

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGY

Case: LiveActive by Studio Moderna d.o.o.

Mia Helin

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JYVÄSKYLÄN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
JAMK UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

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Assigned by Tytti Laakso and Valentin Bufolin of Studio Moderna d.o.o.		
<p>Abstract</p> <p>In the technology driven world of today, digital marketing, particularly social media marketing has revolutionized the way companies market and communicate with their customers.</p> <p>The purpose of this thesis is to further delve into the world of social media marketing and to focus on how important it is for the businesses to build and strengthen their social media marketing efforts. This thesis will focus on a Slovenian health & fitness brand called LiveActive. The main objectives are to identify the best practices for businesses using social media marketing and in turn, present how the LiveActive brand can use social media to their advantage.</p> <p>This thesis is action research oriented and uses qualitative research in the form of benchmarking and desk research. An internship period working directly with the case brand is also used as a method of research.</p>		
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CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	5
1.1	LiveActive by Studio Moderna d.o.o.	5
1.2	Research Approach.....	6
2	THE FUNDAMENTALS OF DIGITAL MARKETING.....	8
2.1	Digital Marketing.....	8
2.2	Social Media Marketing.....	9
2.3	Integrated Marketing Communication	13
2.4	Types of Social Media	14
3	RESEARCH METHOD.....	15
3.1	Data Collection.....	15
3.2	Data Analysis.....	18
4	SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGY	20
4.1	LiveActive Target Market.....	21
4.2	Brand Position and Image.....	23
5	LIVEACTIVE ON SOCIAL MEDIA.....	24
5.1	LiveActive on Facebook	25
5.2	LiveActive on Twitter.....	30
5.3	LiveActive on YouTube	32
5.4	LiveActive on Google+	35

5.5 LiveActive on Pinterest37

6 CONCLUSION41

REFERENCES.....44

FIGURES

FIGURE 1 LiveActive brand position.....23

FIGURE 2 4 Reasons to drink more water.....26

FIGURE 3 Weekend Motivation.....26

FIGURE 4 Cycle for Survival campaign.....28

FIGURE 5 Best Days To Tweet Infographic.....30

FIGURE 6 Performance Training Tip of the day.....33

FIGURE 7 The Google +1 Button on TopShop website.....36

FIGURE 8 Lululemon Motivational Pinterest board.....39

TABLES

TABLE 1 Pros and Cons of Social Media.....11

TABLE 2 SWOT analysis of LiveActive brand.....18

1 INTRODUCTION

The age of technology has highlighted the impact of internet on our world. More specifically, the role that internet plays in shaping the marketing efforts of businesses today. Traditional marketing has taken a back seat, and digital marketing, particularly social media marketing has quickly revolutionized how we do business and how we purchase products and services. Companies of all nature and sizes are joining the digital craze and finding new and innovative ways to market their products and connect with their customers.

This thesis will begin with background knowledge on digital marketing and social media concepts. Cases of other fitness brands using social media will be presented along with specific examples of how the case brand, LiveActive, could use each social media platform for marketing purposes.

Through this thesis, a concrete social media marketing strategy will be created for LiveActive that can be integrated into their overall marketing strategy. If the brand chooses to implement the social media marketing plan, they will be able to further strengthen their online presence as well as engage and connect with their existing and potential customers.

Next we will move on to more information about the case brand, LiveActive.

1.1 LiveActive by Studio Moderna d.o.o.

This section will provide a brief introduction to the case brand and identify the marketing decision problem at hand. The background facts and information about Studio Moderna in this section were collected from the company's website as well as LinkedIn.

Studio Moderna is a Slovenian multi-channel e-commerce and direct marketing company, leading the industry in Central & Eastern Europe. The company focuses on

creating demand for already branded consumer products. Studio Moderna is present in 21 countries, boasts 120 e-commerce websites and has an impressive customer base of around 400 million.

This thesis will focus on the brand, LiveActive. As explained by the brand's manager, LiveActive is Studio Moderna's newest project that is focused on healthy living and fitness. The brand sells everything from fitness equipment & accessories to sports and outdoor leisure products. Although LiveActive is an international brand, this thesis will focus only on LiveActive in Slovenia in order to keep things clear and simple. As with traditional marketing, having a strategy for social media marketing is crucial for businesses because it helps answer the fundamental question of "How can we reach our goal?"

This thesis aims to provide the necessary steps that LiveActive should take to improve their social media marketing efforts and provide answers to the following questions:

1. How can the brand use social media to help improve their overall digital marketing efforts?
2. Which social media platforms are optimal for the brand?

The next section will outline research approach of this study.

1.2 Research Approach

Action Research

As this thesis action research oriented, we will now familiarize ourselves with this method of research and see why it is the best technique for this thesis. Action research can be defined as "A process of covering solutions through progressive problem solving activities. The outcome is intended to improve practices and address issues." (businessdictionary.com)

The main strength of action research is its core focus on coming up with solutions for practical problems. This is exactly why it has proven to be the most effective research method for this thesis. Developing a social media marketing strategy is the first step in strengthening LiveActive's online marketing efforts.

Action research is unique from other research techniques because of its strong emphasis on action, more specifically, bringing about change within a business. It is, therefore, useful for providing answers to 'how' questions. (Saunders 2008, 147) Through action research, we are able to provide examples of 'how' the LiveActive brand can use social media to their advantage and exactly 'how' they should use each social media platform.

Research Problem

In order to find answers for the LiveActive brand, it is crucial to identify the research problem at hand, and consequently, the information that will be needed to provide results. The fact that LiveActive is a relatively new brand leaves room for improvement in terms of online presence and customer communication. While the brand is currently active on a few social media websites, they are not using social media to their full potential.

The strengths and weaknesses of LiveActive that impact their success on social media need to be determined. This will be done using the SWOT analysis of the brand. Recognizing the brand's strengths and weaknesses will consequently provide answers to how the brand can use social media marketing to their advantage. We also need to obtain information about how fitness brands are using social media for marketing purposes. Cases of other fitness brands using social media marketing will be gathered and presented later in this thesis. By obtaining information about other fitness brands on social media, LiveActive will be able to identify the best practices for themselves. LiveActive's target market will also be discussed later in this thesis, in order to identify which of the brand's customers can be reached through social media. This information will be obtained from the marketing strategy of the LiveActive brand.

From this, we are able to form two main research questions:

1. What are the best practices for fitness brands using social media?
2. How well are we performing compared to other fitness brands?

Now that the research problem has been outlined, we can move on to the theoretical concepts having to do with different aspects of digital marketing.

2 THE FUNDAMENTALS OF DIGITAL MARKETING

The purpose of this section is to explore the theoretical concepts of digital & online marketing as well as background information on integrated marketing communication. These concepts can help outline what needs to be considered and included in planning a social media marketing strategy. It is crucial to have a clear understanding of theoretical concepts before creating something practical, such as a social media marketing strategy.

2.1 Digital Marketing

Digital marketing can be defined as the application of the internet and related digital technologies in conjunction with traditional communication to achieve marketing objectives, or more simply, achieving marketing objectives through applying digital technologies. (Chaffey 2012, 10)

Digital marketing is a low cost and high speed marketing avenue that has become a fundamental component of a company's overall marketing strategy. Digital communications offer flexibility and the ability to combine the many aspects of traditional marketing such as; TV, radio and print. (Wind & Mahajan 2001, 17)

According to Chaffey (2009, 29) there are six key types of digital media channels.

1. Search engine marketing: involves placing messages on a search engine to encourage click through to a website when the user types a specific keyword or phrase.
2. Online PR: Much like the traditional public relations practices, online PR maximizes positive mentions of your company, brand, products or websites on third-party websites such as social networks or blogs that are likely to be visited by your target customers.
3. Online partnership: This type of marketing communication involves creating and managing long-term arrangements to promote your online services on third-party websites or via email communications. Link building, affiliate marketing and price comparison sites and online sponsorship are all different examples of partnership.
4. Display Advertising: Using online ads such as banners to improve brand awareness and click through rates to the target website.
5. Opt-in-email marketing: This is the act of renting email lists or placing ads in third party e-newsletters.
6. Social media marketing: Under this category, companies advertise and communicate using social networks and communities. Viral marketing, which entails online word of mouth, is closely tied to social media marketing. The main goal of viral marketing is to build awareness and motivate response.

While all of the aforementioned methods are important components of the digital marketing umbrella, social media marketing has become the most dominant way to instantly reach a worldwide audience and build a strong online presence for a company. This brings us to a more focused look at the social media marketing aspect of digital marketing.

2.2 Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing can be defined as monitoring and facilitating customer-to-customer interaction and participation throughout the web to encourage positive

engagement with a company and its brand. Interactions may occur on a company site, social networks and other third-party sites. (Chaffey 2012, 30).

Social media shares many of its aspects with traditional marketing, such as, text, photographs, and video. However, it has transformed the interactivity between companies and their customers.

Bough (2010, 7) explains, "As advertisers, the world used to be simple. We could segment our messages by demographic, identify one of the three channels where those demographic segments were concentrated and deliver our advertising there. The difference in targeting now is almost like the difference between arithmetic and calculus."

A 2013 Social Media Marketing Industry Report surveyed over 3000 marketers about how they're using social media to promote their businesses. "We began by simply asking marketers if they use social media to market their businesses. The overwhelming majority (97%) indicated they are participating in social media marketing." (Stelzner, 2013). From this, we can get a sense of how prevalent social media marketing is amongst businesses and it is clear that the use of social media marketing amid businesses has almost become a standard practice.

It should be noted, however, that social media should complement and extend your current marketing efforts, rather than entirely replace them. (Evans 2008, 155)

Most companies have come to recognize that social media marketing is much too effective and great to ignore. In fact, according Stelzner (2013) "A significant 86% of marketers said that social media was important to their businesses."

In order for companies to reap the benefits of social media marketing, they must take a proactive approach and engage in customer conversations. The interactivity aspect of social media marketing is what sets it apart from traditional marketing practices. Unlike traditional marketing which consists of one-sided communication, social media marketing involves not only communication by companies to customers but also allows customers to directly communicate with businesses. This dual sided

communication is what makes social media marketing so powerful; companies now have the opportunity to actually get to *know* their customers by following their online behavior. The dual sided communication also allows companies to listen to their customers and find out what people are saying about their products, services and overall brand, which is extremely useful information for businesses. (Mullins, 2013)

Thanks to the internet and social media, people can create their own content for the whole world to read. This creation aspect of social media has changed the role of consumers into becoming co-producers. It isn't just companies that are creating anymore; the power has shifted to everyday people. "In social media marketing; you don't get complete control over the message; you give some of it to your customers and critics." (Szabo 2009, 120).

This also brings a whole new aspect to word-of-mouth marketing for businesses. According to Entrepreneur Media, word-of-mouth advertising has proven itself to be one of the most effective marketing methods, and with social media enabling people to instantly share information and opinions with a worldwide audience, it is now even more powerful.

Pros and Cons of Social Media

While social media marketing can bring great benefits to a company, it's not all peaches and cream. Social media also poses its share of challenges and it's important for companies not to turn a blind eye to them and realize the damage they can do to a company. Next, some positive and negative aspects of social media marketing for businesses will be presented.

TABLE 1. Pros and cons of social media. Ambrose 2010.

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compared to traditional marketing methods such as creating a television commercial or publishing a print advertisement, the cost of social media marketing is very low. • With social media marketing, the internet is your playground. This means that your potential audience is worldwide; virtually everyone is on the internet. • With social media, businesses have access to a limitless audience. This makes it the ideal environment for spreading brand awareness and creating a presence for your business. • Relationship building - social media marketing involves dual sided communication, allowing customers to directly interact with businesses. This is a crucial part of creating relationships with customers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fact that content spreads rapidly across the internet means that negative opinions about your company can go viral, in a very short period of time. It's important to have tight control over what you post, because once it's out there, it's there for everyone to see. • Many people are not interested in interacting or socializing with a brand. It can be difficult to find just the right content that will interest your target audience enough to share it with their friends. • Social media marketing, if done correctly, is quite time consuming. Building relationships with your customers means that you need to be available to always provide feedback and answer customer questions. • It can take months before your brand's image and follower base becomes strong and well established. Social media marketing is an investment, and not to expect instant results.

While the above table shows us that some aspects of social media marketing can be seen as deterring, the key is to recognize that the benefits of using this method of marketing outweigh the negative aspects. The aforementioned cons of social media marketing can also be minimized if companies take the time to carefully plan their social media marketing efforts. It's crucial for businesses to know the different natures of each social media channel, which platforms are best suited for the

business and to *know* their target market and find out which social media platforms they are using. As long as companies carefully plan and do their homework (like with any other marketing efforts), they can count on social media to bring great improvements to their overall marketing efforts.

2.3 Integrated Marketing Communication

This chapter will provide a small glimpse into Integrated Marketing Communications, or IMC, and discuss some benefits of this marketing approach. The American Association of Advertising Agencies defines IMC as “a concept that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines, and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communication impact.” (What is IMC 2008)

Essentially, Integrated Marketing Communications, or IMC, has to do with all aspects of marketing and communications seamlessly working together as one, rather than each aspect on their own.

Benefits of Integrated Marketing Communications

While Integrated Marketing Communications involves a great deal of work, it provides many benefits for businesses, such as, creating brand differentiation, building credibility and boosting sales.

IMC helps customers move through the different stages of the buying process by promoting dual sided conversation between marketers and customers and focusing on longterm customer relationships. Consistency in messages and images help nurture these relationships and build your brand values.

When creating an IMC strategy, the goal should be to create a smooth experience for customers in every aspect of the marketing mix. According to MMC Learning (2008), a unified message is much more powerful than several, small fragmented messages. The synergy ensures stronger, clearer, reinforced messages that can effectively cut

through marketing clutter to reach the target audience, consequently increasing effectiveness and company profits.

Since IMC makes messages consistent, this can boost their credibility and help customers in trusting the messages and the brand as a whole. This credibility and trust reduce risk in the mind of the buyer, essentially making them more likely to purchase from said brand.

2.4 Types of Social Media

While there are countless social media platforms out there, most of them fall under six general types of social media. Some social media websites can fit into multiple social media types. For example, Facebook has some features of media sharing websites because of picture and video sharing.

The six general types of social media are as follows:

1. **Social Networks** – These social media channels connect people through shared interests, likes etc. The fundamental aspects of these services include a profile, ways to interact with others ability to share content such as pictures and videos, etc. The most popular social network example would be Facebook.
2. **Bookmarking websites** – These channels allow users to save and organize links to different websites and resources from across the net. These links can be tagged in order to make them easily searched and shared. Pinterest is an example of a bookmarking site.
3. **Social News** - Features user-posted stories that are ranked based on popularity. The prime social aspect of these social sites is voting and since the posted information is ranked based on users' votes, it enables democratic participation. Reddit and Newsvine are popular examples of social news sites.
4. **Media Sharing** – These sites allow users to upload and share media such as videos and pictures which other users can comment on. Youtube and Flickr are popular media sharing site examples.

5. **Micro-blogging** – These platforms involve users posting short updates or bursts of information for subscribers to read. Twitter is the most popular Microblogging site.
6. **Online Forums** - Online forums allow users to post messages and opinions and engage in conversations.

(Grahl, The 6 Types of Social Media)

This study will focus on Facebook, Twitter, Youtube , Google+ and Pinterest for the LiveActive brand. These particular platforms fit with the brands' overall marketing strategy and goals. Other fitness and lifestyle brands are already using these particular platforms, further reinforcing that a brand like LiveActive could fit in and thrive on these channels. These social media channels will be thoroughly evaluated and explored later on in this thesis.

3 RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Data Collection

In order to solve the research problem at hand, we must research and collect relevant and useful information. Data collection can be categorized as secondary data and primary data. Secondary data pertains to previously produced information, whereas primary data are collected in the field. Secondary data is an important start to any research study and deemed appropriate for drawing conclusions and solving problems. Many times, it is not necessary to have primary data in order to answer questions and draw conclusions. (Crawford 1997, 15)

In order to create a solid social media marketing strategy, I have collected articles and case studies of successful fitness brands on social media that the LiveActive brand can use as guidance. This data was collected through secondary research. I also completed an internship period working with the LiveActive brand, which proved to be a very valuable aspect of research for this thesis.

These research methods, especially my practical experience with the brand have provided me with valuable data and material. This data and acquired knowledge has helped to further develop and enrich the social media marketing strategy for LiveActive.

Desk Research

The first phase of my research process involved desk research. "Much useful information is generated within all organizations simply in the course of their normal operations." (Crouch & Housden 2003, 20). This involves gathering information from inside the organization.

"Internal desk research is the most sensible starting point for any organization and should come before going to great lengths of resource expenditure in acquiring data from outside." (op.cit.p. 20)

This particular method of research has proven to be an effective and beneficial starting point for this thesis. Through desk research, useful material regarding social media marketing and the case brand was collected, which was then used to build my social media marketing strategy for the brand.

Two types of desk research were conducted for this thesis, the first being internal desk research.

This type of research includes data that is produced through normal running of the business and data collected through personal contacts at the organization. (op.cit.p 28)

Internal desk research involved information that I collected internally from Studio Moderna and the LiveActive brand. Throughout my internship period, I collected valuable data about the brand by communicating with employees of the brand and attending meetings. The work that I completed during my practical training proved to be essential for creating a concrete social media marketing strategy as I was working in the area of social media marketing. Some of the data included information about LiveActive's target market, the brand's overall marketing strategy and positioning.

The key to using this type of research is to make sure that information is collected in a way that is useful as well as practical. (op.cit.p. 20)

The second type of desk research that was conducted was external desk research. The most distinctive thing about secondary data is the wide range of information available. This is because external desk research, or secondary desk research, involves information that has been previously published by someone else. (Crouch & Housden 2003, 42).

This research phase involved data collection from online sources as well as books, articles and published company accounts. This phase of my research is where I collected the cases that LiveActive could use as reference for their social media marketing efforts.

External desk research is very general, therefore proving to be effective for collecting background and theoretical concepts, rather than applying it to a specific problem. (op.cit.p.20). Theoretical background was a key aspect of my secondary research phase that helped me create a concrete information base for the social media strategy to be built on.

Benchmarking

Benchmarking can be defined as "Standard, or a set of standards, used as a point of reference for evaluating performance or level of quality. Benchmarks may be drawn from a firm's own experience, from the experience of other firms in the industry, or from legal requirements such as environmental regulations." (businessdictionary.com)

This form of research was used to help develop the social media strategy for LiveActive. Cases of successful fitness brands on social media were collected and evaluated so that LiveActive could use them as reference when implementing their social media marketing strategy.

By benchmarking, LiveActive would be exposed to new ideas and practices that could be used to improve their online presence, build relationships with customers and strengthen their overall social media marketing efforts. Even if the brand chooses not to implement similar practices for their social media marketing strategy, they can still use the data to evaluate and improve themselves.

Benchmarking is an excellent method of research for this particular thesis as it has helped provide real-life examples of how other fitness and lifestyle brands have approached social media and experienced benefits from using it.

3.2 Data Analysis

This section will briefly describe how I analysed the data used for this thesis. After the process of data collection, it was time to make meaning out of the information. The main method of data analysis used for this thesis was a SWOT analysis. A SWOT analysis assesses an organization's situation in terms of the organization's internal strengths, weaknesses and external opportunities and threats. These internal and external forces can impact the organization's performance and strategy choices. (businessdictionary.com)

For the purpose of this thesis, a SWOT analysis has been performed in relation to LiveActive's online marketing activities. The analysis is focused on how the LiveActive brand can build its strengths, take advantage of its opportunities, reduce its weaknesses and avoid threats through the use of social media. (Capon 2003)

The below table is an adaptation of a SWOT analysis performed by LiveActive. The four aspects of the SWOT analysis are then further assessed in relation to social media marketing for the case brand.

TABLE 2. SWOT analysis of LiveActive brand. Adapted from “LiveActive Marketing Strategy 2012/2013”.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation with other, more established, Studio Moderna brands (Wellneo, Walkmaxx, Bigfish, Kosmodisk) • Expertise in online activities and marketing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New to the market, relatively unknown and lacking credibility • Lack of customer loyalty • Promotional costs • Minimal online presence
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fitness & health market resistant to recession • Unique target market from competition • Lifestyle changes trend • Rise in popularity of e-commerce & online shopping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fitness & health market is highly competitive • Will take long time for market positioning and building brand image

Strengths: Beginning with strengths, the LiveActive brand was created under the umbrella of Studio Moderna d.o.o. - the biggest direct marketing company in Central and Eastern Europe. This means that LiveActive is connected with the other successful brands of Studio Moderna d.o.o. This allows cross-selling, promotion and collaboration between LiveActive and the other, more established brands of Studio Moderna. Since Studio Moderna is an e-commerce company, the level of LiveActive's expertise in online selling and marketing is strong.

Weaknesses: LiveActive is a new brand, meaning it is relatively unknown in the market and lacks credibility and loyalty among its customer base. This also means that the brand lacks online presence and familiarity. Fortunately, these weaknesses can be transformed through the use of social media marketing. With social media, LiveActive would have the opportunity to reach an endless audience and quickly strengthen its online image.

Opportunities: The health and fitness trend that has spread across the globe creates huge opportunities for LiveActive. Also, social media platforms such as Pinterest and Facebook have become popular hubs for fitness motivation and health conscious consumers. LiveActive's unique target market also creates great opportunities for the brand, enabling them to reach customers that are not being targeted by their competitors.

Threats: The most prominent threat that LiveActive is facing is that the fitness industry is highly competitive and a difficult environment for a new brand to get started in. Again, the fact that LiveActive is a new brand means that it will take time for them to position themselves and build their brand image. This can most certainly be viewed as a threat for the brand. However, social media can be used as a tool for LiveActive to reinforce and strengthen their brand image and values.

4 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGY

There are countless new articles, social network status updates, videos and pictures published on social media each and every day. In fact, "60% of consumers use social media to follow, discover and give feedback on brands and retailers." (Desmond 2013)

Given the power and popularity of social media, it's important for businesses to develop a social media marketing strategy before actually using social media as part of their marketing efforts. According to Mrkulic (2012) "Without a clear social strategy,

building a successful social presence that inspires customer loyalty and engagement is nearly impossible.”

This statement proves how important a social media strategy is for businesses and also emphasizes how useful this study could be for LiveActive. The term strategy also provides answers to the question “How do we get there?” (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 199).

The social media strategy for LiveActive will first delve deeper into the brand and discuss its target market, brand image and positioning. Then, the social media platforms that can serve as effective marketing avenues for LiveActive will be discussed. These platforms have already been defined by the brand as ones they would be interested in using for marketing purposes. The techniques and benchmarking examples that will be presented can be adapted by LiveActive in order to improve the social media aspect of their digital marketing efforts. The measurement of performance will not be discussed in the strategy. While the social media strategy will be precise enough to provide concrete direction and ideas for the brand, it will still be flexible and offer room for changes. Therefore, LiveActive can use this strategy as a way to highlight which improvement opportunities they can focus on.

4.1 LiveActive Target Market

A well-defined target market is the primary element of a successful social media marketing strategy. LiveActive’s target market is segmented into six distinct customer profiles. The brand’s general target market wishes to lead a healthier and more active lifestyle. All of the profiles within the general target market have different motivations, preferences, goals and needs that should be uniquely approached and fulfilled. The customer profiles are segmented according to several different elements, such as: age, gender, household size, income, stage of family life cycle and fitness style. The six target customer profiles defined by LiveActive’s own brand strategy are as follows:

1. The first personality of the brand's target is the busy and active family. This target will enjoy activities such as cycling, camping, swimming and tennis. They are not the most internet savvy of the brand's target market, but occasionally purchase products from online. Their main goal is to spend quality time with their family.
2. The second target is a single, middle-aged mother with a low to average income. This target customer typically has no history of keeping fit, yet is looking for a lifestyle change and easy ways to lose weight. In terms of purchasing behaviour, this target is rather uncomfortable and unfamiliar with online shopping.
3. The next target personality is the elderly, yet active couple. This target typically enjoys being in nature and partaking in outdoor activities such as cycling, kayaking and hiking. This target customer exercises to stay fit and healthy. In terms of purchasing preferences, this target is the least internet savvy of LiveActive's target customers, so convincing them to purchase online can be seen as a challenge.
4. The fourth target customer is the family man. This target usually has a higher income, strong interest in cool new products and is quite comfortable shopping online. He would be involved in some sports but not satisfied with the amount of exercise in his life.
5. The next target customer of LiveActive is the new mother. Like all new mothers, finding time to exercise is this target's biggest challenge. Their main objective is to get back in shape and find exercises to fit their busy schedule. This particular target is very online shopping savvy.
6. Next is the younger, fit male who does weight lifting and uses supplements. This target character is the most in shape of LiveActive's target customers. While he is already in shape, his main goal would be to further build and tone his muscles and physique.

This defined target market enables LiveActive to tailor their products and services to meet the individual needs of their customers. The unique motivations, needs and behaviours of customers can also provide the brand with valuable information. Eve-

Everything from messages, products, communication approaches can be done more effectively when the target customers are defined. This tailored approach also emphasizes the intimate buying experience that LiveActive strives to create for its customers.

4.2 Brand Position and Image

“Fitness and health for you and your family” is what LiveActive promises for its customers. (LiveActive Marketing Strategy, 2012). The brand strives to be a friendly, positive and credible source for everyone wishing to lead a healthy and active lifestyle. LiveActive aims to make fitness and physical activity a fun part of everyday life, through open and friendly communication, educating and providing guidance and motivating its customers. On the contrary, adjectives such as, “extreme” or “pumped” do not fit with their target market and are not a part of LiveActive’s philosophy.

LiveActive is positioned as a high quality, good value brand for fitness, sports and outdoor leisure equipment. As previously stated, the brand targets everyone interested in leading a healthy lifestyle, including people of all ages and fitness levels; however, fitness fanatics and extremists are not a part of their target market.

LiveActive uses a multi-channel approach towards marketing and communication and aims to create an intimate and friendly experience for their customers. Aside from selling products, the brand provides fitness guidance and advice from local fitness experts. By educating and inspiring their customers, LiveActive can be portrayed as a helpful and knowledgeable friend. The following figure from LiveActive’s marketing strategy illustrates the brand’s position according to several factors.

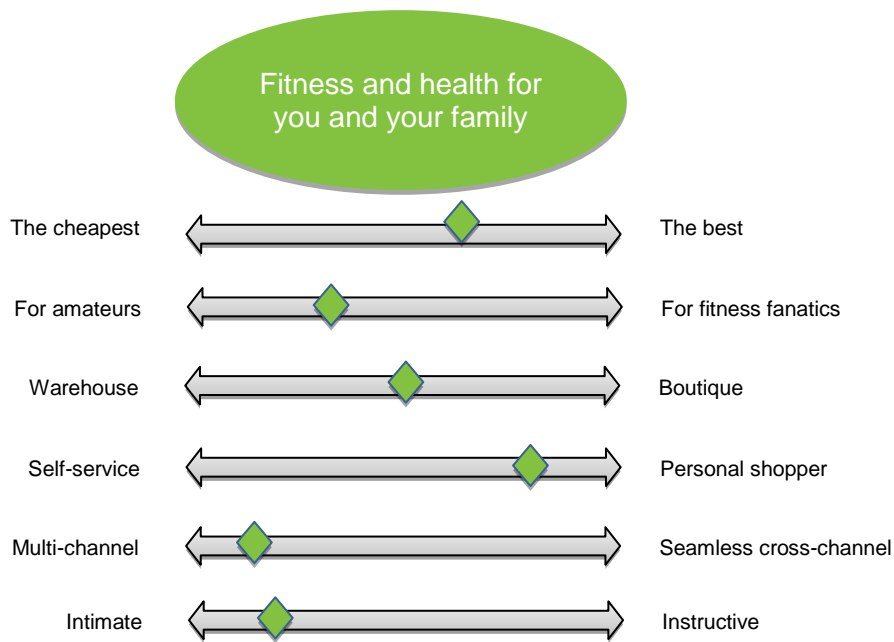


FIGURE 1. LiveActive brand position. Adapted from LiveActive’s Marketing Strategy.

5 LIVEACTIVE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

As the findings indicate that there is potential for LiveActive on social media, we can take a deeper look into the exact platforms the brand is interested in getting involved with.

Before we delve into the specifics of each social media website and how LiveActive should use them, there are some tips that can be applied across all of these platforms.

Getting started on a social media website can take quite a bit of time and effort. This brings us to the challenge of gaining a customer base and building presence.

Since LiveActive is part of Studio Moderna, the other brands under the Studio Moderna umbrella can also help in spreading awareness by recommending LiveActive’s social media profiles to their customers.

Another simple way that LiveActive can gain a follower base is by following/adding/subscribing to others. This is something that tends to be the same across all social networks; when you follow other users, they will usually follow you back. This is particularly valuable if those users are a part of LiveActive's target market or experts in the fitness and health industry. Commenting on or sharing from those users will, again, encourage them to return the favor.

The main objective for LiveActive on social media is not based on increasing sales and obvious advertising. Building brand presence, becoming a go-to source for health & fitness and building customer relationships are the focus of social media marketing for the LiveActive brand.

Whether you are re-tweeting on Twitter, sharing on Facebook or re-pinning on Pinterest, sharing is a fundamental aspect of all of these social media websites. Users share what they like or find useful which consequently opens a window for LiveActive to educate people and spread useful content. Fitness and health are highly popular topics across social media, creating the opportunity for LiveActive to provide fitness and health related motivation and information that audiences will value, trust and come back for.

Next, the different social media platforms and cases of fitness brands will be discussed and presented.

5.1 LiveActive on Facebook

With over a billion active users, Facebook is the most powerful and popular social networking site in the world. It was founded by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004 who initially created the site for Harvard University students and by 2006, the social networking site was open and free for anyone to use. (facebook.com)

Personal identity is a fundamental theme of Facebook; showing people who you are, who you know and where you've been are what this particular website is all about.

(Agresta 2010, 5) According to the social network, Facebook's mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected.

Facebook is the top social media channel for businesses and according Stelzner (2012) "Ninety-two percent of marketers are using Facebook and 72% plan on increasing their activities."

In the case of LiveActive, Facebook is the brand's most successful social media platform. The brand is actively using their Facebook profile to attract and engage with customers, promote their products and build an online presence. Currently, the brand's Facebook page has over 5000 likes and should be integrated with other social media platforms in order to strengthen and build the brand's online presence.

This section will provide some simple and effective examples of how LiveActive can continue to grow their Facebook success as well as some suggestions for improvement. LiveActive's Facebook profile can also be used as a stepping stone for the brand's other social media profiles that are not yet active.

LiveActive's helpful and healthy nature could be better emphasized through a daily posting schedule on Facebook. This concept was initiated by the LiveActive brand manager and further defined and developed by myself. The idea involves having a unique "theme" for every day of the week, related to improving the health and well-being of customers. The themes of the daily posting schedule should be general enough so that they can be repeated weekly with new and exciting content.

For the brand LiveActive, this posting schedule could go as follows:

Monday: Motivational Mondays (inspirational message and/or image)

Tuesday: Educational article. (For example, an article about the benefits of getting enough sleep etc.)

Wednesday: Question of the day (For example, What's your favorite after workout snack?) – Asking questions is a simple and effective way to get people talking.

Thursday: Healthy lifestyle tip of the day. Such as:



FIGURE 2. 4 Reasons to drink more water. Screenshot of Facebook post by Leap Fitness & Motivation

Friday: Healthy recipe of the day

Saturday: Motivational message. (This would help inspire audiences to stick with their healthy choices through the weekend.)



FIGURE 3. Weekend Motivation. Screenshot of Facebook post by Female Health Motivation: Eat Clean, Train Mean

Sunday: Question of the day – Again, asking audiences a question is a great way to create conversation.

Connecting With Customers through Facebook

Communication and engagement are major aspects of Facebook. This is emphasized by the mission of Facebook – “to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected”. Like with any social media platform, the best ways to create engagement with customers is to ask questions and start conversations with them. In order to successfully connect with fans, it’s crucial for businesses to not only initiate conversation with customers but to actually keep up with the communication. After all, answering questions and replying to comments is what customers will value and appreciate.

As Facebook is a social networking website, people go there to engage with others, not to shop. This means that communicating with audiences and creating an emotional connection with them will prove to be more successful than posting a picture of a treadmill and telling people to go buy it. In the case of the LiveActive brand, this is where interesting visuals and health related content and conversation come into play.

Since this thesis is focusing on LiveActive in Slovenia, it’s important to look at what themes would best fit the country. Slovenia is a strong contender in sports, especially winter sports, so posting updates about winnings and Slovenian sports figures is a great way to connect with the local Slovenian community.

Case Example – Equinox on Facebook

Equinox is one of the top fitness brands on Facebook, therefore serving as a great example for LiveActive to follow. The Equinox Facebook page has over 100,000 likes and is featured on mashable.com as one of the “5 Fitness Brands Kicking Butt on Social Media”. However, things weren’t always so bright for the brand on Facebook. At the beginning of 2011, “Equinox had 22,000 Facebook Likes and 6,000 Twitter followers and a few YouTube videos.” (Drell 2012). The brand’s Face-

book strategy was then made over and changed from “purely promotional to mainly content and conversations” (Drell 2012). LiveActive can learn a lot from Equinox’s success on Facebook. Rather than having a promotional and product focused Facebook page, LiveActive could steer their focus closer to fitness, lifestyle and health related content and conversation.

One particular campaign by Equinox that would be a great example for LiveActive to benchmark is the “Cycle for Survival” campaign. This campaign is an indoor team cycling event that raises money for rare cancer research. The “Cycle for Survival” event was founded in 2007 and has helped fund over 50 clinical trials and research for rare types of cancer. (Drell 2012)

EQUINOX › Cycle for Survival
Health/Beauty - New York, New York

**IT'S NOT FITNESS
IT'S LIFE**

**PEDAL
POWER**

For every new fan of Equinox, we're donating \$1 to Cycle for Survival.

Like us, and join the ride.

CYCLE FOR SURVIVAL

EVERY RIDER COUNTS

By liking Equinox, you've contributed to Cycle for Survival's fight against rare cancer. Thank you for supporting the cause.

001730

Like

Cycle for Survival

TELL US WHY YOU CYCLE FOR SURVIVAL

- Wall
- Info
- Friend Activity
- Welcome
- Cycle for Survival**
- Q Bloq
- Boston
- Connecticut

FIGURE 4. Cycle for Survival campaign. Screenshot of Equinox’s Facebook page.

This is an excellent example of how LiveActive could get involved with an important cause, and improve their brand image by doing so. While the “Cycle for Survival” campaign is well established and has been running for several years, this doesn’t mean that LiveActive can’t create a campaign to raise awareness and money towards a meaningful cause or team up with an already established organization. By creating

a campaign of this nature and promoting it on Facebook, the friendly and social image of LiveActive would surely be emphasized. Helping out in the community would ensure customers that LiveActive has the people's best interest in mind and that their customers truly come first.

5.2 LiveActive on Twitter

As explained on mashable.com, Twitter is a free micro blogging platform that was founded in 2006 where users can post 140-character short messages also known as tweets. This particular social networking site has not only won the hearts of everyday people, but has also become very popular among celebrities, journalists and other public figures.

Next, some examples of how LiveActive could use Twitter for marketing purposes will be explored.

Twitter includes the option to connect tweets to a specific subject by using a hashtag. According to Twitter, a hashtag refers to "the theme of your tweet". The LiveActive brand could incorporate the hashtags #LiveActiveSlovenia or simply #LiveActive with their tweets, connecting the brand with their messages. Words related to fitness and healthy living can also be used as hashtags so that users can find the brand when searching for these similar themes. Some words or phrases that LiveActive could use as hashtags would be #healthy, #fitness or #livinglean. These are words and phrases that are often searched and would therefore bring LiveActive's tweet in front of a larger audience.

Compared to other social networking websites, Twitter is a more instant and fast-paced environment. This is emphasized by the short half-life that tweets have. According to dictionary.com, the term half-life refers to the time it takes for something to drop to half of its value or effectiveness. A marketing company called Sysomos conducted a study about a tweet's life-span found that after just one hour, the chances of someone reading your tweet are very unlikely. The study also found that

96.9% of tweet replies are done within an hour of when the original tweet was posted, and only this percentage drops to 0.88% in the second hour.

From these statistics, we can see that after only one hour, the level of interaction through your tweets is very limited. In order to overcome this obstacle, LiveActive needs to be careful with the timing of their tweets, which brings us to the question; when is the best time to tweet? In order to get a clear idea, the below figure illustrates the best days for businesses to tweet and engage with their followers.

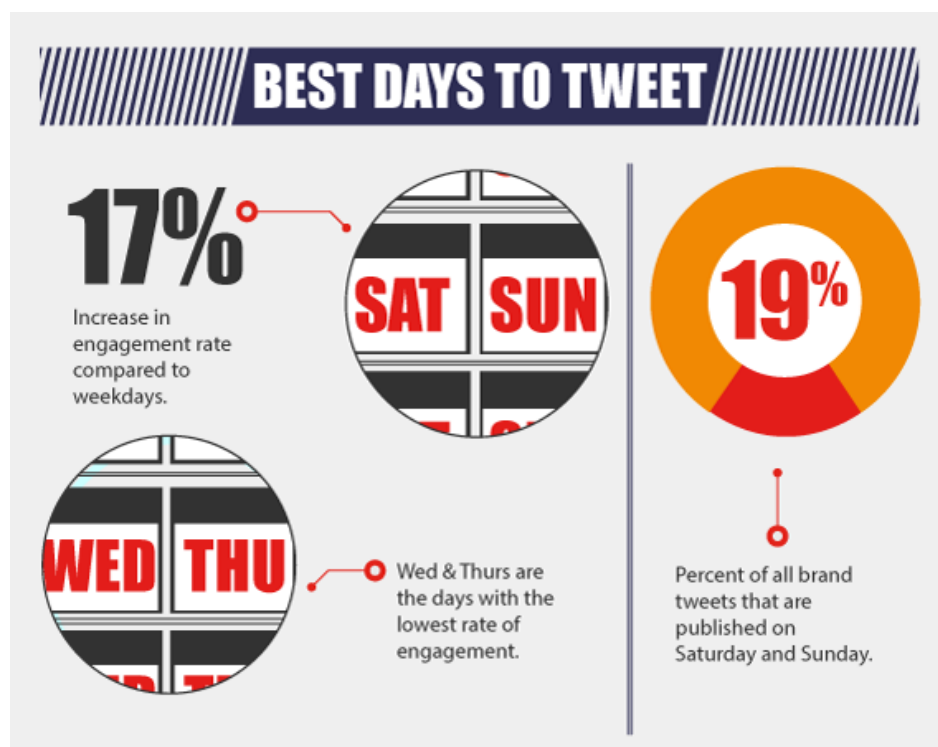


FIGURE 5. Best Days To Tweet Infographic. Retrieved from Fusework Studios website.

From the above figure, we can see that Saturday and Sunday have a 17% increase in engagement rate compared to other days of the week. This means that people are spending more time looking at tweets and interacting through twitter on the weekends. On the other hand, we can see that Wednesday and Thursday have the lowest rate of engagement. This means that businesses will not experience much conversation or engagement from their followers on these days. Lastly, we can see that only 19% of all brand tweets are posted on Saturday and Sunday. In the case of

LiveActive, it should be recognized that more of their tweets and attempts to engage with their followers should be done on Saturday and Sundays.

As previously mentioned, the messages posted on Twitter are limited to 140-characters. These character limited tweets mean that messages need to be clear, concise and instantly get their point across. This short and instant nature of twitter makes it an ideal platform for sharing breaking news and interesting, educational information where users can then read more information on another website. LiveActive can use this approach by tweeting brief, interesting, and probing messages that then lead to articles on their website. This offers interesting and educational material for users and increased traffic to the LiveActive website.

While sharing educational and informative content is important, it's crucial for businesses to also share experiences and opinions on a more personal level. This means that LiveActive would focus their content and conversations on lifestyle, fitness and sports.

In order to create conversation on Twitter, LiveActive could ask questions and entice people into responding and sharing their opinions. An example of this for LiveActive could be asking followers if they're set for basketball season as the brand launches its new basketball products. Asking questions would create conversation and also motivate followers to go and see the new product or new product category on the LiveActive website.

5.3 LiveActive on YouTube

YouTube is an online video-sharing website where people can upload and share video clips. The video clips can be uploaded and shared on the YouTube website, as well as on other websites, blogs, emails and mobile devices. Many businesses have included YouTube in their digital marketing efforts as video can be a very powerful tool in attracting customers. According to Stelzner (2013), "For the third year in a

row, YouTube/video is the top area where marketers plan on increasing their social media efforts.”

YouTube is a great environment for LiveActive to educate its customers and advertise its products. The increased interest and demand for everything fitness and health related ensures that there is a demand for LiveActive on this social media site.

Next, some examples of how LiveActive can use YouTube will be presented.

Workout videos

Perhaps the most obvious way that LiveActive could use YouTube would be to create and share workout videos for audiences. The LiveActive brand is currently partnered with local fitness specialists who assist in creating fitness related articles and workout tips and tricks for customers. The brand could work with these same experts to create genuine and effective workout videos for its customers. These workout videos could also be posted on LiveActive’s Facebook and Twitter profiles as a way to reach a wider audience and strengthen the brand’s credibility as a fitness brand.

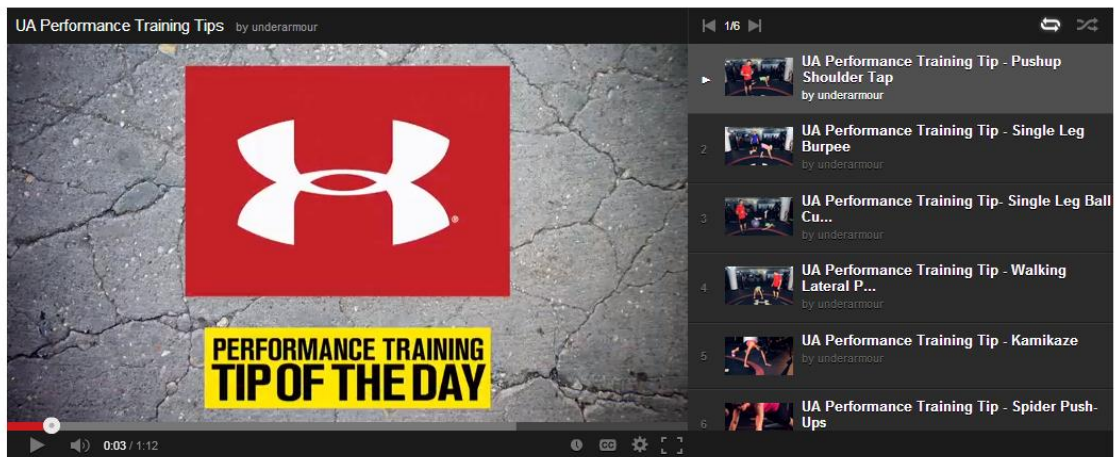


FIGURE 6. Performance Training Tip of the day. Screenshot of Under Armour’s YouTube channel.

Product Instruction Videos

Another example of how the brand could use YouTube would be to create product related videos. These videos would show the details of their products as well as explain how the products should be used. These short, instructional videos could be placed under the product descriptions on the website. Then, as customers shop on the LiveActive website, they can get as much information about the products as possible, essentially instilling trust in the brand and its products.

Motivational Videos

Motivational videos are also an excellent option for LiveActive to include on their YouTube channel. These videos would include customer testimonials and success stories of people who have reached their fitness goals with the help of LiveActive. As long as these videos include real people and real life stories, they can be a powerful source of inspiration for audiences. Short and fun video recaps of sporting events or local marathons that the brand is involved with can also be used as inspirational videos for customers. These particular videos are also a great way for LiveActive to show a less corporate, more personal and laid-back side of the brand.

Case Example – Under Armour on Youtube

Under Armour's YouTube page has more than 150 videos and over 2 million views. The brand's videos feature inspirational content as a way to motivate viewers to get up and get active.

Under Armour's Digital Marketing Director, Dan Mecchi has shared the following statement about the brand on YouTube. "We're a video-centric company. We love TV, our guys make some of the world's best creative, but it's not just about that 30- or 60-second spot anymore. With YouTube, there's no time limit, no pricey air time and the message is more easily amplified." (Drell 2012)

This statement emphasizes how YouTube offers a low cost, flexible environment to reach a global audience with your brand's videos.

Integrating YouTube with other Social Media

In order to create a streamline brand image and effect, LiveActive should also feature their YouTube videos on their Facebook and Twitter profiles. This integration would be especially effective when sharing motivational videos on these other social media profiles. Not only would they direct traffic to the brand's YouTube channel and create awareness, the videos would contribute to the helpful, healthy and friendly image that they strive for.

5.4 LiveActive on Google+

Google+ is a social network site that was launched by Google Inc. in 2011. A key element of Google+ is the ability for users to target what information they share with whom. This concept of targeted information sharing is called Circles. Users can organize their Circles by friends, family, classmates etc. and then share content accordingly.

Although Google+ has gained some popularity as a channel for networking, many businesses have yet to appreciate its full potential. This is likely the case with the case brand LiveActive as they already have a Google+ account; however, their presence and follower base is still minimal.

After getting familiar with this social network channel, it is clear that LiveActive should be using Google+ to their advantage. Google+ has close to 100 million users, offering a wide customer base for LiveActive.

Increased Visibility

The most obvious reason for LiveActive to join Google+ would be to increase brand visibility. Google explains the benefits of making a Google+ account for your business as follows, "Now, when people search for your brand on Google, they can get the latest info straight from your Google+ page, on the right hand side of their search

results. And when your followers search for information relevant to your brand, content you've shared may appear in search.”

In LiveActive’s case, actively running a Google+ page would help customers find the brand faster, increase visibility and most importantly, improve search engine optimization, simply because it’s connected to Google.

In terms of posting information, LiveActive could use the same content on Google+ as on their Facebook page. The nature of these two social media platforms are similar enough that duplicating content would strengthen visibility and create consistency for audiences.

Google + 1 Button

According to Google, clicking the +1 Button is like giving a stamp of approval on the things you like. Others can then see that you have publicly recommended the content.

The +1 Button can be added to a company’s website which makes for an easy way to recommend and share the website content. Google explains why companies should use the +1 Button as follows, “Encouraging others to share your Google+ and site content expands your reach. Drive greater engagement with your company and your content by letting people see recommendations from friends and colleagues.”



FIGURE 7. The Google +1 Button on TopShop website. Retrieved from “The +1 Button” by Google.

The Google +1 Button would make it easy for visitors to share content from LiveActive’s Google+ profile and website with their friends, therefore expanding their audience.

5.5 LiveActive on Pinterest

Much like traditional bulletin boards, Pinterest involves collecting images and other content and pinning them onto virtual pin-boards. The site is essentially a way of bookmarking and organizing things that you like on the internet. Users can pin almost anything they find on the web; images of clothes they want to buy, places they want to visit, useful articles etc. Other users can comment on, re-pin or like the pins, spreading the content throughout the website.

Pinterest is arguably the fastest-growing social media website and according to the business analytics company, comScore, it drives more referral traffic than LinkedIn, Google + and YouTube combined. (ComScore 2012)

More and more companies are using this social media channel to reach a new audience, show who they are as a brand and learn about their customers.

At the moment, Pinterest is a female centered platform with topics such as interior design, crafts, fitness and fashion being the most prominent. LiveActive's core nature being health & fitness and its partially female customer base prove Pinterest to be an excellent platform for the brand to take advantage of.

LiveActive should use this channel to emphasize the lifestyle they create for customers, rather than using it to showcase products. Of course, being an ecommerce business, the brand can include images of their own products and articles that lead to their website.

An example of how LiveActive could incorporate product images onto Pinterest without being overly promotional would be to create a board called, "Running" that would include motivational running quotes, inspirational images of people running, tips for running etc. from around the web as well as images of LiveActive's own running apparel and shoes. The motivational quotes and images of people running would create an emotional connection, increasing the likelihood of people *wanting* the LiveActive products they see.

The thing that sets Pinterest apart from other social media websites is its strong focus on visuals.

Visuals are a very powerful thing because of the fact that people think with pictures. Visuals are also far more effective in communicating information, creating emotion and making people feel connected. (Parkinson 2012)

Getting to know your customers with Pinterest

Pinterest is a great platform for businesses and customers to get familiar with each other. By pinning beautiful and inspirational visuals, LiveActive could show their customers who they are as a brand and the lifestyle their products create. Pinterest would also give LiveActive the chance to get to know their followers. The images that people pin would allow LiveActive to get an inside look into exactly what their followers like, what they find interesting and what they want. This insight into what customers are doing online is something that LiveActive needs to take advantage of.

Building brand image and tone of voice on Pinterest

Pinterest is a great outlet for LiveActive to build and strengthen its voice and brand image. LiveActive aims to be friendly, social, trustworthy, fit & healthy. This image can be channeled effectively through Pinterest by pinning motivational quotes and images, fun fitness tips and other content related to healthy living and feeling good. By approaching Pinterest in a proactive way, the brand can become the go-to source for everything fitness and health related, thus strengthening their brand image among customers.

Getting Started on Pinterest

Gaining followers and building a strong presence is always a challenge for new brands using social media for marketing purposes. This is where integrating and promoting on other social media comes in. LiveActive can integrate their Pinterest profile with their more established Facebook profile.

To get started, it's possible for the brand to create a Pinterest tab for their Facebook page. This way LiveActive's Pinterest account would be visible and easily accessible to all of their Facebook audience.

Of course the brand should also introduce their new Pinterest page by posting the link as a Facebook status. Making it clear and known that the new Pinterest account exists is key. If people are not aware of LiveActive on Pinterest, then there's no sense in even having it.

In order to entice fans to follow LiveActive's Pinterest account, the brand can update their Facebook or Twitter with links from interesting Pinterest images or infographics. This integration can help drive traffic to LiveActive's Pinterest page and create awareness.

Aside from integrating with other social media accounts, there are also other things that LiveActive can do in order to widen their audience and spread awareness.

Case Example - Lululemon Athletica on Pinterest

Lululemon Athletica Inc. is a Canadian yoga and athletic apparel company that has reached a high level of success across social media. The brand currently has nearly 2 million followers on Pinterest.

Lululemon has managed to create an inspirational, encouraging and lively place for users through imagery and simple, yet enticing text. The brand's Pinterest page is filled with images of intricate yoga poses, people running and inspirational quotes that are moving and motivational for followers. For example, one of Lululemon's Pinterest boards is called "manifesto" that they describe as "a collection of statements that reflect our culture, our goals and our lives."

Lululemon's brand experience manager, Lesia Dallimore, shares that "everything the brand posts is meant to encourage healthier lifestyles, challenge guests to new goals, or create conversation around the community. The social experience is simply an extension of its in-store philosophy." (Haynes 2012)

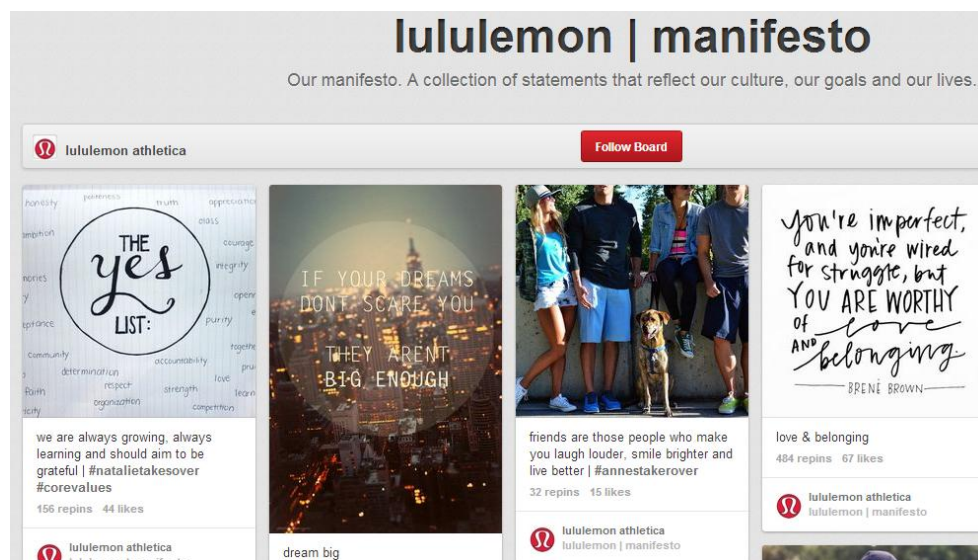


FIGURE 8. Lululemon Motivational Pinterest board. Screenshot of Lululemon's Pinterest page.

6 CONCLUSION

Social media has evolved into an important part of marketing for businesses around the world. While the case company LiveActive has begun using social media as part of their marketing efforts, they are not using social media to their full potential.

My strong interest in digital marketing and social media marketing for businesses is the fundamental reason why I chose this topic for my thesis. As part of my internship period at Studio Moderna, I developed ideas and concepts that LiveActive could use on social media, which further fuelled my interest in pursuing this particular topic for my thesis.

The research of this thesis was conducted to examine the use of social media for marketing and to see how social media is being used for marketing purposes.

The thesis explored digital marketing and social media marketing theories and applied them to practice when developing the social media marketing strategy.

Throughout the thesis, I have tried to provide answers and insight to the following questions:

1. How can the brand use social media to help improve their overall digital marketing efforts?
2. What needs to be considered and included in planning a social media marketing strategy?
3. Which social media platforms should the brand use and how exactly can the brand use them?

I used direct online sources, benchmarking, desk research and practical work with the brand as methods for my research and data analysis. The theoretical background that has been included in this thesis is a necessary aspect that supports the social media marketing strategy that has been developed for the brand. In order for LiveActive to become stronger and successfully use social media for marketing, it is impor-

tant to have a concrete understanding of the background themes of social media and digital marketing as a whole.

Based on the analysis of LiveActive's overall situation, goals and target market, it is clear that the brand's existing marketing practices and online presence could be enhanced and improved through the use of social media. After evaluating the SWOT analysis for the brand, it is clear that the majority of LiveActive's challenges could be improved with the use of social media. The main challenges that LiveActive is facing are due to the fact that it is a new and still emerging brand. Social media offers opportunity for start-up brands such as LiveActive, because of its global reach. With social media, LiveActive has the opportunity to conveniently reach and connect with a wide audience at a substantially lower cost than traditional marketing methods.

Being that LiveActive is an e-commerce brand, it is not a matter of whether the brand has the skills and knowledge to use social media for marketing but a matter of whether the brand is willing to invest and dedicate the time and effort into this style of marketing. According to Stelzner (2012) "Social media marketing still takes a lot of time: The majority of marketers (59%) are using social media for 6 hours or more each week, and a third (33%) invest 11 or more hours weekly."

Since the LiveActive brand is run by a small team, the time needed for successful social media marketing may be seen as an issue. Although social media marketing takes time and dedication, the fact that it is so effective and low-cost makes it worthwhile for the brand.

The social media marketing strategy that I developed can, without a doubt, be incorporated into the brand's current marketing efforts. The strategy is flexible enough for the brand to incorporate it into their overall digital marketing strategy as well as optimize/adjust it accordingly.

Fitness and health are trending topics across social media, making the social media channels that were discussed in this study all suitable options for the brand LiveActive. The main focus across all social media platforms should be to engage with audiences and emphasize the brand's friendly, sociable and healthy image. Communica-

tion and showcasing the lifestyle that LiveActive creates for its customers will be far more powerful than one-sided traditional marketing efforts.

After completing this thesis, it is my hope that my social media marketing strategy can be of benefit for LiveActive, or at the very least, provide some new and fresh insight into the world of social media marketing.

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