies for current customers?

Figure 21: Suggestions for further study on the action plan

Last but not least, AdLaunch should have more customer researches to understand potential customers' real problems. As an example, all interviewees did not plan to use AdLaunch's video creation tool for only creating video ads. This particular insight also supports AdLaunch to guide its product development and marketing activities. Being customer-centric is vital for startups to survive in the first beginning years before going bankrupt. It is even more valid when AdLaunch serves business-to-business customers where the buying process is lenghthy and complicated.

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Figures

Pictures

Picture 1: Themes commonly associated with particular colours

Picture 2: Global Ad Spend on Google and Facebook

Picture 3: Percent of buyers expecting to increase spend on ad in 2017

Picture 4: Declining VC del count in US advertising tech companies

Picture 5: Is your company GDPR ready?

Appendices

Appendix 1: A list of questions for interviews

1. What are your impressions about the tool?

2. How do you think the tool can help your company?

3. What are social media channels that your company is using at the moment?

4. How often do you create video contents for your social media?

5. How did you create those videos?

6. Did you use any similar tools for supporting you to create videos? If Yes, what kinds of tool did you use? If No, do you know any of these online tools?

7. How did you know about the tools you just mentioned?

8. Do you remember their marketing messages?

9. Did you recommend these tools to your friends? What did you tell them?

10. If you're facing a problem in social media marketing, where would you find the solution?

11. In our case, from your perspective, what would be the best marketing messages from AdLaunch to convince you to try the product?

12. And the channels for AdLaunch to deliver the message to you?

13. How much would you pay for the tool?

14. If you like the tool and want to buy it, what will be the buying process for your organization?