Increasing Brand Awareness Through Social Media Marketing for Software as a Service of EAS

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Abstract

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This product-based bachelor's thesis aimed to investigate how to improve brand awareness through social media marketing for a Sofware as a Service (SaaS). The commissioning company EAS is a Finnish start-up that has succeeded in utilising blockchain technology for a new purpose to automate the reporting of VAT and customs data in their SaaS. The European Union changed e-commerce cross-border trade regulations affecting VAT and customs compliance, which stepped into force last year, the 1st of July 2021. The company is working in a completely new business field, so they need a concrete social media marketing plan to increase the brand awareness of their product.

This thesis's research method was desktop research using relevant literature that covers brand awareness, business-to-business (B2B) and social media marketing. The literature review is in two theory parts, where the first one focuses on brand awareness, B2B and social media and how all of these connect. The second theory discusses in detail what the new regulations set by the European Union for VAT and customs mean, how they affect e-commerce, the problems with the new regulations, and finally, the ideal tools to solve these problems. Based on these two different theory parts, a concrete social media marketing plan was made for the commissioning company, and the plan is as an appendix in this thesis.

By using a literature review to produce a social media marketing plan, the author was able to find the best ways to combine B2B social media to increase brand awareness for a SaaS. The social media marketing plan includes a situation analysis of the commissioning company's current social media channels. In addition, the plan highlights some major B2B social media marketing trends in 2022. It also introduces goals and targets for this plan and content ideas for different social media channels, paid advertising, influencers, and marketing calendar. Finally, the social media marketing plan includes ways to measure brand awareness.

In conclusion, the commissioning company is working in a field of entirely new business which has been there for under one year. Even though social media is a popular tool part of marketing in today's world, it is not much used to promote Software as a Service company. There was not much exact literature around this business area as it is a new business territory. With the new social media marketing plan, EAS will execute it and constantly analyse the data to maintain the best results for their business and increase its brand awareness. Other similarly operating companies can get ideas from this thesis and its social media marketing plan, but not everything can be repeated similarly in other companies.

Keywords
SaaS, Blockchain, Automation, VAT, Customs Compliance, Brand Awareness, Social Media

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1   Introduction

This is a product-based bachelor thesis for the Degree Programme in International Business in the major specialization of Customer Relationship Management and Communications in the Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences.

This chapter includes thesis objectives and tasks on how to increase brand awareness of SaaS of EAS, which is blockchain-based automation for VAT and customs compliance. The chapter also includes key concepts, risks, benefits and further information about the commissioning company EAS.

1.1   Thesis objectives and publication

European Union set new regulations starting the 1st of July 2021 (European Commission 2021) for e-commerce VAT and customs compliance which affect that no shipments can be loaded for Europe without automated data gathering and transfer. These new regulations affect all e-commerce businesses widely within the EU. VAT registration can be expensive, complex and time consuming for e-commerce companies.
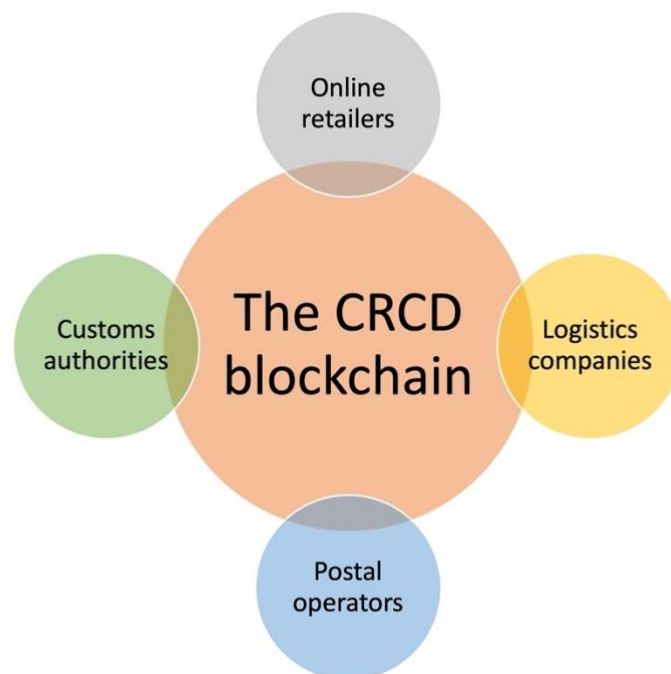

Figure 1. The CRCD (Common Repository for Customs Data) blockchain of EAS connects all operators and the data between the operators.

Finland based SaaS company EAS has created their blockchain called CRCD, which

stands for Common Repository for Customs Data (figure 1.) based automation for VAT and customs compliance which helps and connects e-commerce companies with logistics companies, postal operators, and customs authorities to a single end-to-end data platform as in other words; it is the universal messaging system for customs data (EAS 2021). Their automation tool is faster, easier, and safer to transfer data between different operators – it also requires less manual labour. This automation tool makes everything more manageable so that there will be no data requests from the end customer since the prepayment of tax and duties are done the moment the purchase is made. Furthermore, this software can be easily integrated into other existing IT solutions. Overall, their product utilizes blockchain in an innovative new way. "Blockchain can be either public or private digital ledger containing information, like transactions, and it is harder to hack. In the blockchain, data can be shared faster within the business network" (IBM 2021). Blockchains are considered a future megatrend in United Nations Chronicle (Mulligan 2021) – the problems with blockchains now are that they are not used in many fields since it is considered relatively new territory potential of it is still to be utilized.

SaaS has been one of the most significant and fastest-growing market segments since 2019 (Gartner 2020). "SaaS is a software system that allows data to be accessed from any device via the Internet. It is a faster way compared to separate applications and software" (Salesforce 2021). Therefore, raising the brand awareness of SaaS is crucial – if a company has a high potential SaaS, but no one knows about it, there will not be a future for the service they have developed. Since SaaS is one of the largest growing sectors, the competition might rise quickly, which is why raising brand awareness needs to be done well and fast.

1.2   Project Objective

This thesis aims to increase brand awareness through social media marketing of blockchain-based automation of EAS for VAT and customs compliance in Europe. From the economic point of view, EAS is a relatively new company working in a completely new kind of market because of the new e-commerce regulations. EAS is currently one of its kind and, in that way, a pioneer in their business area since there are not many competitors who have same kind of automation tool – especially not based on blockchain.

For many companies, the new VAT and customs regulations for e-commerce came as a surprise. However, if they do not act fast and get compliance automation on handling new regulations, e-commerce companies face tremendous delivery and VAT reporting issues. If deliveries are lacking, for example, essential customs data deliveries, it means that they

are not following EU regulations and laws. This will affect the online retailers in a way that they will be in trouble with tax authorities in their own country – they will get huge fines, they cannot make their financial statements, and the companies need to change completely how they are doing their VAT and customs compliance.

The outcome of this thesis will significantly help EAS find different aspects and ways to raise brand awareness of their SaaS through social media marketing. Many SaaS companies are struggling to find ways to make their service well-known in the rising ocean of the SaaS segment. This thesis aims to help other SaaS companies to find ways to make their service visible and profitable through social media.

The international aspect is covered by an international company that focuses on doing business across the borders of Europe. The new EU regulations regarding VAT and customs compliance affects all e-commerce doing business to and from Europe. Without automation tools to solve the new problems e-commerce faces because of the regulations, many e-commerce companies might disappear, affecting the global economy directly.

The project objective (PO) of this thesis is: **Preparing a social media marketing plan to raise brand awareness for the SaaS of EAS.**

The project tasks (PT) of this thesis are the following:

PT 1. Preparing the theoretical framework.
PT 2. Identifying online buyer persona for the SaaS service.
PT 3. Establishing the key selling points for the SaaS service from the viewpoint of the changed EU regulations for VAT and customs compliance.
PT 4. Establishing the social media plan.
PT 5. Evaluating project management and project outcomes.

Table 1 below presents an overlay matrix based on the project objective and project tasks above.

Table 1. Overlay matrix

Project Task	Theoretical Framework	Project Management Methods	Outcomes
PT 1. Preparing the theoretical framework.	Brand awareness, B2B, social media, EU regulations	Literature review	Theoretical framework
PT 2. Identifying online buyer persona for the SaaS service.	B2B, brand awareness	B2B market analysis based on SaaS	Buyer persona
PT 3. Establishing the key selling points for the SaaS service from the viewpoint of the changed EU regulations for VAT and customs compliance.	Key selling points, brand awareness	Desktop research of benefits and features of SaaS finding unique selling point	Key selling points
PT 4. Establishing the social media marketing plan.	Social media marketing, brand awareness	Desktop research on which social media platforms are the best to raise brand awareness of SaaS and how to develop the plan.	Social media plan draft
PT 5. Evaluating project management and project outcomes.	Feedback from the company and outcomes of different PTs.	Project management methods used for PT1 – PT4.	Finalised social media marketing plan

1.3   Project Scope

Mutually agreed with the commissioning company EAS, the author will focus on finding relevant ways to raise the brand awareness through social media marketing of their product and the company itself in Europe. EAS is a Nordic startup founded in 2020, and they are still in the growth phase, continuously finding new customers (e-commerce companies and logistics companies). The author will investigate their ideal customers (B2B) and the best ways to increase their brand visibility among the potential new customers and partner companies. In this thesis, marketing methods and social media channels will be investigated on how to use them beneficially to increase brand awareness of the company and their blockchain-based automation for VAT and customs compliance.

1.4 Benefits

The results are beneficial for the commissioning company to get new aspects and ideas for how to raise brand awareness through social media marketing in the eyes of an outsider who has a solid international background – working in 20 different countries. As a new start-up, EAS has a strong sales team, and they are still developing their marketing plan and the team around it. Nevertheless, raising brand awareness is something the company needs and is a current topic.

The author's thesis will help other SaaS companies get information on excellent ways to increase brand awareness through social media marketing – which methods work the best. This thesis also gives new knowledge and ideas on how companies can use blockchain in different business innovations.

For the author, this thesis brings new knowledge and skills from a different kind of market area. It will be beneficial to open different kinds of opportunities for the author, whether related to the work market or future master studies. The author also got the chance to work on a thesis topic related to her specialization area of customer relationship management and communications. The author has an interest and fascination towards branding and building strong international brands and companies – and in that way, this thesis supports those goals and areas of interest.

1.5 Risks and Risk Management

Risks, why the author's thesis could fail, or which could complicate finishing it, are, for example, that something would happen to the start-up company itself. The author has access to all the data, so that will not be an issue at all. Since the thesis is about an entirely new business model and a new way to make e-commerce VAT declaration, there might be difficulties finding relevant literature for theoretical framework – though it can focus on comparing how it was done before and after new EU regulations. These risks are not very high now or relevant in the upcoming year. The company EAS is doing very well, getting several new clients every week, and getting investment money. The literature issues can be won over, and it is possible to mix new and old data for a theoretical framework. Problems could arise if the EU changes regulations – though it is primarily a long process.

1.6   Key Concepts

SaaS (Software as a service) is a software system that allows data to be accessed from any device via the Internet. It is a faster way compared to separate applications and software (Salesforce 2021).

Blockchain can be either public or private digital ledger containing information, like transactions, and it is harder to hack. In the blockchain, data can be shared faster within the business network. This is because all the blocks have timestamps and a link to previous blocks. In addition, all the records and data in the blockchain is immutable, meaning no one can change the current information. (IBM 2021.)

Automation is a technique that can deliver services and/or goods with less human intervention (Groover 2012, 512).

VAT or Value Added Tax, in the European Union is a general, broadly based consumption tax assessed on the value added to goods and services. It applies more or less to all goods and services bought and sold for use or consumption in the European Union. (European Commission 2021.)

Customs compliance is a practice that follows regulations, for example, set by European Commission related to importing goods. Importing goods over the borders can be complex for companies because it requires staying up to date with new regulations. (European Commission 2021.)

Brand awareness is a relationship with a particular category or need and its unique features and benefits. When measuring the success of raising brand awareness, there are three key indicators to be used: recognition, recall and top of mind awareness. (Beverland 2018, 98.)

Social media is technological infrastructure, which includes different virtual channels like Instagram and Facebook, where people can connect and share information with each other and/or with different companies, brands, and organizations (Cruz, Fletcher, Heinze & Rashid 2020, 204).

1.7   Commissioning Company

EAS is a Nordic SaaS start-up which is based in Helsinki, Finland. The company was founded in 2020, and they have created blockchain-based automation for VAT and customs compliance. The Finnish government funds the company. (EAS 2021.)

The blockchain is called CRCD (Common Repository for Customs Data), and it connects online retailers, logistics companies, postal operators, and customs authorities to a single end-to-end data platform. Data collecting starts at the moment of purchase, when merchandise data, end-customer data and seller data is collected. The data is then transferred to the CRCD. The CRCD blockchain is one of the fastest blockchains running and can do more than 20,000 transactions per second which equals it can handle more than a billion orders every day. (EAS 2021.)

The benefits of their product for e-merchants are that they can sell across the EU whether registered to EU, fully automated VAT reporting, instant customs clearance, access to multiple delivery solutions, full compliance with GDPR, reduces costs by their customers, increased end-customer satisfaction as well as easy to use and secure, modern blockchain technology (EAS 2021).

1.8   Project Management Methods and Report Structure

Project management methods (figure 3) include a mix of desktop research, literature review, B2B and market analysis. In the final PT phase, feedback from the case company is also one of the data collection methods. The nature of the topic can be researched in the best way using desktop research analysing existing data and materials to produce new information, knowledge, and insights to make a social media marketing plan to raise brand awareness for SaaS of EAS.

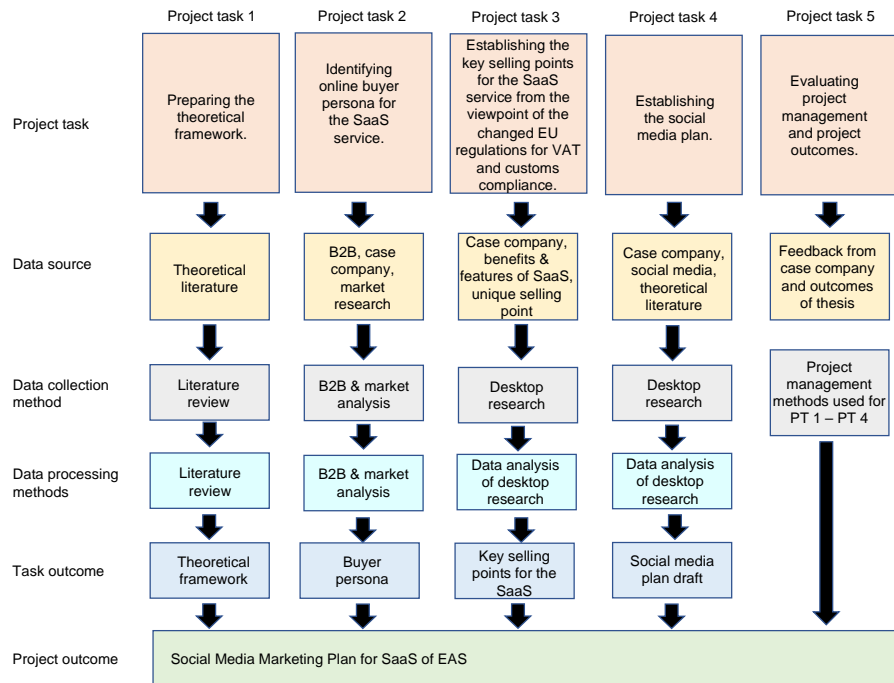|	Project task 1	Project task 2	Project task 3	Project task 4	Project task 5
Project task	Preparing the theoretical framework.	Identifying online buyer persona for the SaaS service.	Establishing the key selling points for the SaaS service from the viewpoint of the changed EU regulations for VAT and customs compliance.	Establishing the social media plan.	Evaluating project management and project outcomes.
Data source	Theoretical literature	B2B, case company, market research	Case company, benefits & features of SaaS, unique selling point	Case company, social media, theoretical literature	Feedback from case company and outcomes of thesis
Data collection method	Literature review	B2B & market analysis	Desktop research	Desktop research	Project management methods used for PT 1 – PT 4
Data processing methods	Literature review	B2B & market analysis	Data analysis of desktop research	Data analysis of desktop research	
Task outcome	Theoretical framework	Buyer persona	Key selling points for the SaaS	Social media plan draft	
Project outcome	Social Media Marketing Plan for SaaS of EAS				

Figure 2. Project management methods.

In PT 1, the data source is theoretical literature about brand awareness, social media, B2B, marketing SaaS companies, relevant theories, and EU regulations on VAT and customs. The PT 2 is about identifying the buyer persona for the SaaS service. The best way to gather information is the case company and its materials, B2B and desktop-based market research on SaaS, which leads to B2B and market analysis. After that, the author can define buyer persona.

The PT 3 focuses on finding relevant key selling points after identifying buyer persona and focusing on what benefits the automation of EAS provides after the changes in EU regulations for VAT and customs compliance. This PT 3 focuses on how the SaaS makes the lives of e-commerce companies easier with the new automation provided by EAS. Data sources for this PT are the case company and its sales team, benefits and features of the SaaS product, and a unique selling point.

The PT 4 focuses on preparing a social media marketing plan for EAS. Data sources will be the case company and their existing social media plan, social media in general, observing SaaS companies in social media – what works and what does not, and theoretical literature focusing on social media. After analysing the data and data collection, the social media plan will be the outcome.

After receiving feedback from the management, it is time to make the changes and modify the outlook of the social media marketing plan. Then, in the final PT 5, everything will be put together to finalise it - that is how the actual social media marketing plan is born (PO).

2   Literature Review

In this chapter the author will focus on how brand awareness works and how it is done in a B2B company whose product is Software-as-a-Service. The author will also study how it is possible to influence on brand awareness and how it can be used as its best in social media marketing. Improving brand awareness through social media in B2B companies is often undervalued even though there lies enormous potential to be used.
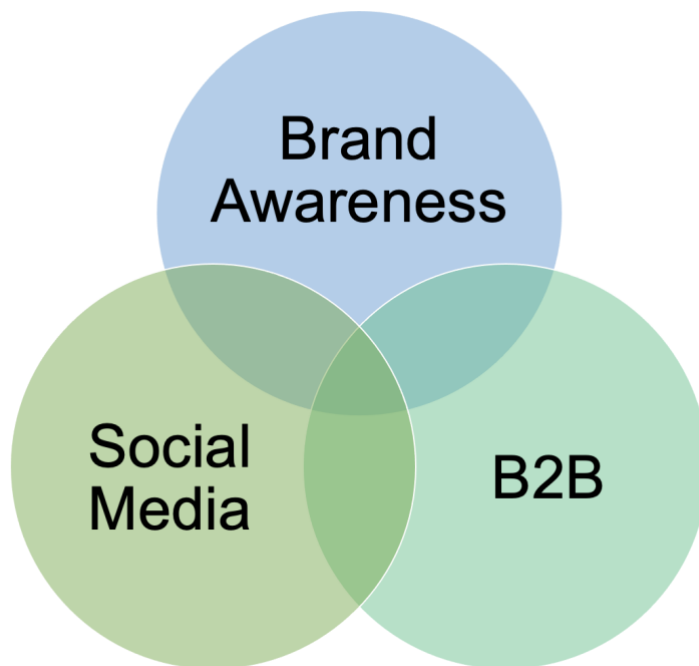

Figure 3. The theoretical framework for social media marketing plan

Figure 3 above illustrates the impact of all those three factors: brand awareness, social media, and B2B can be seen impacting each other on this literature review. The theory of each factor will be discussed, and the definitions around each area.

2.1   Raising Brand Awareness

Brand awareness describes how recognizable and familiar company's product or service is for its customers. Brand awareness is a source of brand equity in bigger picture. (Keller & Swaminathan 2010, 72.) These terms and concepts around brand and branding are presented more in detail in the following chapters.

2.1.1   Brand and Branding

According to Keller and Swaminathan (2020, 32) brand can be name, term, sign, symbol,

or design – it can also be combination of all of those. The intention of a brand is to identify the goods and/or services that a seller or group of sellers is offering, and the idea of a brand is to differentiate their product/products from other companies. Brand can be born, or it can be created by using marketing to create positive image and to make the brand recognizable, this is called branding. When creating a brand, it is fundamental to choose the name, logo, symbol, package design or other characteristics that makes it recognizable and differentiates it from others – these different factors are called brand elements (Keller & Swaminathan 2020, 32).

Branding is extremely important not only to differ your product and/or service from what competitors are offering, but it will make your consumers to be familiar with your product and ease their purchase decision when they have associations to certain companies when they are for example about to purchase a laptop – for sure they will think of Apple and Dell (Keller & Swaminathan 2020, 36). Branding does not only consider consumer products, but it can also be used in Business-to-Business (B2B) as well. There are differences between Business-to-Consumer (B2C) and between B2B branding – B2B branding focuses on expertise since customer's decisions are mostly based on statistics when in B2C emotions are primarily affecting the purchase decision (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2010, 2-3). According to Kotler and Pfoertsch (2010, 8) the most important brand functions in B2B are that it increases information efficiency, reduces risks, and adds value as well as creates image.

According to Beverland (2021, 291) global branding usually refers to the process when a company decides to take its brand outside of its original country to expand its business possibilities. Benefits of making global brand through global branding is that can increase equity and usually brings stronger competitive advantage and a company can have new revenue potential, international companies can also attract more talents, and it will also attract foreign investment.

2.1.2 Brand Equity

According to Aaker (2010, 7-8) brand equity is a set of assets and liabilities which are related to a brand's name and symbol. It also adds or subtracts the value provided by a product or service to a company and/or the company's customers. The major asset categories are brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand association and other proprietary brand assets, and all these assets control brand equity (Aaker 2010, 8).

In B2B's point of view, brand equity must be seen as the strategic asset since it can bring competitive advantage and long-term profitability for the brand and the company (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2010, 6). The purpose of brand equity is to create value of a brand in order to make the consumer be more willing to try the product or service, less time is needed to close the sale, it will be more likely that the customer will purchase the product or service, customer is willing to pay a price premium and will also be less sensitive if price increases occur (Anderson, Narus & Narayandas 2009, 140).

2.1.3 Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is a source of brand equity and brand awareness is composed of brand recognition and brand recall performance. Brand (aided) recognition means how well customer recognizes the brand to something they have seen before and brand recall (unaided) means if customer is thinking about for example buying a chocolate bar, will they think about certain famous chocolate bar like Snickers – in other words how specifically they will think of some brand when they need to buy certain product or service. (Keller & Swaminathan 2010, 72-73.) Top-of-mind-awareness refers to a brand which comes first in mind, it tells that the brand is so strong that it is the first brand people think of when they need to buy that certain product or service.

Figure 4. Brand awareness pyramid (Beverland 2021, 98)

There are three different kinds of advantages of brand awareness according to Keller and Swaminathan (2010, 73) which are learning advantages, consideration advantages and choice advantages. Learning advantages means the company must establish a brand

node in memory – in other words a company needs to affect to the associations that customers have about the brand, how easily they will remember the brand and learn its associations. Consideration means that customers need to think of that brand when they are about to make purchasing decisions about the product/service to satisfy their need – when raising brand awareness, the idea is to be the first brand that comes to your customers' mind. Finally, the choice advantages signify the low-involvement purchases which happen when customers lack either purchase motivation (they do not care what they will buy), purchase ability (they do not know anything else about those certain brands in a category) or purchase opportunity (they do not have time to think more about their purchase and/or brand they are about to buy). (Beverland 2021, 98-99.)

Nowadays, several ways and platforms are used to raise brand awareness, like social media and influencer marketing. When the aim is to raise brand awareness of Software-as-a-Service (SaaS), it is a relatively new area and playground in the eyes of branding and marketing. The brand awareness plan will focus on the blockchain and how it is changing the e-commerce business inside the EU. SaaS companies based on blockchain are on the rise. SaaS is an intangible product; they need different kinds of branding and marketing than commonly known companies and their tangible products. Having a product that differs from what possible competitors are offering is relevant when creating a brand awareness plan for a SaaS company. Social media as a platform to raise brand awareness plays a big part in today's ever-changing technology and social media world. Yet still public relations, name, logo, slogan, advertising, and promotion still play big role when establishing brand awareness (Keller & Swaminathan 2010, 74).

2.1.4   Branding in the digital era

In today's rapidly changing world brand managers are required to coordinate and implement their communications in various digital channels and the communication needs to be suitable to different devices like phone, tablet, and laptop (Keller & Swaminathan, 249). User experience (UX) is extremely valued in digital marketing, and it should be remembered when planning and implementing branding. According to Keller and Swaminathan (2010, 261) if a user feels it is easy to navigate through the website of a company or its social media, it increases the user experience.

Social media and digital marketing have grown into a significant part of corporate marketing and communications in recent years. Many companies have their own social media channels that allow them to interact with consumers, existing customers, and potential customers. Influential marketing has also become a big part of social media,

which, if properly and well designed, can help a company reach an even wider target audience. Many B2B companies are using widely email marketing which is one example of digital marketing as well.

2.2 Business-to-Business (B2B) Marketing

According to Blythe and Zimmerman (2018, 3-4) business-to-business market includes all kind of physical products but also services that organization buy from and sell to other organizations. Internet has evolved a lot in the past years, and it has had its impact on B2B sector as well – lots of business happens on the internet and e-commerce has grown to be an enormous marketplace. It is crucial for companies to have a proper strategy for digital and social media marketing and involve it when branding the company and its product(s). It is important to also have professional looking website – people have less and less time to go through and focus on new things, potential customers need to be able to find relevant information fast from the website.

2.2.1 Business-to-Business (B2B) versus Business-to-Consumer (B2C)

Business-to-Consumer (B2C) differs from B2B, the major differences are marketing strategy and corporate strategy, different segmentation and the sizes of market and channels. In B2B marketing strategy is often same as corporate strategy. Marketing wise in B2C marketing customers are usually affected by emotions when they make purchases but in B2B purchase decisions are more rational and before making any purchases the buyer wants to get statistics, numbers and facts about the product and know how it will make the impact in their business – to increase more sales and/or lower costs. Segmentation is also different in non-consumer market, usually the customers in B2B market are segmented by industry classification codes, product applications, price sensitivity, location, importance of the product to the buying company, and customer size. When technology is involved in B2B market, for example SaaS, it is extremely important to show to the potential buyer the remarkable effects in can have on their financial results. (Blythe & Zimmerman 2018, 9-11.)

2.2.2 How Business Organizations Buy

As mentioned earlier, organizational buying differs from consumer purchasing behavior in a way that is less emotional and more rational based on statistics, facts, and numbers. Other differences when selling from business to business is the fact that usually there is more than one person in the decision position – there might be entire unit who will decide on purchases, marketing, and sales. (Blythe & Zimmerman, 2018, 18-30.)

Blythe and Zimmerman (2018, 20-21) refer to a concept, first introduced by Loudon and Della Bitta (1993), which tells that there are certain environmental influences which can affect to business buyers. These environmental influences (figure 5) are physical, technological, economic, political, and legal, ethical as well as cultural. Physical influences refer to the location of a company – some companies like to buy from local companies only.

Figure 5. Environmental influences on buying behavior (Blythe & Zimmerman 2018, 21)

Technological influences can refer to different level of technological development, for example countries in Europe do not have similar electrical fittings. Economic influences include macroeconomic environment which refers to demand on different countries as well as taxation. If demand to produce is low in some country, their need for raw materials is also low. Political and legal influences can occur when countries change laws and regulations, which can affect widely in international trade like trade barriers and trade sanctions to name few examples. Ethical influences can affect to the buying behavior if the buyer would accept bribes or any other personal compensation if taking the deal – buyers should act for the good of the company, and not for the personal best. Cultural influences might occur when doing international business, since there might be different values, language, behavior, and religion to name few which might affect to the business – in today's multicultural business world it is extremely important to know who you are selling to and get to know their culture to understand the behavior and other factors which might affect to the business. (Blythe & Zimmerman 2018, 20-21.)
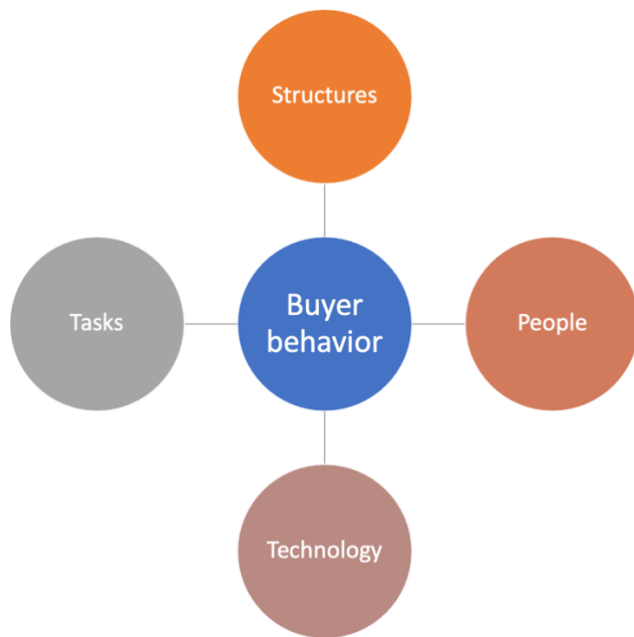
Figure 6. Organizational influences on buyer behavior (Blythe & Zimmernman 2018, 22)

There are also four different organizational influences (Blythe & Zimmerman 2018, 22-23) which effect on buyer behavior (figure 6), these factors are tasks, structures, people, and technology. Buyers have different kind of approach when for example when buying dairy products comparing to when purchasing computers – the purchasing tasks differ when it is about different products, and that is the reason why companies usually have different buyers for different product types. Organizations and companies have either formal or informal structure. Formal structure specifies issues like degree of centralization in purchasing and how strictly they follow the rules. Informal structure includes the network of social obligations, friendships, and internal cooperation that has impact on daily behavior. Technology plays part in the buyer behavior in a way that some organizations might have computer-controlled programs to prevent buyer to purchase over certain limit or even exclude buyer from the purchasing process. Naturally people in the organization affect to the culture the company has and, in that way, have its impact on purchase policy.

2.2.3 Strategic Planning for Global Business Markets

When creating a new company, it is essential to have mission, vision, and objectives clear – what is our business, who is our customer, why our product/service is valuable (Blythe & Zimmerman 2018, 35-37). When company has clear mission and vision it helps to direct its organizational strategy: it is easier to achieve the goals when you know where you want to be and think how to get there, it will be easier to create better marketing strategies and sales tactics when you know what you want to accomplish.

Beside of mission, vision, and objectives one of the main strategies is to have competitive advantage what differentiates product/service from what competitors are offering. According to Michael Porter's work (Joan 2021, 63-64) there are three different basic competitive advantages: cost leadership, differentiation, and focus. In cost leadership the strategy is to minimize production, distribution and/or marketing costs of a company, idea behind this is that it could compete on price without sacrificing profits. When a company wants to have differentiation as its competitive advantage, it means that their product/service is different comparing what their competitors have, and it usually means that it is possible to charge premium price because they have something to offer what others do not have. Focus as competitive advantage denotes company focusing only for few market segments which are precisely chosen, and aim is to have low cost and differentiation strategy at the same time. (Blythe & Zimmernman 2018, 40-41.)

2.2.4 B2B Marketing Communications

Marketing communication is defined by Keller and Kotler (Todorova 2015, 368) as a means by which companies try to catch the attention of their targeted audience to inform, persuade and remind their customers both directly and indirectly about the product/service they are selling.

Figure 7. Determining the global B2B marketing communications mix (Blythe & Zimmerman 2019, 268)

When B2B marketing communications is done carefully and well it will work more effectively and it is possible to gain better results. Aim of the marketing communications in B2B (figure 7) companies is to maintain existing customers and catch the attention of new potential customers. It is important that the message is understandable and relevant for the audience – with clear message there is more potential to reach the right people, especially in today's business world where people do not have much time, and if they do not understand what your company does and sells, they will skip it.

There are several factors according to Blythe and Zimmerman (2018, 267-269) which influence on the marketing communications mix of a company. These factors are the available budget a company have reserved for it. After a company has determined their budget, it is time to choose the right media where they want to reach their target audience (to whom they want to sell their product/service). The chosen media can be website, social media channels, events, and for example email marketing. After these factors have been cleared, it is time to think about what the message is a company wants to send to its customers – in B2B the message is usually more fact-based rather than trying to affect through the emotions. Even though a company would be tech-savvy, it is still advisable to attract your audience with photos, illustrations, and catchy slogans and/or phrases. It is extremely important to constantly measure the results of company's marketing communications – if something is not working, adjustments need to be done to make it more profitable. Nowadays there are lots of competition in almost every field, this makes it crucial to follow what competitors are doing in advertising, social media and in other channels. At times government regulations might affect to marketing, for example in China companies are not allowed to use Chinese flag or cannot use slogans which state that 'recommended by experts' (Brooke & Zhou 2021). Nature of the product refers to the fact that some products/services are easier to explained than others, some product/services need more actual demonstration whether it is through photos and/or videos. It is major to use right channels to promote product/service, to be able to catch right audience and meet your marketing targets.

2.3   Social Media Marketing

Social media happens only online, which allows communications amongst multiple users. Social media marketing focuses on understanding and engaging buyer personas through organic and/or paid media. The difference between organic and paid media are that when trying to engage your buyer personas, if it is done organically, it means there is no money involved on boosting the posts. In paid media, company will pay money to market its posts

– this way it can reach more potential target audience than what it could get organically. (Cruz → al. 2020, 22-24.)

2.3.1 Earned, Owned and Paid Media

There are three different elements which affect to social media marketing. Earned and owned media are part of organic media – owned media includes channels where a company can control their content itself, for example website, apps, and email marketing. Earned media means the media a company can earn through bloggers and journalists who are writing about the brand itself or about its products – it is like a referral. The more owned media a company has, the more opportunities it has to raise brand awareness when creating engaging content. Paid media refers to the types of media where a company can pay to create more brand awareness – this is often used in social media posts to reach more potential consumers and already existing customers. (Berry, Sikkenga & Visser 2018, 18.)

2.3.2 Buyer Personas in B2B Social Media

Buyer persona represents your target audience and customers, and it's based-on market research – usually it includes demographics, locations, average order value, decision making patterns, and keywords which are on search engines (Cruz → al. 2020, 69). Before creating buyer personas, it is essential to who you want to target and in which channels. Mostly in B2B, buyer persona is targeted to be potential customer company, after a company has defined its buyer persona it is time to find out what are the channels where it is possible to reach out to them – popular B2B social media channels are Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn (Cruz → al. 2020, 215-216).

Planning a marketing strategy is greatly facilitated if a company creates a few buyer personalities. The buyer is the ideal customer. Creating buyer persona benefits and helps the company (Ranta 2021) to create a clearer marketing strategy to do target marketing to reach the right kind of customers, to learn what are the social media channels to be in, to understand your customers better, to improve communication with customers, and create unique and personalized content for their channels. It is important to know which channels best reach the ideal customers. The channels are also greatly affected by whether a company operates only domestic or also internationally. Different countries may have different social media channels that work the best.

2.3.3   B2B Social Media

When a company wants to leverage social media in its own communications as well as in its marketing, there are several things that need to be considered. The company needs to think carefully about which social media channels reach the most desired consumers and/or customers. Most companies make an impact on Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. (Cruz → al. 2020, 215-216.) YouTube and podcasts are on the rise. Podcasts are an interesting and different platform to take advantage of to create a deeper discussion and bring out the company's own voice better.

Social media can be utilized in many ways in a company as well as in corporate communications. The company can personalize its messages and target them to the desired target group. With the help of social media, a company can increase its visibility and thus direct consumers to its website. As a result, the company can engage new potential customers. Through various channels, the company can also collect customer feedback and analyze and utilize it in the development of communications. Through the social media channel, the company has a great opportunity to strengthen its own brand and manage its media image. It is also vital to monitor what competitors are doing on different channels.

2.3.4   Content Marketing

Content marketing is a strategic process which means creating interesting content that aims to inform, engage, and entertain a target audience as well as build brand awareness of a brand and its product/products. When the aim is to create consistent content, it is important to remember four different stages of content creating process which are: plan, act, observe, and reflect. Planning includes generating ideas beside of planning. Acting stands for creating content, developing it as well as implementing the content creation and amplification of it. Observing includes tracking and constant monitoring of the content. Finally reflecting means evaluating the content. (Cruz → al. 2020, 9.)

Social media encompasses a wide-ranging world that needs to be well understood to create meaningful and engaging content and create the image of a company in the best possible way. Social media holds many opportunities but also threats. Just one wrong spelling or publishing an image can instantly ruin an entire company's image. It is extremely important that the company either has its own social media marketing and communications team, or the management of social media is outsourced. The most important thing before a company gets involved with social media is to create an excellent

strategy: identify the market potential through different channels and remember that managing social media is a day-to-day job. Media channels cannot be managed once a month but must be always maintained. If a company has a Facebook site that hasn't been updated in a few months, it doesn't give a very lively and trustworthy feel to the company.

2.3.5   Email marketing

Email marketing is one form of digital marketing, and it is still widely used in today's B2B sector. With email marketing it is easy to control your customers/audience since it is targeted usually for one person and that is the reason why it is called 'owned' channel. Email marketing can be and should be automated to save time and make it more effectively – there are great customer relationship management tools for it nowadays, for example Hubspot and Salesforce. Even though email marketing is automated, it can still be personalized – when a company personalizes their email marketing, there is a higher rate that potential customers open the emails and read it through. Nowadays people get so many work emails and some of them will end up directly to junk mail – one mor reason to personalize your message. (Himanshu 2016, 254-255.) With email marketing it is possible to gain more clicks to company's website and in that way try to engage possible customers with interesting website – this can also generate more sales (Berry → al. 2018, 258).

2.3.6   Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the optimization for specific search words – aim for a company doing this is to get its website ranked as high as possible in natural search when consumers are searching specific words related to their products (Berry → al. 2018, 215). Different factors influence the position of a search term. At first it is important to know company's buyer persona and research what the words and terms are they might be using when searching products. When creating content, it is crucial to use the same specific keywords to optimize the ranking – same thing applies when creating a company's website, it is called on-page optimization. When creating links from other channels like social media to a company's main 'owned' website, it is needed again to use same keywords to optimize company's SEO – this tactic is called off-page optimization. (Cruz → al. 2020, 180.)

2.3.7   Influencer Marketing

Social media influencers are people who usually have loads of followers on social media, and in that way, they are able to reach even millions of people with their posts and stories

(Dahl 2021, 78-79). In today's business world it is popular to use influencers to be able to reach more consumers through them – the potential to increase brand awareness of a company is huge – when they promote a brand or its product/products. There are three different ways how to involve with influencer marketing: exchange, incentives, or pay. To use the knowledge and expertise of influencer and exchange it to visibility and/or for the products. When using incentives, it means that influencers want to involve themselves with a brand meaning they like the products and want to promote them for free in their social media channels. By paying actual agreed payment for influencer is also common option since the whole influencer marketing has become more commercial. (Berry → al. 2018, 252.)

Influencer marketing has been on the rise year after year, and it is widely used social media marketing method. The influencer market grew from 1.7 billion U.S. dollars in 2016 to 9.7 billion U.S. dollars in 2020. Last year in 2021, it increased to 13.8 billion U.S. dollars, showing a steady growth. In year 2022, the market is expected to expand to an enormous 15 billion U.S. dollars industry. (Santora 2022.)

When using influencer marketing, it is important to think through who the ideal brand ambassador is to promote the company and its products – if chosen wrong it can be negative effect for the brand image, if for example the influencer has different values, or he/she gets bad publicity.

2.3.8 Reputation Management on Social Media

When a company is executing social media plan it is major to do reputation management as well. What it means is that it is systematic and constant monitoring what the audience is saying, commenting, and posting online as well as answering to the questions they might have. For the companies it is important to take part of the discussion online to stay relevant. It is needed to post engaging and interesting content and it needs to be done strategically. (Berry → al. 2018, 187-189.)

When managing social media reputation, it is recommendable to have guidelines for the people responsible of social media. Social media never sleeps, and different kind of situations could rise. The guidelines will ease the work and it will be clearer for everyone on how to handle different situations. Responding to negative comments and reviews needs to be done fast and well, to avoid any harm for the brand image. Social media is an enormous world, and nowadays there are plenty of tools to help to monitor the conversation around your brand.

2.3.9 Measuring Brand Awareness

There are lots of data to be analyzed when it comes to social media – the data can give valuable insights on how to implement your social media strategy better and it is also possible to measure the brand awareness through that data. With all that data it is possible to track the connection between the online customer journey and their connection to the effective use of organization's key performance indicators (KPIs) (Cruz → al. 2020, 296-298).

Consumer engagement is easy to measure by how many likes, comments, and shares the images and/or videos receive. The growth in the number of followers is also easy to monitor and measure. It's also good to keep track of the ratio of followers to followers - if you follow several thousand accounts but only a few dozen people follow your business, it won't give you a good picture. It is also important to monitor the difference between organic and paid results. In Instagram in particular, a company can create its own hashtags to keep track of, making it possible to get a bigger picture of how active their own followers are.

The comments also make it easy to measure how committed consumers are to participating in the discussions (Rouhiainen 2012, 15). It is a good idea to monitor the results and results of social media on a weekly basis and analyze what works and what doesn't. In addition, it's a good idea to check which topics and content get the most coverage and response. When the results are monitored regularly, it is easier to react to them and see which areas need development and correction.

There are several different programs for tracking social media and analyzing the data from social media. When a company wants to measure its return on capital, or return-on-investment (ROI), the best tools are Google Analytics, Facebook Insights, Hootsuite, and Bit.ly (Rouhiainen 2012, 107).

3   New EU Regulations on VAT and Customs

European Union set new regulations which modernised EU e-commerce cross-border trade regulations, starting the 1st of July 2021 (European Commission 2021) for e-commerce VAT and customs compliance which affect that no shipments can be loaded for Europe without automated data gathering and transfer. This chapter provides insight how VAT and customs compliance were done before new EU regulations to explain how blockchain-based automation helps online retailers automate their VAT declaration.

3.1   Main Points on the New EU Regulations on VAT and Customs

These new regulations affect all e-commerce businesses widely within the EU. VAT registration can be expensive, complex and time consuming for e-commerce companies.

3.1.1   Unifying VAT threshold to 10,000 euros

Previously each member state of the EU had their own VAT threshold, meaning the maximum amount of sales companies can do before being obligated to register for VAT. The thresholds varied from 5000 euros to 100,000 euros. In cross-border sales, it meant, for example, the Finnish company was allowed to sell to France 20,000 euros worth of goods before any registration to France and 100,000 euros to the UK. After 20,000 euros sales to France, the Finnish company needed to register for VAT in France do VAT reporting to France in French two times a month. (Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/965, 214/1-214/2.)

The new regulations set the EU-wide threshold to 10,000 euros. If the same Finnish company is selling 10,000 euros worth of goods to Finland, every sale to any EU-state requires VAT registration immediately in that country. But a simplification was introduced, OSS (one-stop-shop).

3.1.2   One-Stop-Shop (OSS)

One-Stop-Shop (OSS) is a centralised reporting system for EU cross-border sales. When pre 1st of July companies needed to register for VAT after exceeding the threshold limits, the EU wanted to lower the compliance costs by introducing OSS. By registering to OSS, a company can report all its EU cross-border sales to its local tax authorities without any VAT registrations outside of its own country; the local tax authorities distribute collected taxes to EU member states based on OSS reporting. (Jenkins 2021.) OSS also introduces a VAT rate rule: after 10,000 euros in all intra-EU sales VAT rate must be the rate of the

consumption country, which means that when a Finnish company sells to an Italian consumer, the VAT must be calculated based on Italian VAT rates. OSS system is divided into three parts which are Union OSS (intra-EU sales), Import OSS (sales from outside of EU to EU), and Non-Union OSS (Sales of electronic goods and services). (Ecommerce Europe 2021.)

3.1.3 New Customs Rules

Before the 1st of July, everything valued under 22 euros did not have to go through customs - no VAT or duties were paid. The 22 euros exemption rule was heavily misused; everything coming from China was reported as low-value goods (under 22 euros). EU was losing great amounts of tax income and giving an unfair advantage to non-EU sellers. (Asquith 2021.)

The new customs rules state that every single package, no matter the value, must be handled by the customs. VAT must be collected from every single item arriving in the EU. Custom duties are paid when the value of goods exceeds 150 euros. Non-EU Companies who are registered for IOSS (import OSS) gets a simplified customs handling if the full customs data is available to customs. (Asquith 2021.)

New regulations were set because the goal was to ease intra-EU trade by simplifying VAT registrations and reporting. Compliance costs have been way too high and process too difficult. Businesses in EU will be able to compete on equal footing with non-EU businesses that are not charging VAT. As well EU will gain more tax income. (Global VAT Compliance 2022.)

3.2 Problems with the New EU Regulations on VAT and Customs

The biggest problem of them all - the complexity of the regulation is killing the small business. For example, the problems small/medium UK online seller is facing when selling to the EU. UK seller has no idea how to register for IOSS or what is required. Simplified and easy to understand, the material is hard to find. They need someone to represent them in the EU - the service is challenging to find. The challenges are, for example, the following: a company must be dealing with the tax authorities of the EU, which seems too difficult, new tools like tax and duty calculators are needed, VAT reporting is massive manual work, and customs data must be created and delivered. Small companies are not able to fulfil these requirements. The result is that they stop sales to the EU. (Du Preez 2021.) On the other hand, companies like Amazon can manage the issues with their law

and accountant teams and pay companies like KPMG to consult them. Related to 10,000 euros threshold, if a company is not aware of OSS or have not been able to automate your OSS reporting, the 10,000 euros threshold stops your cross-border business. (Gransard, James & Simon 2021.)

Customs could not handle all the volume before the 1st of July. The new customs regulations created additional 2.7 billion customs declarations more annually. Customs can automate the process if the complete customs data sets are delivered in the correct form to customs. Nevertheless, there are no channels how an online marketplace can send this data to the customs. If a company does not use the IOSS customs lowers the priority of the package because more manual work is needed. For this reason, non-IOSS packages are delayed and, in most cases, not delivered at all. (Tulli 2022.)

If a Non-EU seller is registered for IOSS, the seller charges VAT at the checkout. Customs does not collect taxes from the EU customer; the EU collects taxes from the seller based on their IOSS reporting. But the non-EU seller may not have any ways to send the full data and the IOSS data to the customs, so customs has no idea the VAT is already paid by the customer, so customs claim the VAT again. (Global VAT Compliance 2022.)

3.3   Tools and Knowledge

On the 1st of July, no knowledge or tools were ready to be used. Most of the small online sellers did not know the new EU regulations even months after the 1st of July. The new OSS reporting will potentially multiply three times the number of VAT reports to be made. A massive amount of manual work must be done to use OSS. (Global VAT Compliance 2022.)

VAT calculation must be done before every sale. Though it might seem like an easy task to complete, the EU has more than 400,000 lines of special VAT rates. For example, in Luxembourg, shoe size 39 is a standard VAT rate of 17%, but shoe size 38 is considered as children's shoes with zero VAT. Tools considering all EU VAT rules are not existing. (Avalara 2022.)

4   Establishing the Social Media Marketing Plan

Raising brand awareness of B2B companies through social media marketing is on the rise – more and more companies are awaking to the fact that social media channels can be utilized effectively in B2B sector as well, not only in B2C. EAS, the Finnish start-up company, has created blockchain based automation for VAT and customs compliance. Being tech-savvy company, it is great idea to step in the game of social media with well-planned social media marketing plan with their help. There lies great potential promoting its Software as a Service through four different social media channels which are Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter – in these channels the company is already existing and present – Instagram will be the newest addition where to promote their product and raise its brand awareness in order to target already existing customers and to reach new potential customers.

4.1   Establishing the Key Selling Points for the SaaS of EAS

European Union set new regulations which modernised EU e-commerce cross-border trade regulations, starting the 1st of July 2021 (European Commission 2021) for e-commerce VAT and customs compliance which affect that no shipments can be loaded for Europe without automated data gathering and transfer. A Finnish start-up EAS have created solution for e-commerce companies which is blockchain-based automation for VAT and customs compliance. This automation provides the perfect and easy tool for all the e-commerce companies in EU to report their VAT and customs compliance in real-time – this Software as a Service (SaaS) of EAS is called CRCD, and it can report millions of parcels every day. This SaaS connects the whole delivery chain automatically since it allows to define roles for input and output for all parties in delivery chain. (EAS 2022.)

Other benefits of CRCD are that all required data is timely available, and the end-customer does not need to do anything extra to receive the purchased item/items from e-commerce withing EU. It means also that the end-customers won't need to do the importing of the goods by themselves. This automation requires less manual work and actual parcel storage since all the VAT and customs compliance will be done at the moment the customer makes the purchases – the parcels won't be sitting in the storage waiting for the paperwork to be done. The CRCD of EAS provides reviewed and proven data source, and the automation also conceals personal data – companies do not need to worry about GDPR. The automation also secures fiscal and IOSS number which are valuable details when importing goods from other country to another. (EAS 2022.)

Overall, CRCD of EAS makes the VAT and customs compliance for e-commerce companies easy and stress-free – since everything in this automation is automated which means that the companies do not need to hire any extra labour to make the VAT and customs compliance manually. That would require loads of paperwork, time, and money – it would be way too costly – EAS has prepared the perfect solution for any e-commerce company.

4.2 Identifying Online Buyer Persona for the SaaS of EAS

This chapter goes through project task 2, the process of identifying online buyer persona for the SaaS of the case company EAS. Finland based SaaS company EAS has created their blockchain based automation for VAT and customs compliance which helps and connects e-commerce companies with logistics companies, postal operators, and customs authorities to a single end-to-end data platform as in other words; it is the universal messaging system for customs data (EAS 2021).

Currently EAS is using several ways to reach and contact new customers for their Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) – email marketing, social media marketing, Google advertising and search engine optimization (SEO). In B2B marketing buyer personas are needed as well like mentioned in the second chapter – they are the key to make better targeting for the social media marketing. The main customers for SaaS of EAS are e-commerce companies – there are three different kind of e-commerce websites which are individual brand website, where certain one brand is selling its own brand products. Online retailers refer to a website where online retailer is selling products from different brands it has selected and online retailer owns the products which it is selling. Marketplaces consider a website which is bringing together different sellers selling different brands, marketplace itself does not own the products since the products come from different sellers or from different boutiques like in Farfetch. In table 2 these different e-commerce websites (Whitfield 2022) are introduced with examples as well as in which social media platforms they are influencing. Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter are also the chosen social media platforms for EAS to raise their brand awareness.

Table 2. B2B customer types and targeted social media channels

B2B Customers	Example	Social Media Platform
Individual Brand Website (one seller)	Adidas	Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter
Online Retailers (a select number of sellers)	Zalando	Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter
Marketplaces (multiple sellers)	Farfetch	Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter

In figure 8 there is a buyer persona created for SaaS of EAS – the potential B2B target is a sales manager or an e-commerce manager who is responsible for the sales performance of e-commerce platforms. The new, changed EU regulations on VAT and customs compliance reporting has its impact on the performance of the e-commerce companies – if they do not do the reporting properly, the customers won't receive their parcels (orders) if the seller company has not filled proper VAT and customs reporting for the customs.

Emma Ecommerce

Innovative | Analytical | Thinker | Pedantic

Goals
- Drive the sales performance of the e-commerce platform
- Solve problems with new VAT and customs reporting
- Make end customers happy!

Frustrations
- New EU regulations on VAT and customs compliance
- Possible bugs on e-commerce website
- Make orders easy, simple and stress-free for end customers

Age: 36
Work: Sales Manager
Location: Berlin, Germany
Character: Innovative problem-solver

Bio
Emma works as a Sales Manager in an e-commerce company which is selling clothes and accessories - and these latest EU regulations on VAT and customs compliance have been stressful for her. There are so many parcels they are sending from their warehouse every day to customers in the EU area. She has been trying to find solutions on how to solve VAT reporting when there are so many parcels every day - if only there would be an automated tool for that!

Personality
Introvert — Extrovert
Thinking — Feeling
Sensing — Intuition
Judging — Perceiving

Motivation
Incentive
Fear
Growth
Power
Social

Brands & Influencers
HubSpot, Instagram, Twitter

Preferred Channels
Traditional Ads
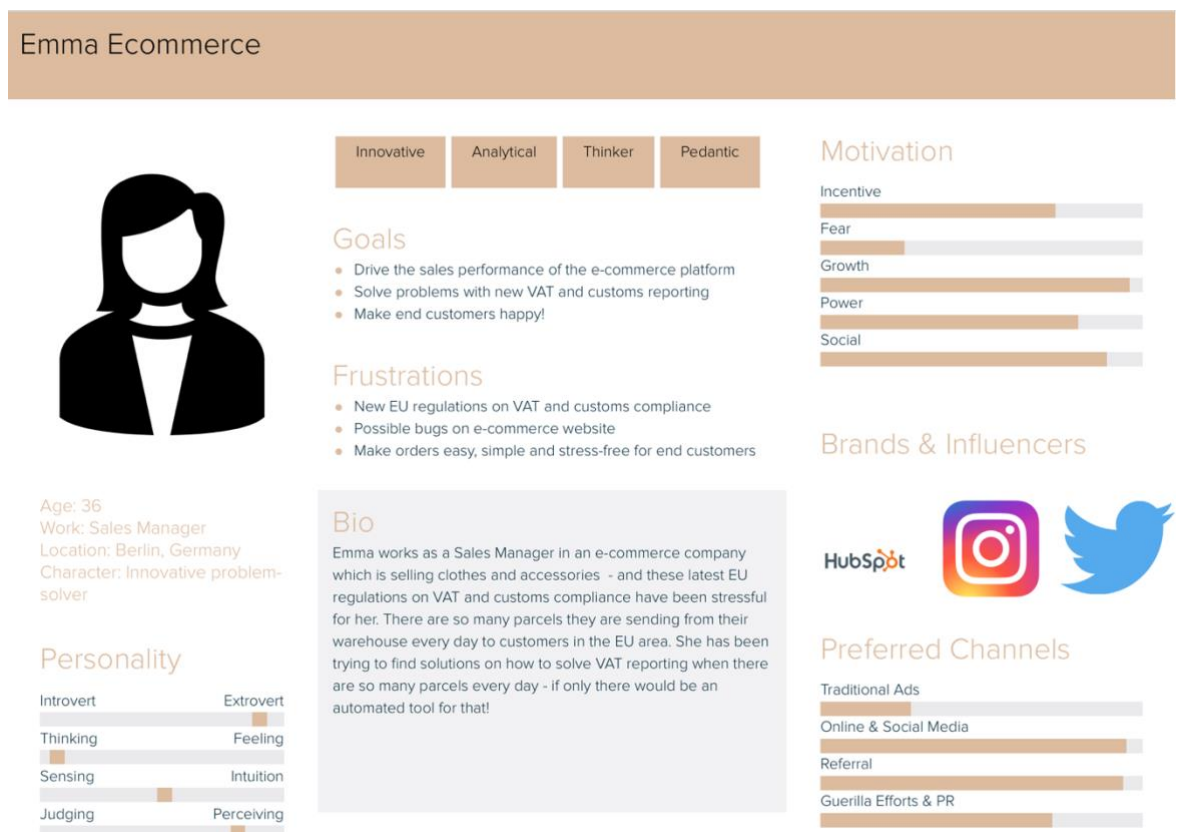Online & Social Media
Referral
Guerilla Efforts & PR

Figure 8. Buyer persona for SaaS of EAS

Preferred channels for the buyer persona are social media including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn – email marketing is also a key tool, for example

HubSpot. Referral has big impact for the persona – it lowers the bar to get a meeting with other companies when someone they know have recommended that company. Traditional PR and guerrilla marketing might also affect to the decision-making progress. This buyer persona is motivated by business growth opportunities, and by tools that make their job easier and running more smoothly. Political and legal influences can influence buyer persona's buying behavior because when EU changed law and regulations on VAT and customs compliance on the 1st of July 2021, it affected directly to even international e-commerce business.

4.3   Drafting the Social Media Marketing Plan

After finishing the theoretical framework for the thesis, the author focused on creating the social media marketing plan with the help of the theory part and the identified buyer persona for the SaaS of EAS and the key selling points for it. Drafting of the social media marketing plan started by analyzing the current situation of the social media channels of EAS – Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. After identifying that the content and messages in the company's social media channel are identical, the author focused on creating different content for each channel. Currently, the content relies on the company's blog, which links to each post. For example, the Instagram page will be launched as a new social media channel because many companies working in fashion and accessories in e-commerce are very present there – it is possible to catch a different kind of attention there. Twitter and LinkedIn are enormous social media channels amongst companies and brands, and that is the reason why it is vital for EAS to stay relevant in those same channels. Facebook still has many active B2B users and there lays still many possibilities to raise brand awareness for EAS.

The main message in social media marketing through all social media channels is the fact that SaaS of EAS makes e-commerce companies lives easier and gives them more time to focus on other relevant things - leaving VAT and customs compliance to be handled by SaaS. Idea for the slogan EAS could use is: EAS - making your VAT and customs compliance stress-free.

The next step for the author was to start drafting and visualizing the content, which would be ideal for each social media channel. The author also analyzed what some of the competitors of EAS are doing: what seems to engage the audience and what could be the new things to try in the social media channels of EAS. For Instagram, it was clear to create some more playful and witty content because Instagram is a more open channel

compared to LinkedIn and Twitter. On Instagram, the content also reflects the feelings the end-customers might have regarding filling VAT and customs compliance by themselves – since some e-commerce stores are responsible for the end-customers.

A similar style compared to Instagram will be used for Facebook as well. Besides witty style on Facebook, blog posts can be added on Facebook. In Facebook, the content aims to present the problem e-commerce managers might have regarding the changed EU VAT and customs compliance and to solve the problem - pointing out the benefits that using the SaaS of EAS has. However, in this social media channel, there are also more of a consultant and professional kind of posts introducing the key elements of the product (CRCD blockchain) and links to the blog articles of EAS.

LinkedIn is used the most among business professionals around all industries. That is why it is an excellent channel to create content with professional and consultant kinds of touch. This same channel is ideal for holding webinars handling different subjects related to changed VAT and customs compliance, its effects on global e-commerce, and directing the importance of using automated VAT tools instead of manually filling out all the paperwork. EAS should test posting on more graphical posts, including explicit photos and even some slogans to catch the target audience's attention fast. A similar professional and consultant style used on LinkedIn will be used for Twitter as well. Ideal content for B2B Twitter gives value to the target audience - it aims to solve something they are struggling with. EAS should keep that professional consultant touch they have in their Twitter presence, but instead of only sharing blog posts, they could post shorter posts with pictures that would easily catch the attention.

Paid advertising is used for each post to gain as much visibility as possible between Q3/2022 and Q2/2023. If the aim is to promote an offer, more money will be put on the posts when the objective is to do a more extensive post on some campaign/offer. The goal of EAS with their new social media marketing plan is to get concrete new customers for their SaaS. That is why paid advertising should be used heavily to target as many potential customers as possible through social media channels. Influencer marketing also plays one of the critical roles in the new social media marketing plan for EAS - depending on the social media and target customers, different kinds of influencers are used in different platforms. EAS will use influencers with more enormous follower rate and micro-influencers to attract different kind of target groups. On Instagram the aim is to use business professionals who focus on e-commerce as well as some fashion influencers who could show the difference ordering from online store where a customer needs to fill

VAT by themselves versus online store which is using SaaS of EAS and where end-customer do not need to worry about doing VAT and customs compliance. At first EAS will focus on influencer marketing in other social media channels since in Facebook it is more difficult to get similar results as in other social media channels. In LinkedIn and Twitter, the aim is to use business professionals who focus on tech-content, blockchain, and B2B around e-commerce.

As mentioned in chapter 2.3.4 running effective social media marketing is everyday job – social media never sleeps, and it requires constant work: analyzing the data and adjusting it regarding the findings. It is vital to post regularly to each channel and automate the posts in advance. The author created social media marketing calendar for EAS to showcase primary campaigns, timetable for influencer marketing, and suggestions for Live Event timelines. This marketing calendar is not specified week by week, because it gives then some freedom for the social media marketing team of EAS to adjust and react to changing situations there might be when it is about start-up company. The author also recommends EAS to hire social media marketing agency who could focus entirely on that since currently only one person at EAS is handling social media marketing, or if the situation changes, they can also hire people for their own social media marketing department.

After the social media marketing plan was ready, the author sent the draft to EAS's sales director, Robert Ruutsalo, for feedback. The author and Ruutsalo had a meeting in person to go through the social media marketing plan and the feedback. Ruutsalo mentioned in his feedback that the social media marketing plan is well written, and its visual look is loyal to the style of EAS. In addition, he credited that the plan had utterly new insights and aspects that the company can use to its advantage in their social media channels. Furthermore, he mentioned that some of the content ideas are already in progress, but those are not public and published yet. Finally, he stated that the author's plan aligns with their ideas. Ruutsalo agreed with the author that VAT and taxes are not very media sexy topics, which makes it challenging to market them similarly as traditional consumer goods. In the end, Ruutsalo mentioned that they liked the video content ideas in the company, and they are launching their YouTube channel in the near future to market their product.

5   Conclusion

The purpose of this project-based thesis was to help the commissioning company EAS raise brand awareness of their SaaS effectively through social media marketing. The result of this thesis is a concrete social media marketing plan created for EAS, which focuses on the timeline between Q3/2022 and Q2/2023. This chapter focuses on key findings of the project and its outcomes and recommendations, and further development. The author also discusses the evaluation of project management and reflection on learning.

5.1   Key findings and Outcomes

This subchapter focuses on key findings and outcomes of the project-based thesis, reflecting on the theoretical framework and social media marketing plan made for EAS. Even though social media has been on the rise for several years already and lots of data can be found around the subject, EAS is working on a new field of business which has been here only for one year. The EU changed e-commerce cross-border trade regulations affecting VAT and customs compliance, and these regulations stepped into force last year, the 1st of July 2021.

The author focused on building the theoretical framework around B2B social media, in chapter 2.3., which is still not used as much as it should be – there is enormous potential. The other interesting fact is that there are more and more SaaS companies that work uniquely, and traditional social media marketing does not necessarily work for them. So new ideas and angles need to be invented to be creative on the best ways to reach the target audience and affect their feelings and buying behaviour. Being a new kind of business and when using social media marketing to raise brand awareness, it is crucial to monitor the data from social media channels constantly, as mentioned in chapter 2.3.4. Furthermore, to make needed moves to change things if something is not working and make the commissioning company reach its social media marketing goals.

One important aspect to bring out is that taxes and VAT are not very interesting topics for many people, making it challenging to come up with content that would change people's thinking towards taxes. Moreover, the SaaS of EAS might be difficult to understand, and many e-commerce companies do not even acknowledge the problems that those new EU regulations brought. So, this is one good reason that supports the fact that it is an excellent idea to use more graphic content and videos in the social media channels of EAS. To quickly explain what their product is about, how it solves the problems of

e-commerce, and why the product is unique!

An interesting finding was that even there are plenty of B2B, e-commerce, and blockchain influencers, they are not present on Instagram – or if they are, they are mainly posting about personal life and excluding work-related things. That is why the author decided that for Instagram, it would be ideal to use, of course, business influencers who focus on e-commerce and some fashion influencers. These fashion influencers could show the difference ordering from an online store where a customer needs to fill VAT by themselves versus an online store that uses SaaS of EAS and where end-customers do not need to worry about doing VAT and customs compliance. That would offer concrete examples of how SaaS of EAS is necessary for e-commerce companies to make their customers keep coming back and ordering because they know it is easy for them. There is no need to fill out difficult VAT papers manually.

Overall, EAS is working in a completely new kind of business territory. Nevertheless, unfortunately, there is not much literature in this area and not even a similar B2B social media aspect to compare what works and what does not when raising brand awareness through social media marketing. Because of this, not all similarly operating companies can use precisely the same content and social media marketing in their business, but they can get ideas and inspiration to mix and match it suitable for them. These things make it fascinating to investigate the best ways to promote and market SaaS companies even more in the future.

5.2   Recommendations and Further Development

The author recommends that the commissioning company uses an outsourced social media marketing agency or build its entirely own social media marketing department if possible. Currently, only one person is focusing on the company's social media marketing. However, once the company grows, it is not enough to have only one person focusing on everything alone.

Raising brand awareness of SaaS is still a relatively new thing, and the SaaS of EAS is a blockchain-based service that also gives a new aspect to it. There lies enormous unused potential in blockchain, and EAS uses it differently compared to cryptocurrency systems, like Bitcoin. There was not much data and information on how to market blockchain, which makes it a fascinating and completely new territory to explore and find ideas on how to raise brand awareness. Other development ideas would be to update the social media marketing plan in the future. Moreover, see how the social media marketing plan is

working: is it engaging more audience, bringing new customers in, and how to make it work better. The author could focus on analysing the success of this thesis's social media marketing plan in her future master's studies and developing the idea further.

5.3   Evaluation of Project Management and Reflection on Learning

Writing this thesis taught a lot for the author about raising brand awareness through social media marketing, especially in the eyes of B2B social media. She also learned new things about VAT and customs compliance and how the new EU regulations have affected e-commerce. Writing this thesis and preparing the social media marketing plan gave new insights and knowledge for the author, and those will be beneficial for the future, whether it is about future career or master studies. It was also interesting to see how start-up company works and see it building something in a new kind of business area. The author learned a lot from the contact person from EAS related to the new regulations and got a comprehensive understanding of how those regulations affect so many different things.

The author participated in a thesis planning course, which took place between September and October 2021. She started writing this thesis after the thesis planning course at the end of December 2021 and finished it beginning of March 2022. The author has been working full-time in a manager position besides writing the thesis. Therefore, it was all about planning a proper writing schedule to ensure she met all targets for this thesis. Unfortunately, there were some unwanted obstacles on the way: the author got a corona infection in January and was on sick leave for ten days. However, since the symptoms were mild, she could put effort into writing. And then she got the corona infection again with severe symptoms end of February and was on sick leave for eight days. It was the time when she was finishing this thesis with this very last chapter and checking everything is like it is supposed to be in the entire thesis. Even though these obstacles were there, she wrote everything she planned to write and handled her schedule well. She also met with her thesis advisor regularly and paid attention to all the advice she got.

Overall, the author enjoyed the whole thesis process, although it was not always easy. At first, it was challenging to narrow down on what to involve in the social media marketing plan, but after she started writing, everything fell in the right place. The author challenged herself to familiarize herself with a completely new business, and she knew nothing in advance about it. She gained valuable new knowledge she can use later on in her future.

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Appendix 1. Social Media Marketing Plan for the SaaS of EAS

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING PLAN FOR
Q3/2022 - Q2/2023

EAS

RAISING BRAND AWARENESS THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

ANU-MAARIT KOSKI

2022

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INTRODUCTION

Social media is constantly growing and evolving, and it can bring significant advantages for a company when it comes to increasing the brand awareness of a company. Social media can be utilized in many ways in a company and corporate communications. The company can personalize its messages and target them to the desired target group. With the help of social media, a company can increase its visibility and thus direct consumers to its website. As a result, the company can engage new potential customers. Through various channels, the company can also collect customer feedback and analyze and utilize it to develop communications. The company has an excellent opportunity to strengthen its brand and manage its media image through the social media channel. It is also vital to monitor what competitors are doing on different channels.

In this social media marketing plan, the focus areas will be creating and launching an Instagram page for EAS and refreshing and maintaining their current social media channels: Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. The focus areas in these social media channels will be content, paid advertising, influencer marketing, and other relevant tips on how to activate their audience and how to engage more potential customers to follow their social media channels.

This social media marketing plan includes different actions made between Q3/2022 – Q2/2023 - in one year. Furthermore, this social media plan is made so that it can be given to outsourced social media agency as well. From this social media plan, EAS can find ideas for content creation, social media campaigns, paid advertising, influencer marketing, and SEO, to name a few. In addition, global trends for B2B social media marketing have been included in this plan to help get ideas on which direction to go with EAS social media platforms.

EAS

EAS is a Nordic SaaS start-up which is based in Helsinki, Finland. The company was founded in 2020, and they have created blockchain-based automation for VAT and customs compliance. The Finnish government funds the company (EAS 2022.)

European Union set new regulations which modernised EU e-commerce cross-border trade regulations, starting the 1st of July 2021 (European Commission 2021) for e-commerce VAT and customs compliance which affect that no shipments can be loaded for Europe without automated data gathering and transfer. A Finnish start-up EAS has created a solution for e-commerce companies: blockchain-based automation for VAT and customs compliance. This automation provides the perfect and easy tool for all the e-commerce companies in the EU to report their VAT and customs compliance in real-time – the blockchain is called CRCD (Common Repository for Customs Data), and it connects online retailers, logistics companies, postal operators, and customs authorities to a single end-to-end data platform. Data collecting starts at the moment of purchase, when merchandise data, end-customer data and seller data is collected. The data is then transferred to the CRCD. The CRCD blockchain is one of the fastest blockchains running and can do more than 20.000 transactions per second which equals it can handle more than a billion orders every day (EAS 2022.)

The benefits of their product for e-merchants are that they can sell across the EU whether registered to EU, fully automated VAT reporting, instant customs clearance, access to multiple delivery solutions, full compliance with GDPR, reduces costs by their customers, increased end-customer satisfaction as well as easy to use and secure, modern blockchain technology (EAS 2022.) Other benefits of CRCD are that all required data is timely available, and the end-customer does not need to do anything extra to receive the purchased item/items from e-commerce within the EU. It also means that the end customers will not need to import the goods by themselves. This automation requires less manual work and actual parcel storage since all the VAT and customs compliance will be done at the moment the customer makes the purchases – the parcels will not be sitting in the storage waiting for the paperwork to be done. The CRCD of EAS provides reviewed and proven data sources, and the automation also conceals personal data – companies do not need to worry about GDPR. The automation also secures fiscal and IOSS numbers, which are valuable details when importing goods from another country to another. (EAS 2022).

Overall, CRCD of EAS makes the VAT and customs compliance for e-commerce companies easy and stress-free – since everything in this automation is automated, which means that the companies do not need to hire any extra labour to make the VAT and customs compliance manually. That would require loads of paperwork, time, and money – it would be way too costly – EAS has prepared the perfect solution for any e-commerce company.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

The current social media channels and networks where EAS is present are Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. Currently, these channels are handled by one person. Two different analytical tools are measuring brand awareness. At the moment, EAS shares precisely identical posts to each channel, and those posts mostly lead to the blog of EAS, where they have longer articles about the topic they have posted. Monitoring the traffic, followers and likes is not done at the moment. Activeness to react to other companies and/or people's posts is not done regularly.

FACEBOOK

EAS has joined Facebook the 26th of December 2020. Currently they have 16 people who like their page, and 15 people are following it. The company is posting approximately once a week, sometimes every two weeks. In January 2022, the company has been more active with posting articles which lead to their own blog. At the moment their average amount of likes per post is 2,5 persons. This average was calculated from the post between 26th of December 2020 and 25th of January 2022 when they had in total 19 posts. Paid advertising is used in some posts.
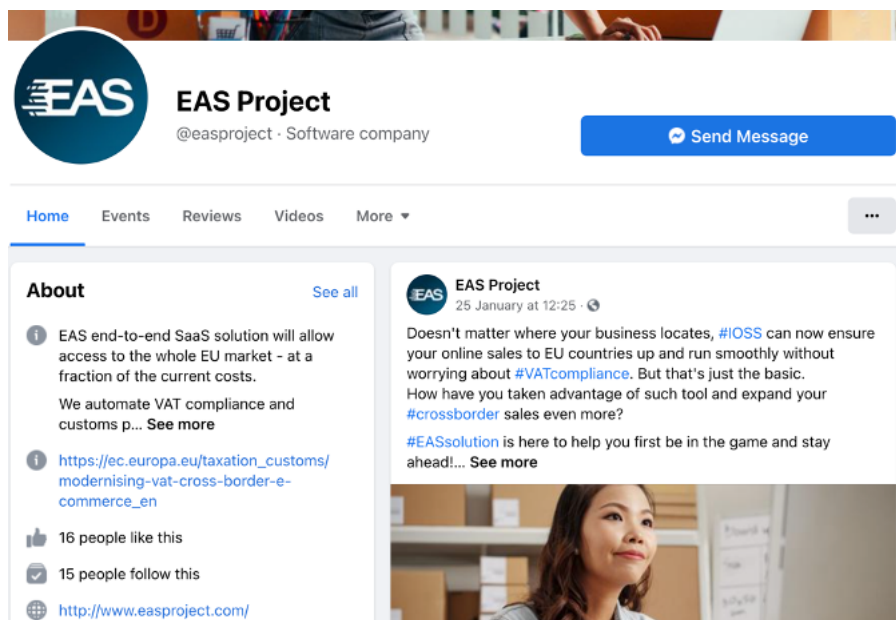

Figure 1. Facebook page of EAS

Table 1. Most used hashtags in the social media channels of

Hashtags
#EUVAT
#EASsolution
#EcommerceTips
#TaxCompliance
#VATcompliance

Above in table 1 are the most used hashtags EAS is using currently. These hashtags are specific and relevant for the SaaS - the same ones will be kept and used in the future as well.

LINKEDIN

EAS joined LinkedIn in the end of 2020. In LinkedIn they have currently 139 followers. Paid advertising is used the most in LinkedIn.
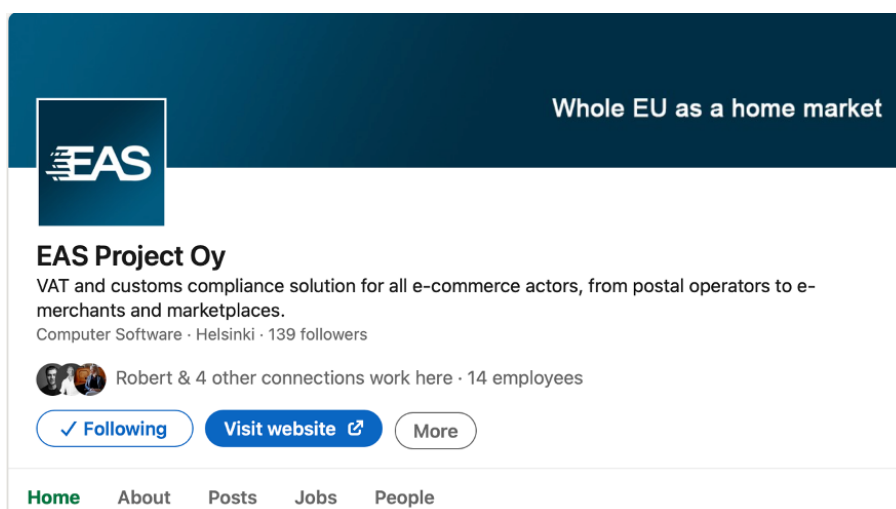

Figure 2. LinkedIn profile of EAS and the amount of followers

In LinkedIn the company has the most followers – and it's also natural considering EAS is B2B company. LinkedIn connects millions of companies and people behind them with each other's. Between May 2021 and February 2022, they have posted 20 different posts, and the average amount of likes are 10.8 – it is clearly higher compared to Facebook. Same hashtags are being used also in LinkedIn since the posts and the content is same.

TWITTER

EAS joined Twitter in October 2020, and currently they have 1 follower. The company itself is following 8 people/companies. Like mentioned earlier the content and posts are same as in Facebook and in LinkedIn.

Figure 3. EAS information and amount of
followers on Twitter

In general, the current content includes professional and consulting type of posts and articles. In the following chapters, there are presented different kind of content to mix with the professional touch.

GLOBAL TRENDS IN B2B SOCIAL MEDIA IN 2022

Social media is evolving constantly, and the trends are changing. A company cannot do same content year after year – there has to be development – creating engaging social media content requires continuous work and analysing the data coming from the channels.

VIDEO CONTENT

Creating more video content was already popular in 2021, and it is not stopping there. Posting videos makes your social media channels more vivid, and it can also be more interesting and catch more attention, since people do not want to read, or they just simply do not have time to read long articles. Videos should not be too long, and they should tell the major message pithily – the link to article or blog can be added to the post though to give extra value and details. HubSpot conducted a survey through which they found out that 33% of marketers are planning to invest more money in short-form videos than to any other strategy in 2022. (Leighton 2022.)

PERSONALIZATION

The big trend is to communicate and connect with your audience instead of pure selling – it will engage your audience more, and in this way most likely to turn them into your customers. It is important to remember that there are always people behind the company you are trying to sell to – creating buyer persona is extremely helpful to humanize your B2B target audience (Leighton 2022.)

PAID ADVERTISING

Organic reach is always good, but it does not harm to boost the visibility with paid advertising. With paid advertising you can reach thousands of potential customers instead of only few. Today paid advertising has been made easier – you can choose which area you can focus on, age of the people, and even more demographics. (Leighton 2022.)

USER EXPERIENCE

User experience should never be underestimated – people seem to be very busy in today's business world, if some site won't run smoothly, they will skip to the next one which might be your competitor. Especially in Facebook, you can have quite many different buttons, and information on your site – but it is good to remember that it should look easy to access, clear in a way that people do not need to scroll back and forward to find what they want. (Snell Media 2022).

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO)

SEO is extremely important since it helps to lead more visitors to company's landing page through organic search by consumers and possible customers. When doing effective SEO, the key thing is to remember to target your key words well and use them across all the social media channels. (Snell Media 2022.)

CONTENT

Content is always the key to everything – if it is engaging and interesting and brings something new to customers, it will lure more followers and can also boost your sales. As mentioned earlier, creating video content besides of posting photos is on the rise. It is major new area to conquer! (Snell Media 2022.)

SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

Creating social media strategy is essential to reach the goals of raising brand awareness through social media. This social media plan includes different actions to be made between Q3/2022 – Q2/2023.

OBJECTIVES OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA PLAN

Main objective is to raise brand awareness for SaaS of EAS through social media which includes increased number followers on social media channels including Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. Target is also to get more new customers from different social media campaigns.

Aim is to

* Gain +500 new followers on LinkedIn

* Gain +200 new followers on Facebook

* Gain +200 new followers on Twitter

* Launch Instagram page and gain +300 followers during the first year

* Get +20 new paying customers for the SaaS between Q3/2022 - Q3/2023

BUDGET

Depending on the available funding EAS has, the budget for social media per month is 200 euros to 1000 euros.

BUYER PERSONA

In figure 4 there is a buyer persona created for SaaS of EAS – the potential B2B target is a sales manager or an e-commerce manager who is responsible for the sales performance of e-commerce platforms. Preferred channels for the buyer persona are
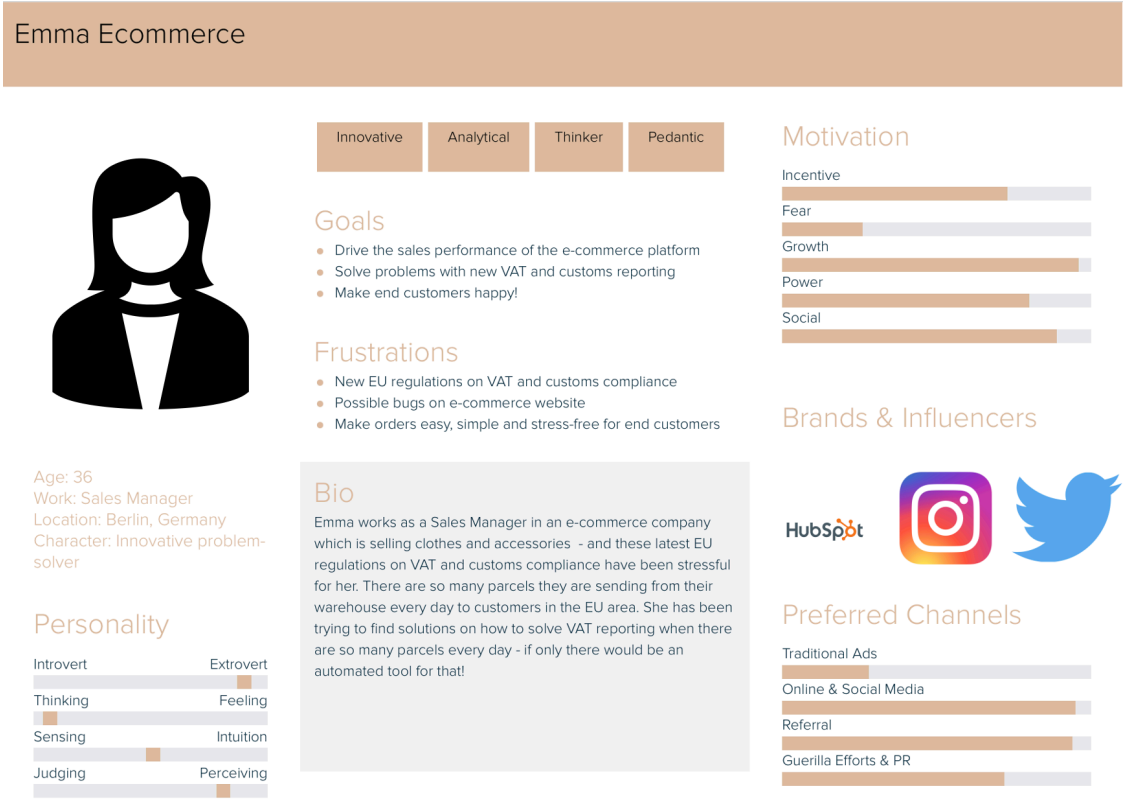
Figure 4. Buyer persona for SaaS of EAS

social media including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn – email marketing is also a key tool, for example HubSpot. Referral has big impact for the persona – it lowers the bar to get a meeting with other companies when someone they know have recommended that company. Traditional PR and guerrilla marketing might also affect to the decision-making progress. This buyer persona is motivated by business growth opportunities, and by tools that make their job easier and running more smoothly. Political and legal influences can influence buyer persona's buying behavior because when EU changed law and regulations on VAT and customs compliance on the 1st of July 2021, it affected directly to even international e-commerce business. Buyer persona helps to humanise the target B2B company and people behind it - it is easier to target the social media marketing with help of it.

CAMPAIGNS

✳ Try our solution for free the first two months!

✳ Get -20 % discount for the first 3 months!

SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

The chosen social media channels to focus on are same as now, and in addition Instagram account will be launched as a new channel.

INSTAGRAM MARKETING

Instagram account will be launched for EAS to support the other social media channels and target more potential customers and raise the brand awareness of its SaaS. In Instagram, it might be easier to reach out the potential e-commerce companies - many marketplaces and online stores focusing on clothes and accessories are very present there.

CONTENT

The content and tone-of-voice for Instagram can be more playful and witty compared to LinkedIn and Twitter. The texts on the posts do not need to be too long to catch the attention of followers and new potential customers quicker. For Instagram ideal amount of posts are three times per week - for example on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Instagram Stories can be uploaded more often.

"I LOVE doing VAT and customs compliance..."
said no one ever - let us at EAS do it for you!

We have created automated solution which handles everything - you can focus on other things, just cross anything related to VAT from your list!

#EASsolution #VATcompliance #EUVAT #EcommerceTips

"Honey, I found online store which does all this VAT stuff for us! Now we can order stuff stress-freely - the best day ever!"

With EAS solution for VAT compliance your customers will be happy and keep ordering more from your online store! No need to make your customers to do all the work with VAT compliance.

#EASsolution #VATcompliance #EUVAT #EcommercerTips

Besides of regular posts and Instagram Stories, it is great idea to throw some Live Streams as well - for example to tell about the company and it's product and tell how the solution helps the e-commerce companies.

FACEBOOK MARKETING

It is easier to start developing content, advertising, and marketing for EAS with an already existing Facebook page. For Facebook, the same playful and witty tone-of-voice can be maintained as for Instagram. Moreover, on Facebook, it gives extra value to link the related articles from the blog of EAS to the posts.

CONTENT

Content will be posted with similar timetable as for Instagram which is three times per week - as it is possible to link Instagram account to Facebook account, some same posts can be uploaded at the same time to both Instagram and Facebook.

Are you struggling to complete VAT and customs compliance for the orders of your customers? Feels like never ending mission?

We can help you with that with our automated VAT and customs tool! Book a time from the link below, and let's sort out your issues!

https://meetings.hubspot.com/robert662/30-min-demo

Always happy to help - yours truly,
EAS

The content aims to solve the problems that their potential customers have - these problems are introduced in the posts along with the solutions to catch attention.

Almost empty harbour with less and less containers waiting to be shipped because of non-filled VAT and customs compliance. Do you want your e-commerce to face this sad view?

We didn't think so. Give us a call, and let's make your e-commerce bloom and the business flow smoothly without worrying about VAT and customs issues. Our blockchain based automation tool does the magic for your VAT and customs issues!

Content also includes more severe scenarios, like mentioned above, of the future of e-commerce which could occur if companies are not going to find an automated tool to do their VAT and customs compliance for the customers' orders. Someone managing the sales of e-commerce would stop and read through a post like that! In Facebook, it is possible to play around with the words in a witty style. However, in this social media channel, there are also more of a consultant and professional kind of posts introducing the key elements of the product (CRCD blockchain) and links to the blog articles of EAS.

LINKEDIN MARKETING

LinkedIn is a significant social network, also considered a social media channel, in the B2B sector. As mentioned earlier, EAS has 139 followers, more than they have in any other channel. In LinkedIn, it has been made easy to connect with potential customers via direct messages.

CONTENT

The current content EAS has on their LinkedIn page fits for the style of having a more professional and consultant kind of touch in the posts. At times the ideas and style from Instagram and Facebook can be used on LinkedIn as well. In LinkedIn, it will be a great idea to use different graphics as well to show, for example, how long it takes for a person to do VAT and customs compliance manually versus the CRCD of EAS. At times people are just scrolling through their front page, and some easy-to-understand pictures can be the key to getting people's attention. Those pictures can and should always include some analytical information because facts and numbers are essential for the target audience - potential customers - EAS wants to reach with their new social media plan.
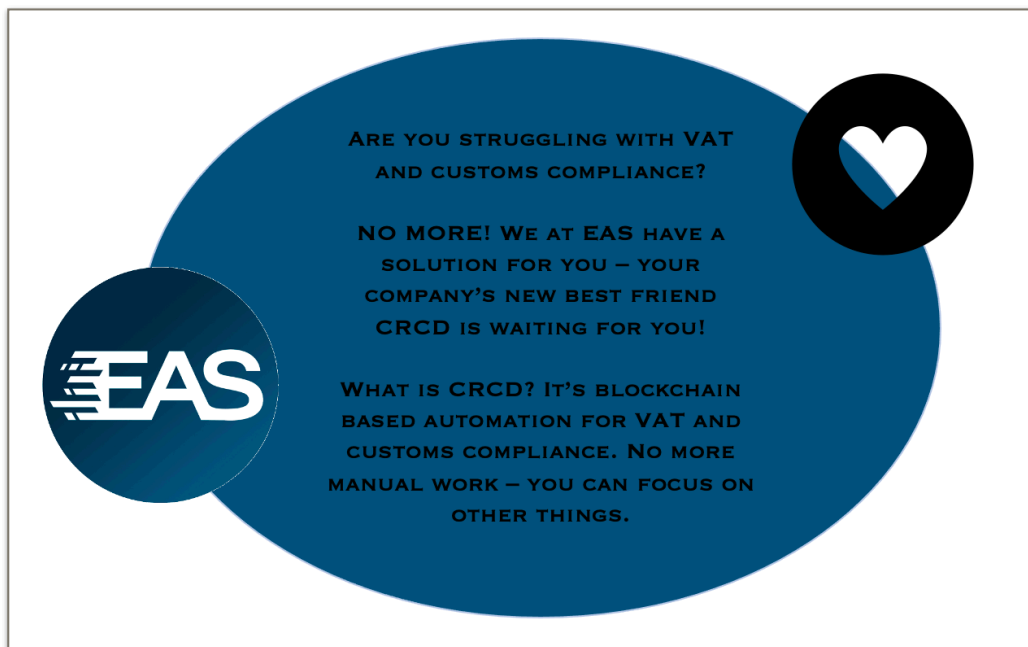
Idea for a more graphic LinkedIn post.

When comparing what competitors are doing on their social media channels, and especially on LinkedIn - graphic posts were very popular, also videos, and different question poles.

LinkedIn is a great platform to hold webinars for existing customers but also for new potential customers! Instead of webinars, it is an excellent idea to film some material to post in there. These videos can be more informative about how new regulations affect e-commerce business, describing the benefits of using EAS and even showing how to use the tool.

TWITTER MARKETING

Ideal content for B2B Twitter gives value to the target audience - it aims to solve something they are struggling with. EAS should keep that professional consultant touch they have in their Twitter presence, but instead of only sharing blog posts, they could post shorter things with pictures that would easily catch the attention. Below there are some content ideas for this kind of style.

Content idea for Twitter to bring out the problem e-commerce managers might have, and give a solution for them!

Another excellent idea for Twitter is to hold Live Events - it is an excellent way to create some buzz and show the company's expertise! There can be special guests in the Live Events - for example, companies using the automation of EAS to tell how it changed their business running smoother.

PAID ADVERTISING

Paid advertising will be used for each post to reach more potential customers and followers in general. The mentioned amount of 200-1000 euros will be shared relatively equally between used social media channels. More money will be put on the posts when the aim is to do a more extensive post on some campaign/offer.

INFLUENCER MARKETING

Influencer marketing will be used as well to raise brand awareness - there will be bigger influencers as well as micro-influencers included in the plan. Proposals and ideas for the perfect influencers on Instagram are tech-savvy and persons who are interested in blockchain, e-commerce, and B2B. To catch the attention of certain marketplaces, it is a good idea to use also so called fashion influencers that those marketplaces follow actively to get the point of view as a customer when ordering from online stores and if they should fill the VAT compliance - not so much fun for the customers!

✳ **Facebook:** At first EAS will focus on influencer marketing in other social media channels since in Facebook it is more difficult to get similar results as in other social media channels.

✳ **Instagram:** Business professionals who focus on e-commerce as well as some fashion influencers who could show the difference ordering from online store where a customer needs to fill VAT by themselves versus online store which is using SaaS of EAS and where end-customer do not need to worry about doing VAT and customs compliance.

✳ **LinkedIn:** Business professionals who focus on tech-content, blockchain, and B2B around e-commerce.

✳ **Twitter:** Business professionals who focus on tech-content, blockchain, and B2B around e-commerce.

COMMUNICATING THE KEY SELLING POINT

The main message in social media marketing through all social media channels is the fact that SaaS of EAS makes e-commerce companies lives easier and gives them more time to focus on other relevant things - leaving VAT and customs compliance to be handled by SaaS. Idea for the slogan EAS could use is: EAS - making your VAT and customs compliance stress-free.

RELEVANT TIPS FOR ALL SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

It is important to remember that being present on social media does not mean only posting posts. It is crucial to create a conversation with the company's audience by, for example, asking questions in their posts and/or in stories - encouraging them to join the conversation. When running effective social media, it is also required to like, comment and share other people's and brands posts - be active!

EAS is known for its blue colours - and it should be used all over social media, so people when immediately think of EAS when they see those specific colours. People react to logos and colours a lot - for example, if a company just show specific red and blue colours to people, they will probably think of Pepsi. Do not underestimate the power of colours!

MARKETING CALENDAR

Marketing calendar includes estimated timetable for campaigns, influencer marketing, paid advertising, and Live Events. From calendar it is possible to see the amount of influencers which are used, and how often different Live Events are being held. SEO needs constant analysing and development so that EAS appears high in results when people search for the words linked to the business area of EAS.

Social Media Marketing Calendar Q3/2022 - Q2/2023

Channel		Q3/2022			Q4/2022			Q1/2023			Q2/2023		
		July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June
Facebook	Campaign	Try for free the first two months!			Get -20 % discount the first three months!			Try for free the first two months!			Get -20 % discount the first three months!		
	Influencer Marketing	None			None			None			None		
	Paid Advertising	Yes			Yes			Yes			Yes		
	Live Event	Once a mont			Once a month			Once a month			Once a month		
Instagram	Campaign	Try for free the first two months!			Get -20 % discount the first three months!			Try for free the first two months!			Get -20 % discount the first three months!		
	Influencer Marketing	Two influencers			None			One influencer			None		
	Paid Advertising	Yes			Yes			Yes			Yes		
	Live Event	Every second week			Every second week			Every second week			Every second week		
LinkedIn	Campaign	Try for free the first two months!			Get -20 % discount the first three months!			Try for free the first two months!			Get -20 % discount the first three months!		
	Influencer Marketing	None			Two influencers			None			Two influencers		
	Paid Advertising	Yes			Yes			Yes			Yes		
	Live Event	One event per month			Two events per month			One event per month			Two events per month		
Twitter	Campaign	Try for free the first two months!			Get -20 % discount the first three months!			Try for free the first two months!			Get -20 % discount the first three months!		
	Influencer Marketing	One influncer			None			Two influencers			None		
	Paid Advertising	Yes			Yes			Yes			Yes		
	Live Event	Once a month			Once a month			Once a month			Once a month		

Social media marketing calendar for EAS between Q3/20222- Q2/2023

FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Since it is about start-up, where are many other things to be focused on, it is good to outsource social media channels to a social media marketing agency. This social media marketing plan can be given to **an outsourced social media marketing agency** to get information about EAS as a company and their product. This social media marketing plan includes content ideas for four different social media channels - Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter. This plan also has considered paid advertising, SEO, influencer marketing, the marketing calendar, and other relevant tips.

MEASURING BRAND AWARENESS

Brand awareness can be measured with different things - for EAS, the following ways are explained below.

✳ Sales/ROI can be measured with different programmes, such as Hootsuite, Buffer, Facebook Insights, and Google Analytics.

✳ Email signups can be tracked, and ideal clients can be measured by Google Analytics and the number of times users click links, for example, the email button located in each social media channel of EAS.

✳ Private messages will be measured by organic measuring.

✳ Likes and shares of posts can measure engagements, audience growth, rate of followers, followers versus the following ratio, active fans, organic versus paid results, clicks per post, audience demographics, and mentions within the audience.

✳ Comments will be measured by volume and engagement level.

✳ Create a survey for EAS target audience - set a precise aim whether EAS wants to measure brand recognition or brand recall or test how well the target audience knows what the product of EAS is and how it is helping them.

Many things affect brand awareness, so the measuring needs to have different aspects and not just one tool for analysing all the data. In addition, analysing data requires constant work to do the needed improvements and changes in the social media marketing plan if something does not work.

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