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DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY IN THE FINNISH WINE INDUSTRY

– Case Study: Company X, Y, Z in Finland



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Abstract

In the context of the Finnish wine market, the country-specific legislation on alcoholic products marketing is seen to be strict and ambiguous, especially for social media marketing in terms of user-generated content. Although the wording of the law indicates a total ban on alcohol marketing on social media, the government stated that the purpose of the law was not a total ban. Therefore, there are certain rules which wine companies custom to strategise the marketing plan for both digital and social media platforms to increase the visibility of wine products.

Like any other industry, digital marketing is crucial, not to mention for the wine industry. The rise of the Internet and social media network enables customers to access inspiring stories and the latest drinking trends. Statistics Finland shows that eighty-four per cent of Finns used the Internet several times a day (Official Statistics of Finland, 2020) whose presences are already out there to adopt news and trends. The research's objectives are to find out how wine companies utilise digital platforms and online availability to reach their potential customers while still strictly following the Finnish restrictions.

There has been a bundle of digital marketing tactics and activities that play an important role in the company's growth. Moreover, following the Finnish Alcohol Act and the guideline from the National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health (Valvira) – who takes responsibility for the implementation and enforcement of marketing regulations, the thesis will focus on digital marketing strategy typically done by case wine companies (importers and wholesalers) and how marketing strategy is accustomed to the alcohol legislation. Further analysis of the most frequently used digital marketing tactics and the Finnish wine trends will also be covered.

The primary methodology of the research used was an in-depth interview with the involvement of three wine marketing professionals. All three separate interview sessions were conducted online via Google Meet platforms within thirty to forty five minutes. Each representative has their own perspectives on marketing wine products, however, all agreed that digital marketing is being an essential strategy for their company's growth. However, in order to execute a proper digital marketing strategy, they have to follow the Finnish restrictions on marketing mild alcohol beverages at all time. The research will present a general analysis of the restrictions and common digital marketing strategies that wine companies are currently effectively executing.

KEYWORDS:

Digital marketing, wine industry, marketing activities, wine marketing, Finland

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------|-------------------------------------|
| ABV | Alcohol by Volume |
| WSET | The Wine and Spirit Education Trust |
| SEO | Search Engine Optimisation |
| HoReCa | Hotel, Restaurant, Catering |

DEFINITIONS

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Alko | Finland alcohol monopoly |
| Valvira | Finland National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health |
| Mild alcoholic beverage | Alcoholic beverage containing a maximum of 22 percentage by volume ethyl alcohol |
| Strong alcoholic beverage | Alcoholic beverage containing from 22% - 80% by volume ethyl alcohol |

1 INTRODUCTION

The thesis focuses on digital marketing activities for wine production under 22% ABV (Alcohol by Volume). These wines are considered mild alcoholic beverages and permitted to be marketed by law. As far as the thesis goes, it will lead readers to general ideas about the rules and restrictions for mild alcoholic beverage online marketing in general, which relate to wine production. The central part of the research is to find out digital marketing tactics tailored by wine companies to in line with the government amendment. Finally, the wine trend will also be covered as it is prospectively direct to planning a successful digital marketing strategy for wine products in a long term.

Although there are some previous studies about alcohol marketing in Finland regarding the Finnish law, the scope of these researches is relatively different, mainly focusing on alcohol marketing using social media channels. As the thesis stretches to the entire digital marketing repertoire applied for the Finnish wine market, this research will provide insider perspective from wine companies to better understand how current companies effectively execute the digital marketing strategy for wine production.

1.1 Motivation of the study

The author of the thesis has backgrounds in Marketing. She has been studying and gaining experience specifically in digital marketing as a marketing coordinator. Furthermore, spending an exchange semester in Ireland back in 2018, the author had an exceptional opportunity to participate in wine courses covering the entire industry of alcoholic beverages made from grape inflorescences, such as marketing and pricing. The experience has been a great source of inspiration for the writer to explore more about this sector in a particular market. It has formed the author's intention to combine her marketing and wine knowledge for future career prospect in Finland. The author aspires to discover how a wine company builds a concrete and successful marketing strategy in Finland according to the alcohol regulations.

According to the Wine and Spirit Education Trust (WSET, 2021), the world's leading organisation in providing wine, spirits, and sake qualifications, wine enthusiasts' career path is dynamic, diverse, like the wine industry's nature. That said, it is even competitive and exciting, rewarding at the same time when compared to any other fields of business. Brand manager and brand ambassador are among the commercial positions requiring both marketing skills and feisty brand identity handling skills. These are two positions that the author wishes to do in the future.

Finally, the purpose of the research comes partly from the author's inquisitiveness to better understand the Finnish law on wine marketing strategy. Like other Nordic countries, Finland also has a state-level monopoly for retail alcohol sales and implements restrictions and regulations on wine marketing. An aim for these efforts is determined as a rule to mitigate health risks and alcohol harms.

In this thesis, only some specific wines under the author's interest will be covered: white wine, red wine, rosé, sparkling wine, and berries wine. These wines are typically considered as mild alcoholic beverages, as stated in the Finnish Alcohol Act (Tuominen, 2017). These are wines that are not containing over 22% ABV. Besides, this is a group of wines that are allowed to be marketed and advertised in a particular rule. The thesis will reveal how a Finnish wine company develops its marketing strategy to cope with the regulations and restrictions.

1.2 The objectives of the study and research questions

The research's objective is to explore the practices of the digital marketing plan and its strategy within the Finnish wine industry. The practices or implementations are different from other Food and Beverage sectors as they are strictly affected by the Finnish alcohol regulations and restrictions. In details, the thesis reveals a general analysis of the latest alcohol regulations in Finland (in which the new Alcohol Act entered into force on 1st March 2018) regarding digital marketing. The purpose is to conquer the most marketing practices and tools that wine companies have been

implemented and executed to cope with the regulations. The following questions will cover the objective of the thesis:

- How does digital marketing support the wine industry in Finland?
- How does the Finnish law and regulations affect the marketing of wine products?
- What are digital marketing strategy in accordance with wine trends in the Finnish market?

Two groups of wines need to be considered in the Finnish market: mild wines and fortified wines. Wines defined as mild wines are alcoholic beverages derived from grapes through the fermentation process and contain a maximum of 22% of ABV. Fortified wines are strong alcoholic beverages made from grapes and contain from 22% to 80% ABV (Valvira, 2018). As in the author's interest, only the group of mild wines will be discussed throughout the thesis.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Wine consumption in Finland

Over the decades, there has been a defined relationship between the amount and frequency of alcohol consumption and the Finnish drinking culture. The local drinking habit typically connects to the consumption of strong alcoholic beverages. However, in recent years, there is a great shift towards mild alcoholic products such as red and white wines when it comes to food and wine pairing (Catterson, 2018). In addition, Champagne is still a market leader in product consumption, and Prosecco is a trendy favourable sparkling wine in the Finnish market (Alko, 2020).

Many factors affect the drinking habits in Finland. It is likely to vary from time to time in connection with the “actor perspective, the social structures, the political aspirations and everyday consumer practices” (Christoffer and Jukka , 2009). With that said, the drinking habits in Finland since the 1990s have changed significantly due to alcoholic products (see Figure 1) they prefer to consume and the social trends.

In particular, since 1990, wine consumption in Finland has been growing fairly steadily. The shift towards wine productions began with a notable decrease in strong alcoholic beverages and a downward in beers consumption to increase the prevalence of wine consumed (see Figure 1). The trend demonstrates how drinking habits have changed over time according to two main factors: state-level alcoholic regulations and social trends such as the internet and social media.

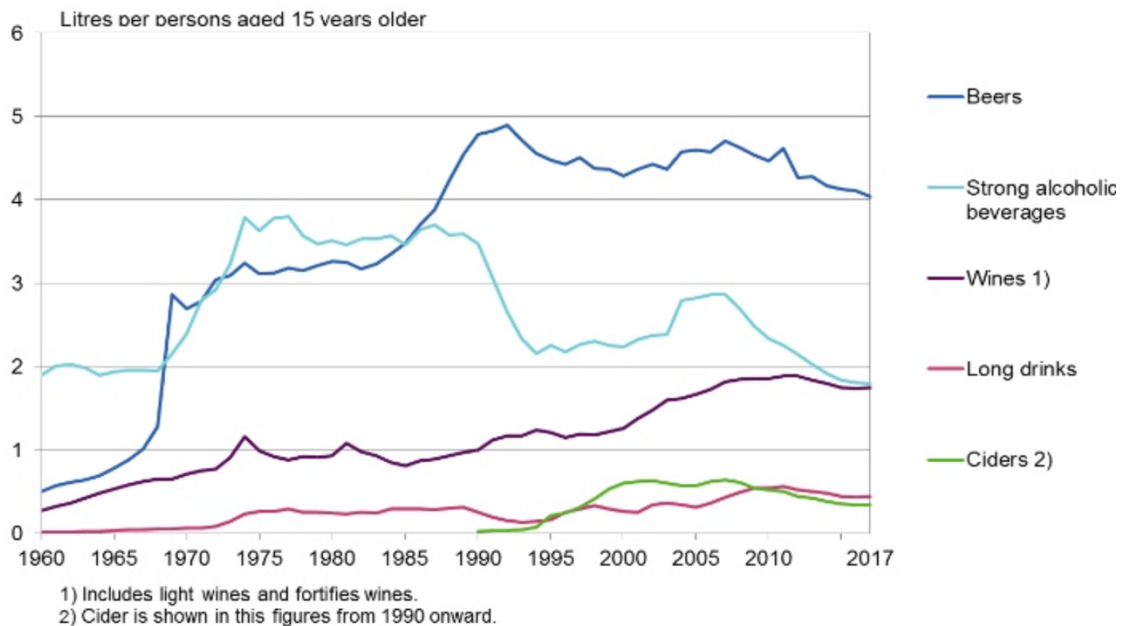


Figure 1: Recorded consumption of alcohol beverages as pure alcohol per person aged 15 years and older according to beverage type, 1960 – 2017. Source: Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL, 2018)

The figure also demonstrates that strong alcoholic beverages are no longer a preferable choice of drinking. Instead, Finns are more aware of the harmful effects of alcohol and leaning towards drinking experience and a healthy lifestyle.

In most recent years from 2017 to 2019, according to Wine Intelligence’s Finland Landscapes 2018 report, there is potential growth in [Finnish] wine market as government restrictions now allow for more choices and availability of different wines outside of the country’s alcohol monopoly (Catterson, 2018). As of the new Alcohol Act enforced in 2018, mild alcoholic beverages under 5.5% of ABV such as light fruit wines can be found in retail stores other than Alko. Significant changes in boosting the physical availability of mild alcoholic beverages, including alcohol advertising and marketing are also mentioned (see Section 4).

In addition, the ascending trend of wine consumption in Finland partly comes from the serviceability of digital channels. The search engine saves customers' time by browsing through a less complicated and transparent process than visiting a physical shop. The rise of using such tool contributes to the undisruptive wine exploration journey. (Catterson, 2018) Wine importers can now catalogue a variety of available wines and redirect them to Alko's online store (B2C). Simultaneously, they can also add an online cart to their traditional website to offer direct sales from B2B partners. Therefore, a website is an essential digital platform driving a smooth and pleasurable customer's journey.

2.2 Wine market in Finland

When the new Alcohol Act came into force on 1st March 2018, Alko remains the monopoly retailing channel. In the year 2018, the monopoly's share of total alcohol sales was 30%. Among the beverages' sales, the total sales of mild wine products (red wines, white wines, sparkling wines, rosé wines) accounted for approximately 64% of the total sales in 2018 (Alko, 2020). The purchases can be made off-premise through Alko retail stores or Alko's webshop. The latter becomes more popular and convenient for customers who know precisely what types of wine they are looking for with the search engine's bar.

In Finland, the wine market is seen to rely on three leading distributors: Alko, importers/wholesalers, and local wine producers. The capability of distribution is restricted by law regarding the percentage of alcohol containing in final products. Alko, as mentioned above, is the biggest alcohol retailer where customers can find a large variety of alcoholic beverages as well as wine products containing 5,5% ABV and higher. Wine importers and wholesalers can also sell alcoholic beverage production to restaurants, bars or hotel partners; at the same time, they are an important supplier of Alko and duty-free. Meanwhile, domestic wine producers can only sell their fermented products with no more than 13% ABV in stores that are connected to the winery (see Figure 2).

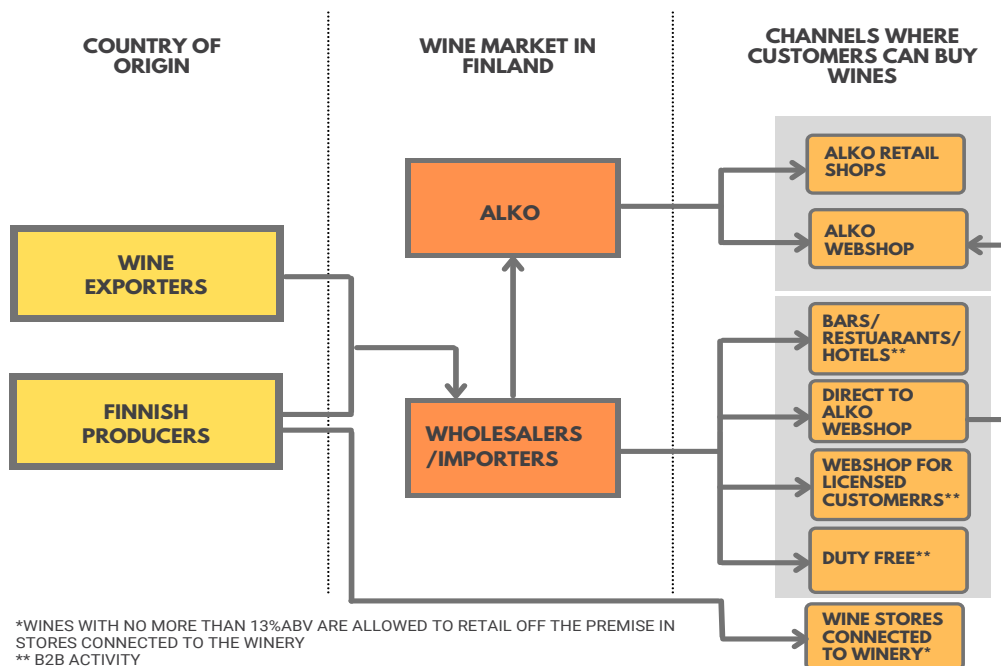


Figure 2: Wine distribution flow in the Finnish market

According to the latest Alko’s annual report 2020, red wines and white wines secure the top-selling products from 2015 to 2019. Other wines such as sparkling wines, and rosé wines were sold less, yet the sales remained relatively stable for five years (see Figure 3).

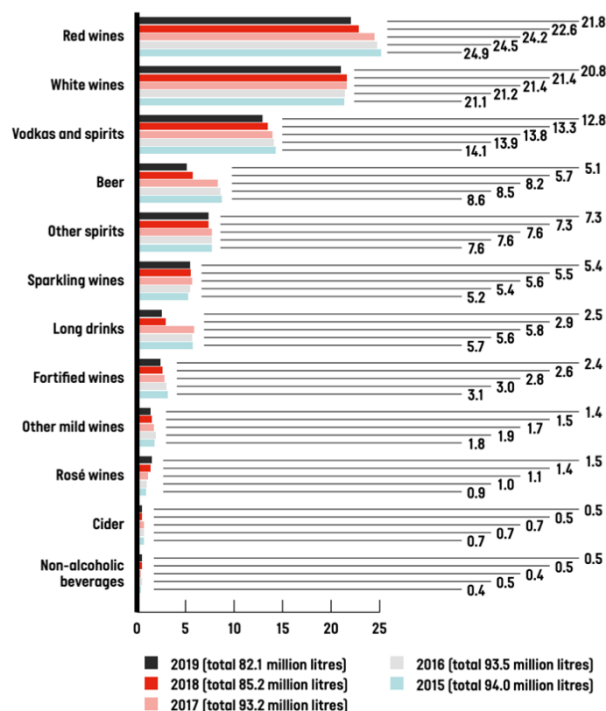
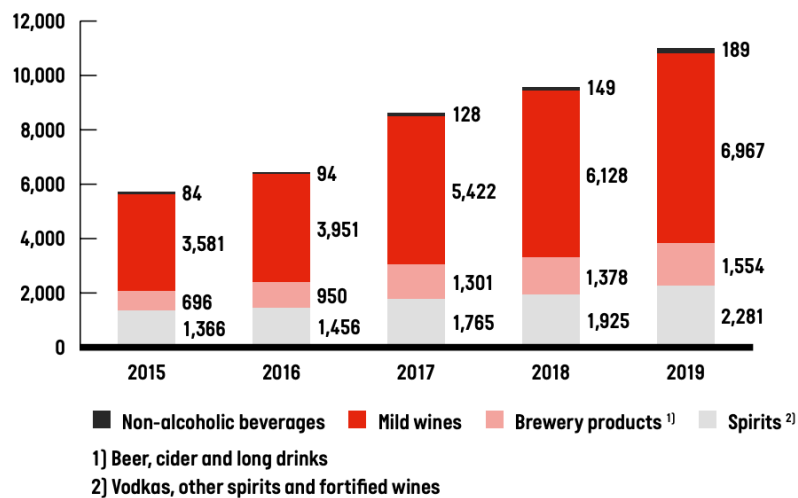


Figure 3: Alko sales by product group, in million litres, 2015-2019. Source: (Alko, 2020)

From 2015 to 2019, mild wines competed spirits and brewery products to stand first place in sales. There were 6967 mild wines products sold in 2019. The sales increased approximately double compared to that in 2015 (Figure 4).



The figures include all products sold and all bottle and package sizes.

Figure 4: Number of products sold by Alko by product group 2015-2019. Source: (Alko, 2020)

Noticeably, during the time of the research, a novel coronavirus outbreak resulted in the demand for wine in 2020 to unusually increase. According to Leena Laitinen, CEO of Alko mentioned in a press release (Alko, 2020), compared to January - November last year [2019], Alko's sales increased 12.4%; and wines accounted for 77% of the increase in litre sales with all positive figures on each segment. "Sales of rosé wines increased by 39.2%. Demand for white wines rose 8.4 %, and red wines were +5.6%; the sales of sparkling wines grew by 4.3%" in November alone, she added (Table 1).

Table 1: Sales by product group. Source: Alko Sales Statistics 12.2020

MYYNТИ TUOTERYHMITÄIN, SUPPEA

Försäljning per varugrupp, kortfattad - Sales by Product Group, brief

| | 11 / 2020 | | 1 - 11 / 2020 | |
|--|--------------|------------|---------------|-------------|
| | 1000 l | +/-% | 1000 l | +/-% |
| VODKAT JA VIINAT | 1 066 | 2,2 | 12 476 | 7,6 |
| <i>Vodka and spirits - Vodka och brännvin</i> | | | | |
| MUUT VÄKEVÄT | 670 | 7,8 | 7 218 | 12,7 |
| <i>Other spirits - Övrigt sprit</i> | | | | |
| VÄKEVÄT VIINIT | 281 | -3,5 | 1 868 | -3,9 |
| <i>Fortified wines - Starkvin</i> | | | | |
| PUNAVIINIT | 2 085 | 5,6 | 21 397 | 14,9 |
| <i>Red wine - Rödvin</i> | | | | |
| VALKOVIINIT | 1 631 | 8,4 | 21 936 | 16,9 |
| <i>White wine - Vitvin</i> | | | | |
| KUOHUVIINIT | 343 | 4,3 | 5 096 | 9,7 |
| <i>Sparkling wine - Mousserande vin</i> | | | | |
| ROSEVIINIT | 87 | 39,2 | 2 006 | 38,9 |
| <i>Rosé wine - Rosévin</i> | | | | |
| MUUT MIEDOT VIINIT | 164 | -8,2 | 1 034 | -2,5 |
| <i>Other wines - Övrigt svagvin</i> | | | | |
| SIIDERIT | 32 | -5,8 | 446 | 3,5 |
| <i>Cider - Cider</i> | | | | |
| LONGDRINKIT | 174 | -2,5 | 2 348 | 2,1 |
| <i>Long drink - Long drink</i> | | | | |
| OLUET | 439 | 4,3 | 4 854 | 6,6 |
| <i>Beer - Öl</i> | | | | |
| ALKOHOLITOMAT | 42 | -1,6 | 481 | 6,7 |
| <i>Non-alcoholic beverages - Alkoholifritt</i> | | | | |
| YHTEENSÄ Sammanlagt - Total | 7 013 | 5,0 | 81 160 | 12,4 |
| YHTEENSÄ 100%:NA ALKOHOLINA | 1 236 | 4,8 | 14 054 | 11,5 |

Corona crisis has demonstrated the importance of digital marketing through the increase of e-commerce transactions for the case of Alko and any other wine businesses. "The number of Alko's e-commerce orders has increased by 80 percent compared to last year. In December, e-commerce order volumes were expected to double that amount of last year. Customers want to get acquainted with the product range in peace and minimize the transaction time and close contacts at the store.", said Leena (Alko, 2020).

To conclude, many Finns nowadays are increasingly favourable toward mild wines than other strong alcoholic beverages (section 2.1). A high proportion of wine consumed in recent years has undoubtedly proved this trend. As a result, the wine market is currently a promising drinking market in Finland. The trends of drinking habit and social media development are opportunities for wine companies to create their customer profile based on wine product segmentation and channels the customers use. Moreover, the relaxing government restrictions and thriving e-commerce have become a solid association that strategically support companies' marketing plan effort.

2.3 Digital marketing in wine industry

Digital marketing has become necessary in the world of information fluidity to most businesses and organisations. Under a cloud of new entrants and disruptive innovation, marketing had transformed dramatically in the digital age when businesses utilise online presence such as search engine optimisation (SEO), social media, online advertising; and

multi-channel analytics to understand customers' behaviour and achieve the business goals, especially the marketing goals (Mankad, 2019).

The reason for the transformation to digital marketing is that digital marketing is a reporting and analytics engine that can be layered within the brand campaign. It allows an individual organisation to monitor goals in real-time and how the campaign performs. For example, they can track what are trendings, responses, and other reactions like product viewing, interest response rates, cost per click, and lead generation through digital analytics tools (Mankad, 2019). Unlike traditional marketing, which is often seen via TV ads, billboards and on-site events, digital marketing aims to a vast audience available in the world of internet of thing.



Figure 5: Key digital marketing activities to manage in all organizations. Source: (Chaffey & Smith, 2017)

Almost every business has immersed in the digital world and developed its digital marketing strategy targeting many potential online audiences. Combining available assets (website, social media channels, branding asset, online brochures, look books) to marketing **tactics** (content, search engine optimisation and online PR) is one of the effective digital marketing methods to increase brand's online presence. By constructing a well-planned strategy, businesses can benefit from its content for reach improvement, lead generations, enriched conversion rates, higher revenues achievement and ROI to building trust and maintaining brand identity (Mankad, 2019).

Digital marketing strategy scatters by numerous activities from projection, execution to data-driven analysis. Most digital activities are implemented in the execution and analytics phases in which marketers use different tactics to perform the marketing scheme and then use digital analytics tools to analyse the results. Digital marketing tactics widely implemented are search engine optimisation, content marketing, marketing automation, social media marketing and paid search (see Figure 5). Marketing-related data is then

programmatically collected thanks to online assets such as website and social media channels for further analysis.

The wine industry does not neglect the trend yet jumps directly in the bandwagon to recognise a vital role of digital marketing. In Finland, marketing strategy associated with alcoholic beverages is seen to have various restrictions and regulations especially for online marketing. However, when the latest amendment entered to force in 2018, alcoholic beverages containing up to 22% AVB are allowed to be marketed for both offline and online (Valvira, 2018). Most wine productions sold in Finland belong to this alcoholic beverage' group. Many wine brands and importers can now harmonise the reform of the Finnish Alcohol Act with their marketing strategy.

2.3.1 The essential role of digital marketing in wine industry

There are many advantages of digital marketing that wine companies have unquestionably implemented. Firstly, the vast majority of prospective customers and competitors are online. Potential customers are likely to expect a complete product card described their wine of choice on a website. Website is where wine production is allowed to place a price list and all wine-related information such as country of origin, grape variety, alcohol level, food pairing recommendations and tasting notes. Social media presence is also essential for wine companies to update their latest wine products or wine trend in the market, where customers easily distinguish them from other competitors to make a final purchasing decision.

For a successful business, knowing what competitors are doing is extremely important. Most likely, they would generally establish a web presence and social media interaction with their potential customers. Content marketing and blogging are mostly tended to be shared to maintain customer relationship. A tip on self-guided wine tasting or articles about new wine arrival is typical contents fitting for both web blog and social media. Therefore, looking into these competitors' activities, wine companies will grab some new ideas for their marketing strategy while capturing the whole picture of the wine market.

Secondly, a search engine is another benefit from the digital world for wine marketing. By optimising the position on Google or Bing search to the top page, relevant keywords lead potential customers to the business and help wine companies move ahead of their competitor.

Thirdly, digital marketing allows wine company to engage with the prospects personally, helping them build brand loyalty. Web registration system and email marketing are typical examples of the effort of understanding customers better. There are many tactics to interact with customers by newsletter, direct contact information or social media button click. By interacting with people digitally, mainly through likes and comments, wine

companies can gain customers' preferences on the types of wine they are willing to purchase.

In 2018, Finland ranked number two from the top ten digital expat havens according to InterNation's Digital Life Abroad which made Finland become one of the world's most digitalised countries for fast internet connectivity (Lindsey G., 2019). Almost every business in Finland benefit from high-speed internet access to include free online web alternative such as mobile application in their marketing campaign. Mobile apps are becoming a worthwhile marketing asset as one way it enhances a business's availability with the target audience at all times, and the other way it provides a marketer with a direct means of interaction with customers (Adam, 2016). Notifications, in-app messages, and analytics features make the mobile app an important channel to evaluate and understand users' behaviour and their buying journey for a successful marketing plan.

Finally, as part of the digital marketing strategy, analytics plays a vital role in helping companies measure and regulate digital marketing campaigns where relevant. In particular, marketing analytics means tracking traffics and responses to every marketing effort made. Web analytics and social media reports are widely utilised due to their convenience and user-friendly configuration for this purpose.

2.4 Mild alcoholic marketing restriction policy in Finland and wine digital marketing strategy

2.4.1 Finnish policy for marketing mild alcoholic beverage

The world of wine has developed in its way. Both consumers and producers have established a unique marketplace where the wine marketing strategy is unlikely paralleled with some of the other common industries such as FMCG or other similar diligences. In most industry, the marketing strategy is seen to have a broader audience approach as possible while in the wine industry, digital marketing activities are likely to be limited. A strict policy on wine consumption due to alcohol-related health issues happens to stringent wine marketing strategy regulations for wineries and wine businesses.

Specifically, Alko has been performing as a leading alcohol retailer in Finland. Their marketing strategy on wine and other high alcohol content by volume beverages rather focuses on social responsibility and customer experience than commercial dedications. A completely-owned state company has run various marketing activities online such as raising customer's awareness about the harms caused by alcohol and encourage a healthy lifestyle. Sales techniques frequently used in marketing, such as discounts via social media, are not considered to apply in Alko nor the entire industry.

On the other perspectives, wine importers or wine producers are performing their marketing campaigns comparatively different from the approach of Alko. It is acknowledged by their natural structure, which results in a product-oriented marketing strategy. With that said, wine businesses are allowed to execute commercial activities to promote alcoholic beverages; however, the marketing strategy should be aligned with the Finnish alcohol policy.

In accordance with the latest Finnish law on alcohol marketing, two categories of alcoholic beverages should be placed under consideration: strong alcoholic beverages (which contain between 22% and 80% ABV) and mild alcoholic beverages (maximum 22% ABV) (Alcohol Act, Section 3). The attempts for strong alcoholic beverages' marketing, in general, are prohibited. Therefore, this research only focuses on the marketing policy for mild alcoholic beverages.

By law, the marketing regulations apply to commercial activities to promote the sale of alcoholic beverage. Alcohol marketing includes direct and indirect advertising and other promotional activities. Indirect advertising refers to using the name or established trademark of an alcoholic beverage to advertise another product or service. If the advertisement ran online, it could not target or appear to children and adolescents under 18 years old (Valvira, 2018).

Marketing for mild alcoholic beverages can be advertised under certain limitations, primarily focusing on the use of social media. As a result of the reform of the Finnish Alcohol Act in 2018, wine production can be marketed digitally, yet it should follow specific restrictions. The National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health (Valvira) is authorised to implement and enforce marketing regulations. The guidelines (Valvira 2018) for mild alcoholic beverage's marketing activities infer the use of social media as:

- It is prohibited to use verbal or visual content produced by consumers for commercial marketing. That said, the use of material created by consumers, such as comments, photos or videos advertising alcoholic beverages, is prohibited. These materials should not be available on the alcohol company's website or social media channels.
- When using websites and social media for advertising, advertisers must disable the "share" function. They must not encourage consumers to create or share content by themselves to advertise alcoholic beverages.
- The advertiser has to remove consumer-created material, referred to as alcohol advertising, in any social media channel. Praising comments on an image of alcoholic beverages, for example, are considered as consumer-created content.
- The restrictions apply to commercial operators such as producers, importers, and seller of alcoholic beverage. Blogger, Youtuber, or individual holding social media accounts may be considered commercial operators if that person promotes alcoholic beverages for a commission. Hence, collaboration with bloggers or influencers will be carefully considered as a marketing tactic in wine marketing.

- Blog content generated or in collaboration with a manufacturer, importer or seller is not considered consumer-created material. Therefore, it is possible to have blog text on a website or other online services.
- In general, displaying a sponsored advertisement for mild alcoholic beverages on social media network is permitted. However, the ads must only be targeted at people at the legal drinking age. Advertisers also ensure that the sharing button is disabled for sponsored ads.
- The “like” function is not considered consumer-generated content as long as it does not constitute verbal or visual content. Therefore, it is allowed to keep the “like” button unblocked.
- The use of social media sharing buttons on the website linking to advertising alcoholic beverages is not permitted.

In summary, marketers can advertise mild wine production on the website and social media network. The latter circumstance involves tighter rules than on the website. Marketers should not urge or encourage customers to create or share contents that are considered alcohol-related marketing on social media platforms. As a result, comments, text posts, blog, images or videos implied as marketing alcoholic beverages must be blocked or deleted by the marketers. The “share” function in any social media sites may be intentionally controlled by the marketing operator. Additionally, paid advertisement on social media is also prohibited if the content was implied to be shared among the viewers or/and aiming at underage people.

In brief, it is by default permitted to promote wine products (which are mild alcoholic beverages). Legislations such as the restrictions on social media functions to promoting wine products have limited wine producers from reaching a vast amount of young audiences who are actively available on social network sites for a conversation or discussion (A. M. Atkinson, 2017). However, solid limitations will be applied to the marketing strategy if the companies sought for spreading brand image to broader audiences.

2.4.2 Digital marketing strategy for wine production according to Finnish legislation

There are various palettes of wine marketing possibilities to attract online users under the internet and social media network landscape. The repertoire of marketing tactics to cope with the Finnish law regulation consists of creating branded content for both website and social media channels, display promotions on wine brands’ web-shop, engage interaction possibilities (e.g., emoji buttons) within the social networks (Emmi Kauppila, 2019).

Restrictions on content marketing on online services steer alcohol beverage brands back to the traditional website combined with content marketing for their strategic branding marketing. On the one hand, the website will guide customers through attention-grabbing content such as educational articles about grape varieties, introduction to a wine region, and, importantly, a product card with detailed information about a bottle of wine available for sale. It is contributing to customers embracing wine exploration (Catterson, 2018). On the other hand, it is a shortcut helping customers instantly get assistance through a chatbot and a built-in search engine tool.

Websites are also a place where email marketing triggers. Subscription is the most common technique for collecting customers' emails to create and maintain customer relationship. By doing this way, subscribed customers will be amongst the earliest audiences to be notified about the most recent events, interesting articles about wine trends, or new pair of wine and food recommendations.

Since the website is a powerful platform for a wine brand image, it is extremely necessary to optimise the business visibility from the beginning of the customer's journey. Many customers are initially searching for wine production or a brand through a search engine such as Google or Bing rather than visiting directly to the website. By doing this, customers aim to get an overview of the business via location suggestions, website ranking, and reviews before making a final destination. Essentially, optimising the ranking on search engines (SEO) with relevant keywords phrase will help a wine business stand out from other wine competitors.

Back into the wine market in Finland, wine wholesalers and importers are important channels to supply wine products to B2B associates such as HORECA, duty-free and Alko. Besides, for end consumers or B2C activity, wine businesses have an additional strategy to direct these customers to retailing selling points, most of the case, to Alko (Figure 2). The reason is that the Finnish alcohol law only allows Alko to retail alcoholic beverages from 5,5% ABV.

Wine importers and wholesalers are implementing a webshop to their traditional website to simplify the purchasing process for both B2B and B2C clients. Taking Norex Selected Brands Oy's website as an example, a family-owned wholesaler and importer of wines and spirits land an online store for their B2B partners. These are registered alcohol license holders who are professionals in the Finnish alcohol industry. By law, they are allowed to access the online service to review marketing materials of wine production and place an order.

For end-consuming customers (B2C), they have a separate website named "Viikonviini", providing customised content, commonly about wine and food pairing, wine tasting tips, ethical and green products, and knowledge behind a bottle of wine. Last but not least, there is an indispensable session for price listing individual wine selection. The shopping cart is removed from the traditional website; instead, a price listing redirects to Alko's online store for further purchasing. As the digital product listing via Alko's retail website enables both a legal and less complex process than shopping wines from stores.

Although there are restrictions on content marketing for social media, wine companies have still positioned social media network as ongoing corporate communication channels (Ashley and Tuten, 2015). Within consideration of the audit of alcoholic related content generated

by customers, marketers can creatively employ social media network as an integrated component for marketing campaigns. Publishing customer-centric content to collect engagements such as Likes while comforting the sharing rule on social media is considered an effective strategy to draw social media users' attention.

Online advertising on a website is traditionally permitted and as a rule, a website for alcoholic beverages will make sure that visitors are older than 18 years old before entering the homepage. Advertising on social media channels is also allowed as long as it is not involved in the aim of sharing uncontrollably to broader audiences and it should not target underage people.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data collection methods

Since there are several complicated regulations and restrictions on the alcohol marketing sector, particularly noted for the wine industry, the **exploratory methodology** will be preliminarily executed to analyze the case research. It is conducted to understand better the informant's point of view on local wine marketing rules. Starting from providing general knowledge will hence point out the existing issues which restrict wine companies from undertaking an ordinary marketing strategy compared to other F&B businesses. Rather than providing conclusive evidence, the exploratory study prefers thorough understanding of the problem or insider view of the research's topic (Saunders, 2012).

In particular, the qualitative method is the primary research design was used in the thesis. The benefit of the choice of qualitative method as Gilbert (2008) noted that it is research that aims to investigate and analyze specific problems by describing scenes, gathering data through interviews, or analyzing the meaning of documents. In other words, the qualitative method was conducted to have an in-depth and extensive understanding of the issues utilizing their textual interpretation through most common methods such as interviewing and observation (JW, 2007). This study focuses on the practices of marketing strategy under the restrictions of wine marketing regulations.

The primary research method to be conducted in the thesis to collect data is by **interviews** and **observation**. The actions give in-depth information on the case research. The thesis contains semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method where interviewees' opinions will contribute to the project's analysis with a meticulous set of partly diverted questions while allowing new angles to the central themes. Semi-structured interviews designed for this thesis are those in-depth interviews with preset open-ended questions. It is conducted once only with individuals who work in the Finnish wine industry. Prior to the interviews, a semi-structured interview guide which is a schematic presentation of questions or topics and needs to be explored by the interviewer, will be prudently prepared (Barbara D., 2006).

In-depth interviews used in the research are to discover shared understandings among selected interviewees who are experts and professionals in the Finnish wine industry. Selecting in-depth interviewed participants is based on an iterative process referred to as purposeful sampling that seeks to maximise the depth and richness of the data to address the research question (Kuzel, 1999).

Initially, the author had planned to conduct onsite face-to-face interviews. However, upon the corona pandemic situation during the execution of the thesis, the plan changed to online interviews operated via Google Meet platform in order to practice the social distancing rules. There were three one-on-one interviews sessions completed with marketing executives from wine importing companies and wholesalers.

Observation is another type of qualitative research method involved to include the writer's research and viewpoints related to the field. Observational data can be integrated as auxiliary or confirmatory research. Observational methods are, sometimes, supplemental means for corroborating research findings (Gray, 2009).

3.2 Interview design

A semi-structured interview is a means of data collection for this study. A researcher and respondents are undertaking a conversation followed by open-ended questions prepared by the researcher. The goal is that the researcher wants to gather information from each respondent in a demanding approach. With the assistance of the interview questions guide, three research questions are divided into three topics: sub-questions specifically constructed to conquer the problems in detail. In other words, open-ended questions proposed for the study means to expect respondents to provide detailed answers by their own words, phrases or sentences, for examples. (Matthew, 2018)

In the semi-structured interview, sets of sub-questions might not be asked in precise order to each interviewee. Though, the researcher would attempt that all designed questions will be asked. There might have some additional questions arising during the interviews, and these questions are also valuable to be noted for further analysis.

One of the important techniques in the qualitative method is creating a field note. Field notes are written recordings generated before, during, and after interviews vitally necessary for the data collection process. Since the field notes record the researcher's observations throughout the data collection process, these notes will be further involved in data analysis. There is another technique to support the data collection process is recording (Matthew, 2018). This is a supplement of field notes where information is not fully taken. Besides, a review of what was happening in the interviews through recordings gives hidden insights for data analysis.

The objectives of all three interviews are to find a proper understanding of the research questions. Particularly, they are: How does digital marketing support the wine industry in Finland? How does the Finnish law and regulations affect the marketing of wine products in Finland? What are the marketing strategy trends for the Finnish wine market?

3.3 Reliability and limitations

The interviewees selected for this thesis are Marketing Managers and Digital and Brand Marketing Manager correspondingly. Working in the Finnish wine market, they would be fitting for providing practical insights about wine marketing which helps increase data reliability.

Although two out of three participants are holding a general marketing management position, they can also provide insights on digital marketing strategy as it is part of their responsibilities when asked about their roles and how they are compatible with digital marketing.

The interview invitations were sent out three to four weeks before the online meeting. Due to time limitation and interviewees' schedule, only three companies approved the interview invitation. Therefore, there are limitations on the assumption of the findings.

As the nature of law development, the Finnish legislation on marketing mild alcoholic beverages digitally might be reformed in the future. Therefore, the research is only valid at the time being until the law is significantly changed again.

4 RESEARCH ANALYSIS

4.1 Key findings from the research

The new amendment of the Finnish law on alcohol marketing has formed a framework that many wine companies are recommended to follow. Due to the nature of social media platforms for their interactivity and sharing function, digital marketing using these online networks has been impacted by the Finnish alcohol legislation. The general goal is to minimise the harmful effects of alcohol use among a specific group of audience on social media.

There are varieties of restrictions for marketing mild alcoholic beverages. In terms of wine, online marketing, content creation, target audience, and social media marketing are key aspects of constantly updating the alcohol restrictions for effective digital marketing while making it appropriate to the law.

Specifically, content created by consumers is not allowed to reshare or reuse for online advertisements, such as on Facebook or Instagram. However, company-generated content and sponsored content are, in general, possible for publicly publishing via a website or social media sites with some restrictions. For example, audiences for such content or advertisement must be well-defined and targeted to the legal age of drinking. Sharing button is encouraged to deactivate during the launch of a wine marketing campaign.

However, an interview session with wine marketing experts has delivered a mutual opinion on the clarity of the Finnish mild alcohol digital marketing restrictions. Marketing manager X1 prompted the restriction interpretation from the law when, in her opinion, it is likely unclear about a specific restriction on social media marketing is inferred. Digital marketer from company Y has a different approach slightly. Compared to traditional wine marketing, digital marketing is more efficient in terms of affordable expenses, although there are several implementation restrictions. If there is ambiguous guidance from the law, the company will approach Valvira for a clearer understanding. Though it is a time-consuming process. Sharing a similar opinion with digital marketer X2, marketing manager Y3 agreed to communicate with Valvira whenever unclear restriction statements emerge.

4.2 Key findings from the interviews

There were three wine companies' representatives, in total, involved in the research. Two companies are specified as wines and spirits importers, while the other importing company's focused product is only wines. Both companies' names and interviewees' names were kept anonymous. Therefore, the companies' names are implied as company X, Y and Z, respectively. All three representatives interviewed were women professionals who would

be regarded as “she” during the thesis analysis. Numbering after company X, Y, Z, for example, X1, Y2, Z3 indicating a particular interviewee is also coded to keep consistency and strictest confidence as in confirmation with interviewees.

Table 2: A list of companies participated in the interviews and their business model

| | Business model | Targeted customers |
|------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Company X | Wines & Spirits Importer and Distributor | B2B and B2C |
| Company Y | Wines & Spirits Importer and Service Provider | B2B and B2C |
| Company Z | Wines Importer | Mainly B2B |

As in the literature review, most wine and spirit importers and wholesalers are key distributors of Alko and HoReCa (B2B). Consequently, three interviewed companies are mainly centering on these traditional business partners for their digital marketing strategy. Additionally, end customers (B2C) are an influential targeted audience in Company X and company Y. While at the same time, it is less concerned in company Z. The targeted group of customers correspondingly affects the tactics, and digital platforms companies prefer to apply for their digital marketing strategy.

At some points, the company's business model indicates a diversity of digital marketing activities implemented so that they could reach a broader wine-lover audience. Company X and Y are both targeting B2B and B2C, so their digital marketing strategy is utilising as many available social network channels, website, and search engines as possible to maximise the opportunity to attract the targeted consumers. In the meantime, company Z only focuses on B2B, which narrow their digital marketing plan to be influenced by their business partners such as Alko.

Consequently, the more digital marketing activities the company implements, the more critical it is for its growth. From the three interview sessions, company X and Y rated the importance of digital marketing with a higher level (4/5) than that voted by company Z (3/5).

Perceiving the weight of digital marketing to the wine market, all representatives shared that they are frequently following the Finnish alcohol law and updating knowledge with other marketers in the wine industry to comprehend the restrictions and improve their digital marketing performance. All marketers voted for the significant role of the Finnish alcohol law to mild alcohol beverages is high (at least 3).

The research is conducted when the coronavirus broke out (March to May 2021), so it is worth noting how the pandemic affects its digital marketing strategy. Both marketers X and Y shared that their company has shifted the marketing activity to the digital environment more commonly than before. Notably, digital marketer Y2 strongly believe that digital marketing has generated positive outcomes on growing brand visibility and connecting to potential customers.

Alongside the digital marketing strategy, one out of three interviewed companies (company X) has still mingled traditional marketing to support their marketing strategy. At this point, the other two companies have been transferring to digital marketing as the most important activity to grow the business.

Website, search engine, and social media are crucial platforms for launching their digital marketing plan. Website and social media are the most effective and affordable tools to increase the online traffic to their business search. To maximise social media usability, marketers widely conducted online ads are with great care of restrictions cited in the amendment.

Content marketing and visual marketing assets are commonly delivered together on the website and social media platforms. The purposes are to increase the attractiveness and curiosity of the online audiences while boosting the company's online presence. Due to the restrictions, the content generated by customers is not encouraged to be shared or commented publicly online via advertisement. Instead, blogging and educational articles about wine created by marketers, wine producers or importers are published online.

The general rule of marketing mild alcohol beverages (wines) on digital platforms for the Finnish market is that online advertisement is followed by various restrictions, including content creation and pricing. On the other hand, other digital marketing activities can be conducted with the utmost concern of targeting the legal age of drinking. Website is also allowed to include the online retailing site as long as it directs to Alko online store.

4.3 Wine trends in pair with digital marketing strategy

In terms of the style of wines for the near future consumption, most company' representatives predict a favourable trend of sparkling, white wines and wines made from the Old World (French, Italy, Spain, and Portugal). Wines that have natural or organic origin have formed another trendy option among wine consumers, making winemakers put high efforts to achieve a mark for the local wine market competition. Story-telling and traceability of wine are also other features that wine lovers would try to study before making a purchasing decision. It could be a grape varietal that the wine is made from, the history of the vineyard or the unique winemaking method. All mentioned trends are a great source of inspiration and ideas for content creation.

For company Z, since they incline to the B2B business model, their approach to digital marketing strategy is slightly different from the other two companies. They focus more on marketing their company brand than marketing the products. Their audiences are business partners such as restaurants, hotels and the national airport.

Speaking of the content marketing applied in company Z, it practices educational content and product overview, which are most regularly presented on social media and website. Occasionally, the company is likely to blend already have content together with specific posts for a short-term product campaign such as "Italy Bubbly Week" to promote sparkling wines of Italy.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 How does digital marketing support the wine industry in Finland?

When being asked about the importance of digital marketing for the growth of a company on a scale from 1 (least important) to 5 (extremely important), two out of three companies' representatives voted for the highest level of 5 (Table 4). Company X and company Y rated the same level of 5 in emphasizing the vital role of digital marketing in recent years connected to its effectiveness in increasing brand awareness.

Marketing manager X1 stated that *"Nowadays, everyone goes digital. It is the most effective and measurable tool. We can control almost everything. In a short time, we can react quickly"*. Digital and Brand Marketing Manager Y2 added: *"It (digital marketing strategy) is imperative, especially during the covid19 crisis when people move towards online shopping even with alcoholic beverages. Also, since print media is no longer as effective as digital platforms due to its time-consuming process, we added digital marketing to increase the performance of brand awareness."*

Table 3: The importance of digital marketing to the company's growth on the scale from 1 (least important) to 5 (extremely important)

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Company X | | | | | |
| Company Y | | | | | |
| Company Z | | | | | |

Responding to the same evaluation, marketing manager Z3 moderately rated the importance of digital marketing strategy growth to the medium level of 3. When asked for further explanation of her choice, she accentuated the monopoly rules for their wine products marketing strategy. Nearly 90% of their wine selection is distributed to Alko, while the rest will be distributed to HoReCa and tax-free partners (Finnair). As a general rule of thumb, a company cannot decide individually on the product marketing strategy after the product placed in Alko.

Company Z's digital marketing strategy depends instead on the marketing budget assigned for a particular brand and product, according to Z3. Margin setting and pricing for imported wines products directly affect the marketing budget of the company. The pricing activity is compromised with producers or wine merchants (so-called *négociants*). After pricing negotiation is allocated, the company will then conclude the marketing budget, then consider the brand reputation and the number of wine bottles on sales. Finally, they will decide on digital marketing tactics and channels for the purchased wines. Social media (Facebook and Instagram) marketing is the most focused tactic that company Z will prioritise to launch a wine promotion campaign.

In terms of commonly-used digital marketing activities, all three companies agreed on the effectiveness of content marketing, SEO and social media marketing for their wine’s promotion strategy. Two out of three companies shared the same tactic of using social media platforms to deliver the marketing efforts. Newsletter and short-term campaigns are widely used in company X and company Y to maintain customer’s relationship. In contrast, company Z focuses on paid marketing (Table 3). The content marketing comprises special offers, new wine arrival campaigns, wine trends articles, wines, and food pairing recommendations. Their subscribers mainly derive from HoReCa and other B2B partners.

Table 4: Digital marketing activities interviewed companies choose for their digital marketing strategy. Blue-filled cells show the most frequently-used digital marketing tactic in each company.

| Digital Marketing Activities | Company | | |
|-------------------------------|---------|---|---|
| Content Marketing | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| SEO | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Social Media Marketing | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| E-mail Marketing (Newsletter) | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Campaigns | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Paid marketing | | | ✓ |

In relations to social media marketing, assets such as pictures, illustration and graphics are critical. It is likely that a high percentage of social engagements coming from a well-composed picture of a picnic meal with a bottle of white wine accompanied with light spring foods and fruits. In order to make images more appealing, digital image editing tools such as Photoshop and Canva are utilised to enhance visual attractiveness.

A digital marketing strategy will not be successfully assessed without post-marketing campaigns analytics. At this stage, all three digital marketing managers agreed that they had been regularly viewing online performances to analyse the execution of entire digital marketing activities with the involvement of multi-channel analytics. Companies are marketing their wine products in various tactics across different channels, web analytics such as Google Analytics, and social media analytics for businesses.

For details, metrics that company X used for digital performance analysis are keyword analysis (SEO), Ads manager (Facebook paid ads campaigns), and social media analytics tools (Instagram and Facebook). They tend to follow online performance and interactions daily and analyse the data once a month for optimisation and change-making. Company Y's representative responded with a relatively similar strategy and highlighted the importance of online performance analysis, which involves an enormous amount of time and effort to improve the subsequent campaigns' performance continually. Open rate metric on Mailchimp was also mentioned to be used for newsletter analysis at company Y.

In the meantime, analysing activity at company Z depends primarily on goals set for a particular wine product to be sold and a wine brand. Analysing digital marketing data is a final stage of a current campaign and the beginning process of a new wine product promotion. Click-through rate, mobile, age, gender and location are critical metrics for data analytics to help them make adjustments for the next digital marketing campaign. Google Analytics is the primary tool for their digital marketing activities analysis. Both company Z and Y often hire a third party or agency for a data report.

5.2 How does Finnish law and regulations affect the marketing of wine products in Finland?

Regarding the impact of Finnish law and regulations on mild alcoholic beverages digital marketing strategy, all companies, in general, agreed that it does affect their digital marketing activities (Table 5). Marketer Y3 rated at the level of 3 (medium rate) while Z3 assessed to level 5 and addressed that the Alcohol Act heavily affect their decision on choosing an appropriate digital marketing activity.

Table 5: The impact of the Finnish Alcohol Law and restrictions on wine digital marketing on the scale from 1 (slightly-affected) to 5 (heavily-affected)

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Company X | | | | | |
| Company Y | | | | | |
| Company Z | | | | | |

In the perspectives of marketing manager X1, traditional ads, influencer and wine journalist collaboration and competitions organising (these are popular marketing activities in the wine industry) have no longer been a prominent trend for wine marketing. The reasons are that traditional marketing requires a significant amount of budget, human resources, and a lack of control on contents that influencers share while generating a lower conversion rate. Instead, digital marketing enters as an alternative and practical approach favoured by X1.

However, to some extent, marketing manager X1 voted 4 for the influence of Finnish alcohol law on the company's digital marketing strategy. The Alcohol Act prevents companies from advertising wines with visible price or increasing post engagements as comments are encouraged to be blocked on social media ads, she added.

Digital and brand marketing manager Y2 shared the same opinions that there are restrictions on digital marketing due to the Finnish alcohol law. Company Y also satisfactorily prefer to use digital marketing to promote imported wine products to the online world. However, according to Y2, the significant obstacles for digital marketing are wording and comments limitations on ads posts. Some straightforward buying encouraging phrases such as "Buy it" does not allow for digital advertising. Traditional marketing is also combined with digital marketing, yet it is not the priority.

To the greatest extent, marketing manager Z3 specified that the alcohol restrictions have heavily affected their digital marketing activities. She voted 5 for the impact. Targeted come-of-age audiences, customer-generated content and online advertising are carefully examined for a particular digital marketing campaign.

All marketing managers agreed that the guideline on marketing mild alcoholic beverages on digital platforms from Valvira is sometimes ambiguous. The guideline itself can be approached as a highly recommended implementation. In order to clarify the restrictions, most companies typically engage in a conversation with Valvira beforehand to take advantages of the digital marketing capability for their companies' strategy as company Y and Z do.

As stated in section 2.4.2, content marketing is one of the essential tactics in digital marketing. Blogging is particularly important as most companies reserve a section for it on their website. Topics for blog articles are commonly about food and wine pairing, cocktails recipes, and seasonal wine choice. Wine branded post and mood-boosting stories posts on social media channels receive an abundance of attention from online audiences that no interviewed company denies its productivity.

When it comes to social media for content marketing, visual image plays a vital role to attract online audiences' attention. *"Instagram is one of the most popular effective social media tools to use as people easily get attracted by creative visual content. They would be likely to stop to read the post thanks to an engaging image."* – according to X1. Nowadays, creating a catchy visual image does not necessarily involve graphic designers; marketers could alternatively engage in this creative activity thanks to digital image editing tools.

As of all companies' preference, Facebook and Instagram are chosen to be leading social media platforms for digital marketing campaigns due to their affordability, user-friendly interface, and many available online audiences. Company X possesses the highest number of followers on both Facebook and Instagram. Both company X and Z are more interactive on Facebook than on Instagram. (Table 6)

In reverse, company Y choose Instagram for sustaining its brand visibility. Nevertheless, there is an interesting note from Y2 that their Instagram account is a joint account with three other wine companies. The top tier reason is that her company shares the same audiences and somewhat similar content while minimising the operation costs on human resources and other marketing activities.

Table 6: The number of followers on Social Media channels from company X, Y and Z. The figures were recorded on May 2021.

| | Facebook | Instagram |
|-----------|----------|-----------|
| Company X | 26 202 | 5 908 |
| Company Y | 536 | 2 494* |
| Company Z | 1 300 | 539 |

*A joint number of followers on Instagram from company Y with the other two companies.

5.3 What are digital marketing strategy in accordance with wine trends in the Finnish market?

The trend in wine consumption has been directly influencing companies' digital marketing strategy. All three companies anticipated that most customers are searching for environmentally-friendly wines such as organic and natural wine in the next five years. In terms of trendy style of wine in the Finnish market, sparkling, white and red wines from Old World are preferential a driver. Also, sustainability, traceability and social responsibility within the wine growing and winemaking process are additional elements that customers are hunting for further buying reference.

The trends of wine consumption revealed by three digital marketers partially aligns with the Alko Trend report 2020 (Alko, 2020). This latest report about Trends and Phenomena in the Beverage Industry has also been a valuable source of references for a wine company to ideate content marketing. As in the report, some particular international trends associated with wine beverage consumption are:

- The climate crisis is also reflected in beverage choices
- Social pleasure-seekers
- Old World strikes back
- New experiences from food and drink pairing
- Product's origin and ethics

Responding to apparent trends mentioned above, all interviewed digital marketers shared almost the same opinions on utilising social media as the key platforms to deliver content marketing (which can be based on earlier-mentioned trends). The tone of voice, visual images and captivating heading are essential to capture audiences' attention. Additionally, being responsive is necessary to understand customers' interest and their buying behaviour. Consequently, digital marketing will be more goal-oriented by optimising search engine keywords and interpreting the A/B test. Besides, marketer Z3 added educational content marketing as an additional method to nurture and grow their online audience.

Mentioned responses are from the perspectives of marketers who are preparing digital marketing for the Finnish wine market. It is worth mentioning the trend from the audience's landscape. "People are seeking fun, new experiences, and visibility that are also being highlighted in social media. Suppose the colours and shapes of the food and drinks are in harmony. In that case, you will end up with a beautiful table setting and some wonderfully atmospheric pictures", said Taina Vilku, Product Communication Manager at Alko. In this Alko Trend Report, Taina pointed a vital role of social media platforms, especially Instagram, where social pleasure-seekers can find enjoyment, fun and experiences. In another word, social pleasure-seekers could become potential target audience that digital marketers always try to understand their behaviours to create a unique experience.

5.4 Suggestions for digital marketers to strategise an effective digital marketing plan for wine products

The more audiences enter the online world, the more competitive it is for wine importers and wholesalers to build a unique brand identity and brand trustworthiness through digital marketing. In order to achieve the goals, it is essential to understand the customers' behaviours and interests. According to the experience of marketing manager X1, most customers in the Finnish wine market are not too familiar with wine production. However, the recent trend is that they are more inclined to favour wines than other high alcoholic beverages as an alternative concerning health-related problem.

One of the effective practices for these customers is to utilise social media platform to deliver audience-oriented content based on their hobbies and interests with an appropriate tone of voice. Visual image and headings are essential elements for social media marketing. Psychologically, online users are briefly attracted by an eye-catching picture initially and then a straight-to-the-point heading text when browsing a particular social network platform.

After executing social media marketing, the next indispensable step is following up on online audiences' interactions, analysing their behaviours, creating another testing version if necessary, and using the A/B testing technique. Doing digital marketing strategy is a long journey of learning from the previous campaigns, tracking the performances and optimising the metrics for the next campaign.

All the digital marketing activities should always be abode by the Finnish alcohol policy and the guidance from Valvira for marketing wines on digital platforms. Although the law is constantly updated, and the restrictions on mild alcoholic beverages are complicated, there are several ways to pacify the restrictions, such as getting a consultation from Valvira and sharing experiences and knowledge within the wine digital marketing community. It is successfully proved by the case of company Y when they collaborate with other wine companies and work with like-minded marketing strategists better to optimise their own company's digital marketing strategy.

Another valuable finding based on the experience of marketer Z3 is that a price value for a specific wine is the main factor influence customers' purchasing decision. Wines that labelled more than fifteen euros are likely to have fewer concerns by consumers. Therefore, it is essential to promote the wines to more specific and targeted consumers as possible.

All companies interviewed are currently aiming to the local audiences rather than internationals and ex-pats living in Finland. Hence, the language they use for digital marketing is Finnish and Swedish. The language barrier creates struggles for foreign nationalities enthusiastic about wines and wants to improve wine knowledge in general. Also, it is difficult for them to study the local wine market via blogging or other content marketing activities which are written in Finnish or Swedish. It is suggested that target audience and marketing language should be included in international profiles as part of the customer persona.

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APPENDIX 1: EMAIL INVITATION SENT TO MARKETING PROFESSIONALS BEFORE THE INTERVIEWS

Dear [...],

My name is Tien Dong, I'm a student from Turku University of Applied Sciences, my major is in Marketing. With a special interest in winemaking and wine production and having academic knowledge in marketing, I am working on the thesis: Digital Marketing Strategy in the Finnish Wine Industry, which I am looking for further insights from professionals in this field. Knowing that you are a marketing manager at [...], it would be my honor if you could share your insights about how the Finnish regulations restrict wine companies to do digital marketing strategy.

Should you think that you can share some relevant information and insider knowledge regarding my thesis topic; I would like to ask for an interview session with you for 30-45 minutes via Google Meet platform. You can absolutely offer me your best suitable time if you find these schedules below do not fit you.

1. Date: [...]
Time: ...

2. Date: [...]
Time: ...

Here are 3 main thesis questions that will be covered in the interview, may you have a look at them then. (The interview questions will be sent later if you agreed on my invitation)

- How does digital marketing support the wine industry in Finland?
- How does the Finnish law and regulations affect the marketing of wine products in Finland?
- What are digital marketing strategy trends in the Finnish wine market?

The interview is conducted for the thesis purpose only, therefore, the information given from an interviewee shall be used in the strictest confidence.

I am really looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Kind regards,
Tien Dong

APPENDIX 2: OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS DESIGNED BY TOPICS

- A. How does digital marketing support the wine industry in Finland?
1. What kind of goal metric does your company use before sketching the digital marketing strategy? (e.g: SMART)
 2. What are digital marketing activities that your company usually execute? (Content marketing, SEO, Social Media, Newsletter, Multi-channel Analytics, Campaigns)
 3. What are platforms your company mainly choose to do digital marketing activities (Website, FB, Instagram, Youtube, Automation tools, Apps, Online reviews, or none)?
 4. What are the most frequently used digital marketing tactics?
 5. On the scale from 1 to 5 (**1** is least important and **5** is extremely important), how do you evaluate the importance of digital marketing to your company's growth? Why do you choose that number?
 6. Does your company analyse how effective digital marketing strategy is used? What tools do you use?
- B. How does Finnish law and regulations affect the marketing of wine products in Finland?
7. On a scale from 1 to 5 (**1**: slightly affected the company's digital marketing strategy and **5**: heavily affected the company's digital marketing strategy)
- How does the Finish legislation affect the digital marketing strategy in your company?
8. What are those restrictions from the law that directly affect your company's digital marketing strategy? (Target audiences, Content generation, Advertising)
 9. How does your company pacify with the restrictions to increase the visibility of wine products through digital marketing strategy?
 10. What types of content does your company usually present to customers
- C. What are the marketing strategy trends for the Finnish wine market?
11. There are trends in wine, such as ... how do you think your company will benefit from these trends to plan an appropriate digital marketing strategy?
 12. Based on your observation, what are other trends / wine drinking habits in Finland?
 13. What are your recommendations on doing an effective digital marketing plan as a wine import company?