



Digital Marketing Plan: Aseanic Trading Oy

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The motivation behind this thesis stems from the commissioning company's current situation and digital marketing landscape. The primary focus is on developing a digital marketing plan for the company, as their existing digital marketing efforts are almost non-existent. This will mark the company's inaugural digital marketing plan.

The objective of this product-based thesis is to improve the commissioning company's digital marketing actions and activities and create an effective digital marketing plan taking all the parts that need to be considered and the company's business to business (B2B) nature.

The intended audience for the digital marketing strategy is business-to-business clientele located in Finland. The main emphasis of the strategy focus in the channel selection for digital marketing, aiming to determine the most effective combination of digital channels for the target group, content types, and messaging.

The theoretical framework will explain the different concepts related to the digital marketing methods, social media marketing, search engines. As it is very important to understand the definition of the terms. The SOSTAC® planning model will be studied and use it to create the structure of the plan.

The outcome of the thesis is a digital marketing plan that provides a guide for the company to enhance their digital marketing efforts towards business-to-business audiences within their industry.

The end of the thesis plan consists of recommended actions to be taken in the initial phase and additional steps that can be executed in the subsequent phase.

Keywords

Marketing, FoodService, B2B marketing, digital marketing, digital media, strategies, search engines marketing, social media marketing

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1 Introduction

This is a product-based type of a bachelor's thesis for the Degree Programme in International business in the major specialization of marketing, in the Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences.

The strategy designed by the author will be implemented focusing on digital marketing although it needs some customization, meaning that place must be reconsidered as a digital channel because there is no physical place for digital marketing. As the commissioning company doesn't have an existing Digital marketing the author is planning to design and present it to the company and as they agree, will be implemented to the company

The objective of creating a digital marketing plan for the commissioning company is to help them to improve their digital marketing actions, analyzing the modern techniques of digital marketing and how these are affected by different cultures

The commissioning company, Aseanic Trading Oy is based in Helsinki since in 1994 and the main business is to import Asian and Latin American goods for wholesale and retail and generates \$12.17 million in sales (USD). The company not only works on providing delivery services to restaurants and supermarkets around Finland but also to private consumers in the physical and online shop

1.1 Thesis background

The following thesis plan will include a brief explanation of the different concepts and theories of digital marketing used in the thesis. The methods used for gathering the data and the structure of the thesis plan.

The focus of the thesis is creating an effective digital marketing plan taking into consideration all the parts needed when creating it and the company's business to business (B2B) nature.

Digital marketing is fundamental to have in every business, an opportunity as it is an asset for the business's growth, as it is the fastest-growing form of marketing owing to its high reach, visibility, and measurability of results. The scope of digital marketing is very vast. As per digital marketing statistics, according to IIDE (2022), about 60% of the population of the world uses the internet. It raised by 20% during the past two years due to the pandemic as many businesses were going online.

1.2 Project objective

The objective of this thesis is to get a deeper understanding of the topic, analyze the modern techniques of digital marketing and how these are affected by different cultures and put into practice the findings.

As this will be the first digital marketing plan for the case company, the author is aiming to design a creative digital marketing plan for the company. The outcome of this thesis is to increase the brand awareness, maintain the relationship with existing customers, gain and bring in new ones, as well as increase company 'sales revenue.

The project objective PO for the thesis is **to create a digital marketing plan for Aseanic Trading Oy.**

The purpose of the project tasks is to provide a clear understanding of what the thesis research is aiming for as well as defining what the author is trying to find to.

Some of the project tasks (PTs) for the thesis are:

PT 1. Preparing the theoretical framework

PT 2. Analysing the company's and competitor's current digital marketing activities, and future. DM budget available of the commissioning company.

PT 3. PEST environment and market available in Food industry in Finland

PT 4. Preparing the DM plan incl. customer acquisition through DM and (KPIs for measuring performance) to B2B and presenting it to company management.

PT 5. Evaluating project management process and project outcome. As well as the feedback received from the company and own learning outcomes

Table 1. Overlay matrix

Project task	Theoretical Framework	Project Management Methods	Outcomes
T 1. Preparing and designing the theoretical framework	Digital marketing theories: social media marketing, search engines	Desktop study, E-books, and literature review.	Theoretical Framework
PT 2. Analysis of the company's and competitor's current digital marketing activities, and future	Marketing data provided by the company or online and DM budget available of the commissioning company	Desktop study (theory books, e-books, online sources, company's interview, and internal sources.	Understanding of the current DM situation.
PT 3. PEST environment and market available in Food industry in Finland	Online, analysis of the food industry in Finland	Desktop study, B2B market analysis	Market analysis
PT 4. Preparing the DM plan and presenting it to company management.	Use the information gathered from PT1-PT 3.	Desktop study, literature review, and project management methods used for PT 1 – PT 3	Digital marketing plan
PT 5. Evaluation and feedback received from the company	Evaluating the project management process and project outcome. As well as the feedback received from the company and own learning outcome	Feedback	Possible improvements, corrections.

1.3 Project Scope

The project scope of this thesis plan is to deeply analyse the company's current digital marketing situation and create a plan as their current digital marketing is close to non-existing. The author is aiming to focus on low budget marketing options and increase the company's sales revenue.

The result of the study is to show the company the importance of digital marketing and how they can improve the company's revenue by implementing modern techniques into their DM plan.

The author has agreed with the commissioning company to create the digital marketing plan. The implementation of this plan is not included by the author, even if the author works in the commissioning company, the company can decide itself when to implement it and whether make changes based on the market and suggestions and can use this marketing plan in future as well

1.4 Benefits

This study will benefit the commissioning company and partners as they do not have a marketing plan and their marketing activities are very few. By implementing this plan, it should address the company's problems, increasing its profits by creating more sales, bringing new customers in and decrease expenses by using digital marketing.

Creating this project will benefit the author to improve academic writing skills and digital marketing knowledge, by this means on knowing how to create a digital marketing plan that can be effective for the case company. For the author, working inside the case company, allow to have full access to information, analyse its competition, find the modern techniques of digital marketing, and create a successful plan to apply the findings.

By understanding all the factors of digital marketing and social media and all the current trending topics that are applied in the marketing plan to the case company, the author can also apply those in related workplaces in future.

In the other hand, this study will educate the reader by understanding the different concepts and theories of digital marketing.

1.5 Risks and Risk Management

The first and biggest risk is from the author's side in terms of time management as the author is working full time and might face some issues that has to be controlled to finalize the thesis as planned.

The second risk is related to the digital marketing plan itself after being implemented, due to the consumer preferences and the digital marketing trends that are changing fastly enough.

The commissioning company might face some risks as well, including competitive risks, or reputational risks. The author needs to plan wisely in terms of budget and show stakeholders that the risks are considered by creating a realistic digital marketing plan. Market demand is unpredictable as consumer trends can change rapidly, creating problems for this branch of business

1.6 Key Concepts

Marketing is a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they want and need through creating and exchanging products and value with others (Kotler et al 1999.)

Digital marketing involves utilizing various digital communication platforms, such as the internet, to promote brands and establish connections with potential customers. This encompasses a wide range of strategies, including email marketing, social media engagement, web-based advertising, as well as text and multimedia messaging, all serving as channels for marketing efforts. (Mailchimp 2022.)

Food Service Distributor play a crucial role as intermediaries bridging the gap between food manufacturers and food service operators. These operators typically include chefs, food service directors, food and beverage managers, and independent owners of food preparation businesses. The distributors handle the acquisition, storage, sale, and delivery of food products, providing food service operators with convenient access to a wide array of items from different manufacturers. Essentially, they facilitate the procurement and distribution process, ensuring that food service operators have a diverse selection of products to cater to their needs. (HubSpot 2022.)

Business to Business marketing encompasses all marketing tactics and materials designed specifically for businesses or organizations. When companies sell their products or

services to other businesses or organizations rather than individual consumers, they employ B2B marketing strategies. (HubSpot 2022.)

Digital media refers to the means of communication that rely on digital technology platforms, such as the internet, web, mobile phones, television, and digital signage, to deliver content and interactive services. It encompasses various forms of electronic communication facilitated by these platforms (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2019, 9.)

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) Process of making the website and all the content in there optimal for search engines to gain higher visibility in organic search results (Searchenginejournal 2019.)

Search Engine Marketing (SEM) is a way of online advertising that involves paying search engines (such as Google or Bing) to display ads in their search results. Because search is the primary way people navigate the web, this can be a big source of traffic. (Searchenginejournal 2019.)

1.7 Commissioning Company

Aseanic Trading Oy is a well-established multinational company operating in Helsinki since 1994. Importing more than 5000 products from Asia, Middle East and Latin America for wholesale and retail, not only providing delivery services to restaurants and supermarkets around Finland but also to private consumers in the physical and online shop, offering them the best service as possible. (Aseanic Trading Oy 2021.)

To place the company activities, the company has adopted certain measure to smooth the working progress and has distributed each activity under the framework of different divisions, which are follows:

- Sales, Customer & Service Division
- Finance & Account Division
- Human Resource Division
- Logistic Division

Aseanic Trading's vision revolves around prioritizing the well-being of their customers and suppliers, whom they regard as their business partners. Their aim is to deliver the utmost quality in both service and products, while also striving to achieve the company's growth objectives.

In February 2020, when Covid-19 became an pandemic and with all the lockdowns, the company implemented the new service of home delivery to private consumers with a better service to its customers who are more inclined to order from the comfort of their homes. As the pandemic continues to wreak havoc across the globe, this type of service is a key factor that can help the businesses and consumers the same (Aseanic Trading Oy 2021).

2 Digital Marketing

This chapter, introduce the most relevant concepts of digital marketing shown in figure. 1. It also introduces a planning framework that can be used into the final digital marketing plan.

Figure 1 illustrate the digital marketing theory that will be applied in the final plan. First will be introduced the most important concepts and aspects of digital marketing, followed by most effective aspects of search engine marketing and social media marketing and lastly the explains the steps of SOSTAC® in order to understand its uses and apply them in the final project.



Figure 1. Theoretical framework for digital marketing plan

2.1 Digital marketing concepts

This chapter presents a series of subchapters that delve into various concepts encompassing the key components of digital marketing. These subchapters aim to provide readers with a preview of what to anticipate in terms of content and give an overview of the main topics to follow.

2.1.1 Marketing

Marketing involves the process of selling products and services to people and uses advertising as the means to accomplish this goal, it has a very broad understanding of the term and see it as involving everything from the corporate culture of manufacturing a product to the way the product is sold and the complex relationship that exists between consumers and producers (Berger 2013.)

Marketing is the management process involves recognizing, foreseeing, and effectively meeting customers' needs and desires in a profitable manner. It entails identifying customer demands, predicting future requirements, and ensuring the satisfaction of those requirements while generating profitable outcomes. (Chartered Institute of Marketing – CIM.)

The main purpose of marketing is to attract customers using different methods, There are different methods to advertise, build the brand and attract customers, but they all have the same purpose, just need to determine which type of marketing match better the goals. According to HubSpot (2022) some types of marketing are:

- Internet or online marketing:

This refers to the practice of establishing a business's online presence with the intention of promoting and advertising products or services. This concept originated from a successful Excedrin product campaign conducted on the internet, demonstrating the effectiveness and significance of utilizing online platforms for marketing purposes. In essence, having an online presence for business reasons has become a form of marketing in its own right.

- Blogging marketing:

Blogging involves brands utilizing blogs as a means to share valuable industry-related content and engage potential customers who actively seek information on the internet. Blogs are no longer limited to individual writers, as companies now leverage them to establish thought leadership, build credibility, and attract the attention of their target audience. By publishing informative and relevant blog posts, brands aim to nurture the interest of potential customers and provide them with valuable insights related to their industry.

- Print marketing or traditional marketing:

With newspapers and magazines gaining deeper insights into the demographics of their print subscribers, businesses are increasingly sponsoring articles, photography, and other content within these publications. By identifying the specific publications that their target customers are reading, businesses seize the opportunity to support and contribute to the creation of relevant content. This form of sponsorship allows businesses to reach and engage with their desired audience through the trusted medium of newspapers and magazines.

- Video marketing:

In the past, marketers mainly relied on commercials as a means of promoting their products or services. However, the current trend is for marketers to invest in the creation and distribution of various video content that entertains and educates their primary customers. This approach allows businesses to engage with their audience on a deeper level by offering informative and entertaining videos that align with their interests. By expanding their video content beyond just commercials, businesses can better connect with their target audience and ultimately improve their marketing efforts.

2.1.2 Digital Marketing

Digital marketing refers to the utilization of digital media, data, and technology in combination with traditional communication methods to achieve marketing goals. Its primary objective is to effectively manage diverse online company representations, including websites, mobile applications, and social media platforms. This is accomplished through the implementation of online communication strategies such as SEO marketing, social media marketing, online advertising, email marketing, and partnerships with other websites. By leveraging these digital channels, businesses aim to enhance their online presence, engage with their target audience, and attain their marketing objectives. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2019, 9.)

In figure 2 can see the different categories of digital marketing channels or communication tools showing their relationship to paid, owned, and earn media, in which each give opportunities to influence customers. None of these media types are new, but what is new is the increasing prominence given to owned and earned media while paid media has always dominated in the past. (Chaffey 2022.)

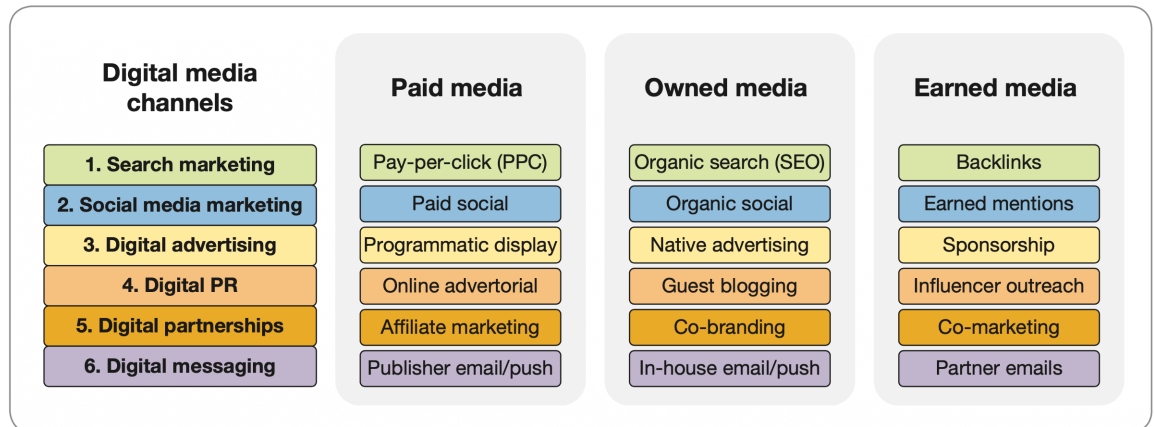


Figure 2. Six categories of digital marketing channels or communication tools (Chaffey 2022.)

According to Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019, 9), the success of digital media relies on the integration of these techniques with traditional media platforms, including print, television, direct email, and human sales and support. This integration is crucial for effective multichannel marketing communications. Online channels can be strategically managed to facilitate the entire customer buying process, encompassing pre-sale, sale, post-sale activities, and the ongoing development of customer relationships. In essence, a cohesive approach that combines digital and traditional media channels allows businesses to optimize their marketing efforts and enhance the overall customer experience.

According to the HubSpot Blog (2022), digital marketing provides a holistic perspective on various metrics that are relevant to a company's success. These metrics encompass impressions, shares, views, clicks, and time spent on a webpage. This is considered one of the significant advantages of digital marketing. Unlike traditional advertising, which has its merits, it lacks the ability to be easily measured. In contrast, digital marketing enables the measurement of return on investment (ROI) for virtually every facet of marketing activities.

2.1.3 B2B Marketing

In B2B marketing, the content tends to be focused on providing information in a direct and straightforward manner, as compared to B2C marketing. This is primarily because business purchase decisions are driven by the potential impact on revenue and the bottom line. Unlike individual consumers, who may not consider return on investment (ROI) in monetary terms, corporate decision makers prioritize ROI as a key factor. Therefore, B2B marketing efforts concentrate on delivering content that addresses the specific needs and concerns of businesses, with a strong emphasis on demonstrating the potential financial benefits and ROI for corporate customers. (LinkedIn 2022).

HubSpot (2022) states that B2B marketing aims to specifically target individuals who are responsible for making purchases on behalf of their organization, rather than for personal use. In this context, the organization itself becomes the customer. The primary goal of B2B marketing is to raise awareness of your brand among other businesses, highlight the value of your product or service, and ultimately convert them into customers. The focus is on effectively communicating and demonstrating the benefits and relevance of your offerings to businesses, with the intention of building strong business-to-business relationships.

2.1.4 B2B Buying and purchase process

B2B **buying** process is the major aspect of B2B marketing as they are used to **purchase** goods and services. The level of risk is low in this process as the decisions are made relatively quickly in consumer markets and the focus of this is attached to a purchase. (Fill & McKee 2011.)

Purchasing in B2B markets is essentially a group activity, with the composition and size of the group changing accordingly to the significance of the item being purchased. Often-times, B2B purchasing process involve several departments and decision makers and longer decision-making processes. When B2B buyers make purchasing decisions, they consider not only the requirements of their company but also their personal needs. These needs can stem from both logical and emotional motivations, which influence their choices in acquiring products or services (Insights 2020).

2.2 Content Marketing

This thesis will explain different concepts of Digital marketing for a better understanding of the thesis topic and what are the concepts needed when creating a digital marketing plan as the author is doing for the commissioning company. The following concepts will be used as a theoretical framework for the thesis.

2.2.1 Types of content strategy

Lead generation

This is a strategy that focuses mainly in generating content that is used to get people to opt-in to an email list. In which belongs two different elements: driving traffic to the piece of content and developing an opt-in that is enticing for potential customers. (Toomes 2021.)

A lead generation content strategy includes content that is focused on educating customer on their pain points so that they can begin to move from the awareness to the consideration phase. But the opt-in needs to be interesting and valuable enough for a lead to hand over their email address. (Toomes 2021.)

According to the Sales Panel blog (2021), lead generation strategies typically involve leveraging various types of content to enhance brand visibility and generate interest in products or services. These strategies utilize the sales funnel to nurture leads who show interest in the business, guiding them towards making a purchase. Experienced B2B marketers prioritize the quality of the leads they attract. To achieve this, they invest resources in understanding their buyer persona and creating content that deeply resonates with their ideal customer.

When discussing strategies, it is crucial to allocate significant resources to produce valuable content that helps the target audience accomplish their goals related to the company's products. An effective approach for attracting and converting qualified prospects is to create gated content pieces and promote them.

Gated content is a valuable content that aligns with the business objectives of the potential prospects. This content can take various forms such as white papers, ebooks, or case studies. It is important to give this content a clear and compelling title that explicitly conveys the benefits a prospect will receive upon downloading it. As the content is gated, prospects interested in accessing it must complete a lead capture form. The use of gated content is effective because it leaves a positive impression on prospects who download it and enhances the brand's credibility in their eyes. Moreover, it generates high-quality leads comprised of individuals genuinely interested in the offered product or service. (Sales panel blog 2021.)

- Keep context in mind

In today's landscape, gaining attention requires personalization and relevance as essential elements. It is crucial to not only speak the language of your customers but also to provide content and advertisements that align thematically with the platforms or contexts in which they are viewed. By tailoring your messaging to suit the specific needs and interests of your audience, you can enhance engagement and capture their attention more effectively. This approach recognizes the importance of delivering content and ads that resonate with individuals in a personalized and contextually appropriate manner. (LinkedIn 2022.)

- Thought leadership

A thought leadership content strategy focuses on content that's innovative, attention-grabbing, in-depth. It needs to say something new about the topic rather than rehash what has already been said by others in the industry. (Toomes 2021.)

The second part of developing a thought leadership content strategy is coming up with a solid plan for distributing and getting eyes on the piece. It is important to get the piece of content in front of people who are outside of your typical readership. This might include publishing on guest blogs, industry publications, or sites like LinkedIn or Medium. (Toomes 2021.)

- Search engine optimization (SEO)

This type of strategy focuses on driving lead traffic to the company's website through search engines. While creating content for current and potential customers, taking search engine optimization into consideration when creating the content strategy can help ensure that the greatest amount of people can see and access the content created. (Toomes 2021.)

One of the main considerations for an SEO content strategy is knowing what people are searching for. This often requires an SEO expert to do some competitor and keyword research. This reveals SEO opportunities for the content that may not be known to be available. (Toomes 2021.)

The second part of SEO content strategy is ensuring that the content that is being created is formatted in a way that makes it easy for search engines to crawl the content. Understanding how to utilize headings, find the right keyword density, and create effective metadata are all important to the SEO strategy. (Toomes 2021.)

- Enterprise content marketing strategy

This type of content marketing strategy is focused on providing relevant content to the organisation's audience. The goal is to speak to specific pain points and needs while aiming to build rapport with the reader. It is designed specifically for large companies with over 1,000 employees. And when building this type of content strategy, marketers will need to consider the company's needs, budget, challenges, and team members. Whereas a small business content strategy will prioritize doing the most with the least resources, and enterprise strategy will prioritize creating content at scale. (Toomes 2021.)

2.2.2 Importance of Headlines

The headline plays a crucial role in content creation as it has the power to capture the audience's attention and determine whether they will engage with the content. It serves as the first impression for the audience, allowing them to quickly assess the relevance, interest, and informativeness of the piece. Furthermore, the headline can impact the readability, searchability, and potential virality of the content. Therefore, it is essential to include an attractive headline as an integral part of the digital marketing plan (Clickgiant 2015.)

- Start headlines with number

Incorporating numbers in headlines actively captures the interest of readers. This implies that users are more likely to go beyond the headline and proceed to read the entire article. A headline's effectiveness is determined by the value it provides to the reader. It is crucial to ensure that the headline conveys a specific gain or advantage for the reader. Numbers play a significant role in enhancing this benefit because our brains are naturally drawn to numbers. Numbers help organize information in a logical and structured manner, making the content more appealing and engaging to readers. (Widenhouse 2020.)

2.3 Social media marketing

Social media marketing is a highly effective method for businesses to connect with potential customers and achieve their marketing objectives. It involves utilizing various digital platforms to promote the brand and its products. However, it is not just about creating business accounts and posting content; it requires a dynamic strategy with measurable goals to continuously enhance the social media presence. Consistently sharing engaging pictures, videos, stories, and live videos can help attract a relevant audience. Additionally, social media platforms offer paid advertising options, allowing businesses to reach large numbers of highly targeted users by investing in sponsored content. (Wordstream 2022.)

Social media enable to engage with the customers geographically and in real life and find out what they want, think, or feel at any given time, the content shared and what are the strategies that can be used, which makes them a great tool for any company. It is an extra way of talking to the customers in different forums and especially if some clients are in another time zone. (Coles 2014.)

Coles (2014), summarizes the social media platforms and their uses, platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn and others below in table 2.

Table 2. Social networking sites and their uses

Site	Web address	Use
Facebook	www.facebook.com	Social and business-to-customer site
Instagram	www.instagram.com	Social and business-to-customer site
LinkedIn	www.linkedin.com	Business-to-business networking
Twitter	www.twitter.com	Small bite-size messages to all
YouTube	www.youtube.com	Video-broadcasting site
Google +	www.plus.google.com	Business-to-business and business-to-customer

According to Coles (2014), there are many benefits of using social media, such as:

1. They are free platforms that can be used everywhere
2. Able to reach a huge audience
3. Another communication tool that can be utilized alongside more traditional methods.
4. Easy engagement with customers
5. Have a visible presence on the web
- 6 Able to receive real-time feedback

Social media, being a highly effective marketing channel, offers several benefits to businesses. It allows them to **humanize** their brand, establishing a sense of trust with clients. Additionally, social media aids in **driving traffic** to the business website by linking blogs with advertisements and posts. It also facilitates the direct generation of leads and conversions by utilizing all available platforms, including direct messaging. These platforms provide opportunities for both direct and indirect communication with customers, enabling businesses to connect directly with them, gather feedback, and engage in meaningful discussions (Wordstream 2022).

2.3.1 Facebook marketing

Facebook was founded by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004. Has 1.74 billion daily active users and is the world's most popular and the largest social media platform, as well as one of the biggest local business directories, where any type of business contact information can be found, participate in the different forums and groups, find, and visit local businesses near them and announce hour changes or events (Neil Patel 2022). Businesses are actively

pursuing customers across this social media platform, so it makes sense to build their own presence there. (Wordstream 2022.)

According to Facebook Business (2022), Facebook provides user-friendly tools for creating and managing campaigns and offers comprehensive reports to track their effectiveness. With over two billion monthly active users, Facebook provides an extensive reach, ensuring that businesses can connect with their desired target audience.

2.3.2 Instagram marketing

Instagram is a visual-focused platform that helps brands connect with an enormous audience of followers in a personal way, increase brand awareness, and boost sales. According to Gotter (2021), Instagram has a large and diverse audience of over one billion monthly active users and 500 million daily users on Instagram Stories that are happy to engage with brands, resulting in high engagement overall. 63% of Instagram users log in at least once a day and over 200 million Instagrammers visit profiles at least once a day spending an average of 28 minutes.

Instagram ads have excellent results and offers higher engagement than Facebook in the sales process as businesses profiles with high number of followers can add swipe up links to their Instagram stories to drive traffic directly in their websites or other platforms (Gotter 2021.)

Instagram ads typically come at a higher cost compared to Facebook ads. However, the advantage of using Instagram lies in its higher organic reach, making it an ideal platform for creators and entrepreneurs seeking to foster organic growth. (Gotter 2021.)

2.3.3 WeChat marketing

WeChat, also known as Weixin, is a versatile application that serves multiple functions including social media, messaging, marketing, and payment services. It is the largest social network in China and ranks among the top 10 globally. WeChat has gained popularity not only in China but also in Mongolia, Hong Kong, and several other foreign countries. This is particularly significant in regions where platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp are restricted or banned. (Hootsuite 2021.)

WeChat users have the ability to perform various activities within the app itself, without the need to switch to other platforms or applications. They can send messages, share moments from their lives, share photos and videos, request transportation services, make payments for groceries, engage in fitness activities, book Covid-19 tests, and even access

government services such as visa applications. All of these actions can be conveniently carried out within the WeChat app, providing users with a comprehensive and all-in-one platform for their daily needs and tasks. (Hootsuite 2021.)

Like WhatsApp, WeChat allows messaging users to share their location with contacts. However, WeChat offers additional features not found in WhatsApp. Users can exchange coupons and lucky money packages with each other, adding a social and interactive element to their communication. Moreover, WeChat enables file sharing between users in proximity through Bluetooth. In total, WeChat users send an astounding number of over 45 billion instant messages per day, highlighting the immense popularity and active usage of the platform. (Hootsuite 2021.)

WeChat offers WeChat pay where users can link their bank accounts to the app, to pay bills, buy groceries, to transfer money to their friends and family and to e-commerce purchases. This also includes Quick Pay, in-app web-based payments, using QR code for payments and native in-app payments (Hootsuite 2021).

When it comes to marketing on WeChat, businesses have two options: they can either apply for an Official Account directly or collaborate with third-party partners. Hootsuite (2021) explains that WeChat marketing offers two types of accounts: **Subscription accounts** and **Service accounts**. These accounts provide businesses with different features and functionalities to engage with their target audience and promote their products or services on the platform

The Subscription account on WeChat is primarily intended for marketing purposes but is not available for overseas businesses. On the other hand, the **Service account** is designed for sales and customer support. Service account holders have the capability to send up to four broadcast messages per month and gain access to features such as WeChat Pay and API. Additionally, users can utilize Enterprise WeChat to stay updated on work-related conversations, manage annual leave days, track expenses, and even request time off. These features provide businesses with a comprehensive suite of tools for effective communication and management within the WeChat platform.

Types of WeChat Official Accounts	
Subscription	Service
Designed for marketing	Designed for sales and customer support
Not open to overseas business	Four broadcast messages per month
Can post content to a newsfeed for followers	Access to WeChat Pay and API
	Can't message customers first or reply to customer messages after 48 hours

Figure 3. Types of WeChat Official Accounts (Hootsuite 2021.)

In China, WeChat is used as the main channel to do marketing, can create moments ads, banner ads, key opinion leader (KOL = Bloggers or influencer) ads. Also, by displaying the QR codes, users can link their accounts to their websites, display it in physical stores or in other promotional materials (Hootsuite 2021.)

2.4 Search Engine Marketing

Search engine marketing is a match-based system that lets search engine prioritize the best, most relevant content related to a user's query that consists of phrases and keywords that reflect the intent of the user (Leake, Vaccarello & Ginty 2012.)

According to HubSpot (2022), the essence of search engine marketing strategy lies in optimizing paid search advertisements with a clear objective in mind. To formulate a successful strategy, it is crucial to have a comprehensive understanding of how paid advertising platforms operate and skillfully manage various factors that impact performance. These factors include keywords, budget allocation, and ad copy. By effectively managing these variables, businesses can enhance the effectiveness of their paid search ads and achieve their desired marketing goals.

The goal of search engine marketing is to connect with users at the moment they are actively seeking the information or solutions that businesses can provide. Pay-per-click (PPC) advertising, a key component of SEM, is designed to be less intrusive as it targets users who are already interested in the offered content. Moreover, a well-designed SEM

strategy can have a positive impact on a website's search engine optimization (SEO) efforts. By attracting high-quality traffic through SEM, search engines like Google recognize the website as a credible and authoritative source, leading to potential improvements in search rankings. This indicates to search engines that the website is trustworthy and relevant, which can further enhance its visibility in search results. (Semrush 2021.)

2.5 SOSTAC® planning model

SOSTAC® stands for Situation analysis, objectives, strategy, tactics, actions and control as shown in figure 3. (Chaffey & Smith 2017). For creating a digital marketing plan, the planning stages are as following:

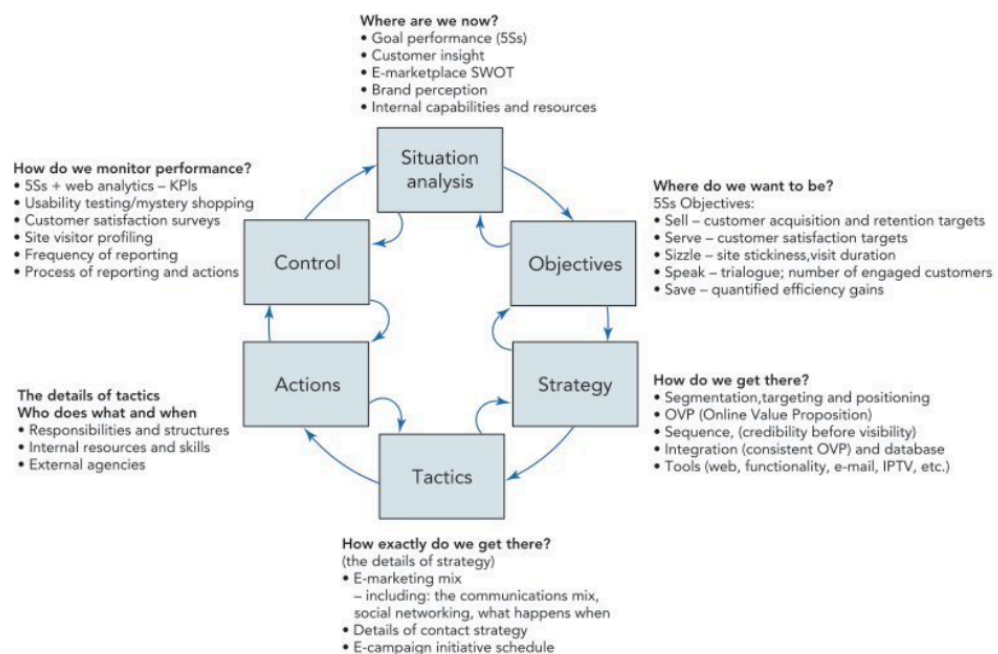


Figure 4. SOSTAC® planning framework. SOSTAC® is a registered trade mark of PR Smith (Smith 2011.)

The definition of each stage of SOSTAC® are:

Situation analysis means where are we now? Considering the situation of digital marketing plan

Objectives means where are you going? It covers the purpose or reasons why business go online as they need to examine what kind of objectives will drive good digital marketing. Digital marketing encompasses five main benefits, reasons, or objectives:

1. Sales Growth: Digital marketing expands sales by enabling wider distribution, effective promotion, and increased sales volume.

2. Value Addition: It provides customers with additional benefits and value through online platforms, enhancing the overall value proposition of the company.
3. Customer Engagement: Digital marketing facilitates closer connections with customers by actively tracking their behavior, initiating conversations, and gaining insights about their preferences and needs.
4. Cost Savings: It offers cost savings in various areas such as service delivery, promotions, sales transactions, administrative tasks, printing, and postage. Additionally, it can generate additional profits through optimized transactions.
5. Brand Extension: Digital marketing extends the brand's presence and reinforces its value in a completely new medium, thereby expanding brand recognition and reach in the online realm.

This means, that digital marketing drives sales growth, enhances value for customers, fosters customer engagement, reduces costs, and extends the brand's influence in the digital landscape.

Chaffey & Smith (2017) propose a summarized version of the marketing objectives as the 5Ss: Sell, Serve, Speak, Save, and Sizzle. These objectives provide a framework to add value to the business using the internet. Once these objectives are defined, businesses can then devise strategies to achieve them. The 5S objectives encompass various aspects such as driving sales, providing exceptional service, engaging in effective communication, saving costs, and creating a captivating and appealing online presence. By aligning their efforts with these objectives, businesses can leverage the internet to maximize value and achieve their digital marketing goals.

Sell — Utilizing the internet as an additional sales channel to expand the customer base and reach new markets

Serve — Leveraging the internet to enhance customer service and provide additional value. This can be achieved through various techniques, such as offering 24/7 access to support information and online tools

Speak — Harnessing the power of the internet as a communication tool for inbound, outbound, and social interactions, seamlessly integrated with other media. Developing a well-defined content marketing strategy is crucial to drive inbound marketing efforts

Save — Using the internet to increase operational efficiency and reduce costs by streamlining processes and leveraging digital tools

Sizzle — Leveraging the internet as a brand-building tool to increase brand awareness and engage with the target audience. The online value propositions (OVPs) play a vital role in communicating the unique and appealing aspects of the brand

Strategy means how to get there?. To archive the digital marketing objectives set previously using a range of tactical tools and a revised marketing mix. (Chaffey & Smith 2017, 74.)

According to Chaffey & Smith (2017, 75-77), the implementation of a digital marketing strategy involves various elements, including **tactics, action, and control**. **Tactics** refer to the specific tools and techniques employed in the strategy. These tools can range from website landing pages and opt-in email incentives for inbound marketing to digital media channels like paid search, virtual exhibitions, programmatic advertising, and sponsorships. It is crucial to understand the capabilities and limitations of each tool and determine where and how they should be used, such as on desktop or mobile landing pages or through social media platforms.

Actions encompass the planning and execution of projects within the strategy. This involves developing project plans, setting timelines, and carrying out the necessary tasks to achieve the desired outcomes.

Control entails evaluating the results of the implemented tactics against the predetermined objectives. This assessment allows for measuring the effectiveness of the strategy and making adjustments as needed to align with the desired outcomes.

Overall, the tactical implementation, action-oriented planning, and careful assessment of results form essential components of a comprehensive digital marketing strategy

3 Project Management Methods

This chapter explains how the author is planning to develop the thesis, and what are the steps. Each phase describes what is going to be made, what kind of source will be using, and what is the expected outcome.

The main project management method used in the thesis is desktop study, which is mainly sources from theory books, e-books, online sources. These methods are used to find out and gather all the information needed to answer the project tasks as it is a project-based thesis and to design the digital plan for the company.

Since the author is employed full-time at the company and possesses valuable insights and information about the company's situation, conducting an interview is unnecessary for this project. The author will leverage their access to internal information to create the company's digital marketing plan. The task will be divided into parts.

PT 1. At this phase, the author will focus on establishing the theoretical framework. This involves delving into various concepts of digital marketing and researching theories related to social media marketing and search engines that can be effectively applied in the digital marketing planning process.

PT 2. At this phase, the author will conduct a complete and deep situation analysis about the company's current digital marketing activities, a SWOT -analysis as well as investigate who are the main competitor and what they are currently doing. Marketing data provided by the company or online and DM budget available of the commissioning company.

PT 3. At this phase, the author will conduct a PEST environment analysis. This focus on analysing B2B market available of food industry in Finland

PT 4. During this phase, the digital marketing plan will be developed using the theories and information gathered in PT1 - PT4. The plan will specifically focus on customer acquisition in the B2B (business-to-business) sector through digital marketing strategies. Once completed.

PT 5. At this phase, the feedback from the company should be collected, to make the corrections needed

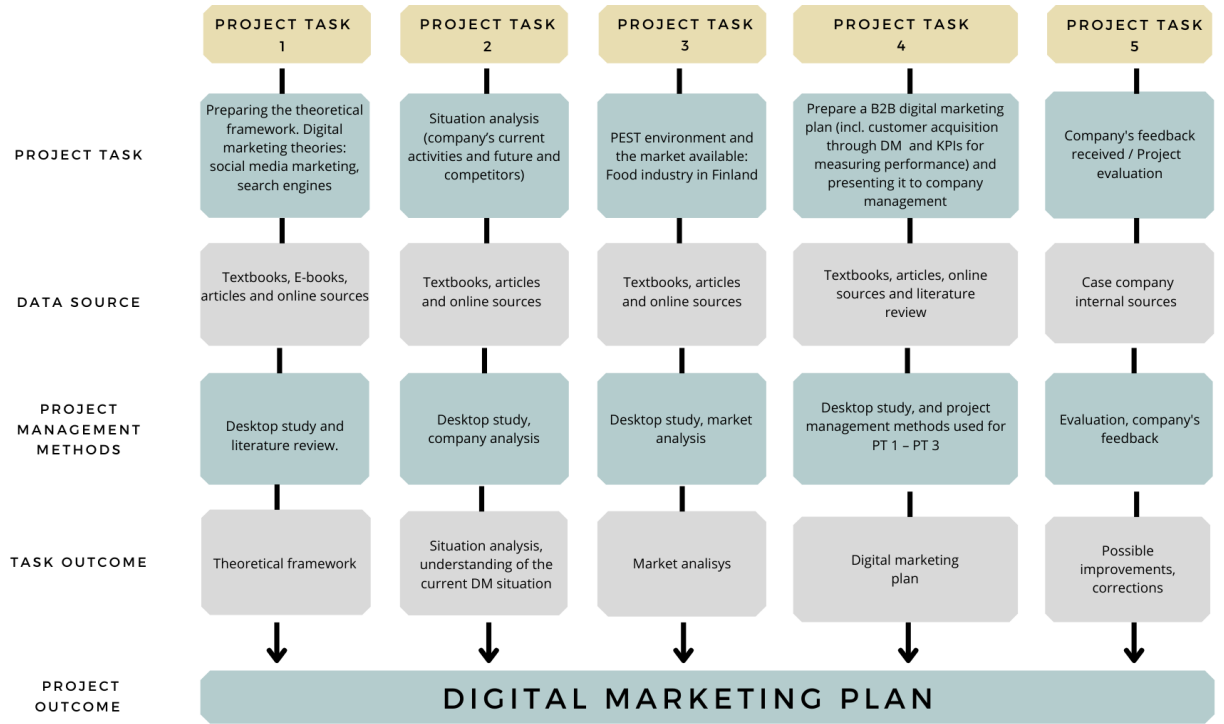


Figure 5. Project management methods.

4 Situation Analysis

This chapter assesses the situation analysis of the case company Aseanic Trading. The situation analysis firstly analyses the case company's current situation and activities. Then the author conducts a thorough SWOT analysis in 4.2. The next chapter 4.3 focuses on completing the situation analysis by conducting a competitor analysis

4.1 Current Situation

In this chapter, the author will conduct a comprehensive analysis of the current situation. With extensive experience working in the company, the author possesses the necessary access and authority to utilize all available information for the development of this plan.

Aseanic is a small-medium organization and has a short digital marketing history. The company does not have a marketing plan nor a marketing budget, so marketing is only focused

4.2 Current marketing tools

Currently Aseanic Trading is using the following marketing tools:

- Contacting and meeting with potential clients to identify their needs and provide different offers regarding prices and product availabilities.
- Creating promotional campaigns and send it to their B2B customers through WeChat
- Advertise new and coming products on social media.

According to Aseanic Trading Oy, those are the most effective methods of marketing for sales to advertise and offer their products and service for as the company does not have an established marketing plan.

4.3 SWOT Analysis

The sub-chapter uses the SWOT analysis as a tool to get in-depth information about Aseanic Trading to show their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and help the company to re-formulate their goals and improve their strengths and opportunities and create an appropriate strategy. The first goal of the SWOT is to have a big picture of the company's current situation that can be used to support strategic decisions and the end

goal is to find a few key themes where the company can focus on. SWOT will end up being filled with foregone conclusions and platitudes. (Munroe 2019.) Figure 6 below presents the SWOT analysis of the case company Aseanic Trading Oy



Figure 6. SWOT analysis

4.4 Competitor's analysis

Analyzing competitors is important, because it helps the company to identify the product's unique value proposition and what makes the product different from the competitors', which can inform future marketing efforts, as well as to identify what is the competitor doing right. All this information is critical for staying relevant in the market and provides an opportunity to find weaknesses in competitor's strategies. (White 2022.)

When conducting a competitor analysis, first, a business needs to review own digital activities and indicate areas for improvements. Second is to know who are the Competitors and analyze what they are doing in the same market. There are two types of competitors, direct- and indirect. Indirect competitors are appealing to the same customer segment but are not offering similar services or products. Third, study the best practices from the competitor analysis, and four, set goals to develop own digital activates to reach new targets. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019. 153.)

Table 3. Competitor's online presence comparison.

Channel	Aseanic	Jiahe	Vii-Voan
Website	X	X	
WeChat	X	X	X
LinkedIn	X		
Facebook	X	X	X
Instagram	X		
Youtube	X		X
Twitter			

Table 3 above focus on the direct competitors that have a similar business model offering similar services and products. At the same time compares the online presence of Aseanic and their competitors. Aseanic is the most active in social media profiles. Vii-Voan doesn't have a website active but all of them uses same tactic in WeChat to advertise their products, and other matters as they all are Asian companies. Aseanic is the company that have established a LinkedIn and Instagram page trying to reach all type of customers. All

the companies are showing low activity with randomly posted content in social media except in WeChat as it is their main social channel for the Asian community.

5 PEST Analysis of Finland

The author analysed the factors of the wholesale industry in Finland, especially in Helsinki where the company is located, based on PEST analysis method, factors which are listed below.

5.1 Political Factors

- According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry 2022), Finland has a stable and democratic government that is generally supportive of international trade, which can facilitate food imports into Helsinki, as it is the capital and largest city of Finland, that has a favorable business climate.
- Finland is a member of the European Union, which provides access to a large market with a common set of rules and regulations for businesses.
- The Finnish government has implemented policies to promote innovation and entrepreneurship, which can benefit the wholesale industry in Helsinki.

5.2 Economic Factors

- Helsinki has a strong and diversified economy, with a high standard of living and disposable income that can support demand for imported food. (Helsinki Business Hub 2022.)
- The wholesale food industry is an important part of the city's economy, with many wholesalers and retailers operating in the city and the surrounding area. (Helsinki Business Hub 2022.)
- The cost of living and doing business in Helsinki is relatively high, which can increase operating costs for wholesale businesses.

5.3 Social Factors

- Helsinki is a multicultural city with a diverse population and highly educated population, which can provide a skilled workforce for the wholesale industry and create a high demand for a wide variety of imported foods. (Helsinki Business Hub 2022.)

- The city has a diverse population, which can create opportunities for wholesalers to serve different customer segments. There is a growing interest in health and wellness in Helsinki, which can influence the types of food products that are imported and sold in the city. (Helsinki Business Hub 2022.)
- There is a strong focus on sustainability and environmental responsibility in Helsinki, which can influence consumer behavior and impact the wholesale industry. Environmental concerns, such as the carbon footprint of imported foods, can influence consumer behavior and the types of food products that are imported. (Helsinki Business Hub 2022.)

5.4 Technological Factors

- Rapid advances in technology are changing the way food is produced, transported, and distributed, which can impact the food import industry in Helsinki. (Helsinki Business Hub 2022.)
- Digital platforms and e-commerce are increasingly used for food sales and distribution, which can create opportunities for importing food into Helsinki.
- Technology can also be used to track and verify the origin and quality of imported food products, which can be an important factor for consumers. (Business Insider)
- Rapid technological changes can create both opportunities and challenges for the wholesale industry in Helsinki, as businesses must keep up with the latest developments to remain competitive. (Helsinki Business Hub 2022.)

Overall, the wholesale industry in Helsinki operates in a stable and favorable business environment, with opportunities for growth and innovation. However, businesses must be prepared to manage operating costs in a relatively high-cost city and adapt to rapidly evolving technologies and social trends. Helsinki is a favorable market for importing food, with a strong economy, diverse population, and growing interest in health and sustainability. However, businesses must navigate regulations and standards for food imports, manage prices in a relatively high-cost city, and adapt to rapidly evolving technology and consumer trends.

6 Digital Marketing Plan

This chapter presents the analysis for the digital marketing plan of Aseanic Trading Oy based on the needs of the company to build and implement a new marketing plan and raise awareness.

This optimization process is founded on the theoretical framework outlined in chapter 2. The plan will commence by examining customer acquisition and identifying the ideal buyer persona for the company. It will then delve into current digital marketing trends. Finally, the plan will provide a detailed digital marketing strategy for the B2B sector, with a primary focus on utilizing WeChat as the main channel. This section will encompass specific objectives, target audience identification, recommended strategies for WeChat, and the metrics to be measured for assessing success.

6.1 Customer acquisition

6.1.1 Buyer persona (B2B)

Figure 7 below shows the best profile of a buyer persona for the company


USER PERSONA		CHALLENGES
 <p>NAME Juha Sarpila</p> <p>AGE 35 - 45</p> <p>LOCATION Helsinki</p> <p>OCCUPATION Owner or manager of a small-to-medium-sized retail business in Helsinki</p> <p>MARITAL STATUS Married</p> <p>NATIONALITY Finnish</p> <p>ASEANIC TRADING OY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited resources to find and research new products and suppliers The need to balance quality and affordability when selecting products The need to manage inventory and logistics to minimize costs and maximize profitability 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To find high-quality and unique products to offer his customers that will differentiate his business from competitors To maintain a profitable business by purchasing products at a reasonable price To develop a strong and reliable supplier relationship to ensure consistent product availability and timely delivery 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality: Juha is committed to offering his customers high-quality products that meet their expectations and build loyalty. Customer satisfaction: Juha values the satisfaction of his customers and strives to offer a wide range of products that meet their needs and preferences. Long-term relationships: Juha seeks to build long-term relationships with suppliers who can provide consistent product quality and timely delivery. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industry trade shows and events Professional networks and associations Online marketplaces and B2B platforms Recommendations from other business owners or suppliers 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional and concise communication that provides clear product information and pricing details Regular updates on product availability and delivery timelines Openness to negotiating terms and pricing to meet Juha's business needs Respect for his time and resources, with a focus on efficiency and reliability in all communications and transactions. 	

Figure 7. buyer persona

By developing a buyer persona, the B2B Asian wholesale company can customize its marketing and sales approaches to effectively engage and connect with potential customers, such as Juha in Helsinki. This buyer persona provides valuable insights into Juha's characteristics, needs, preferences, and behaviors, enabling the company to create targeted and personalized strategies that resonate with Juha and similar prospects.

6.2 Trends

6.2.1 Instagram trends

1. Influencer Marketing: Collaborate with food bloggers, chefs, or food influencers to showcase the products in their posts. This will help to increase company's reach and brand visibility among their followers. (Business Instagram 2022.)
2. User-Generated Content: Encourage customers to share photos of their meals or dishes made with the products on Instagram using a branded hashtag. Can then repost these photos on the account, which will help to build a community and encourage engagement with Aseanic's brand. (Business Instagram 2022.)
3. Product Styling: Invest in product styling and photography to make the products look as visually appealing as possible. Instagram is a very visual platform, and customers are more likely to be attracted to products that look good in photos. (Business Instagram 2022.)
4. Behind-the-Scenes: Showcasing the process of how all the products are made or sourced can be an interesting way to connect with the customers. People are often curious about where their food comes from, so providing a behind-the-scenes look can build trust and loyalty. (Business Instagram 2022.)
5. Seasonal Content: Create seasonal content around holidays or events that are relevant to the products. (Business Instagram 2022.)
6. Instagram Reels: Use Instagram Reels to produce brief, entertaining, and captivating videos that highlight the company's products. Instagram Reels has become increasingly popular and serves as an excellent platform to creatively showcase the products. Taking advantage of this feature can effectively capture the attention of the audience and provide an engaging and enjoyable viewing experience. (Business Instagram 2022.)

6.3 WeChat digital marketing plan for B2B

In this sub-chapter, the author has a digital marketing a plan focusing on B2B using WeChat as main channel including the following information

Objectives

1. Increase brand awareness and recognition for our B2B Asian wholesale company in the Helsinki market.
2. Generate leads and inquiries from potential B2B clients in the Helsinki market.
3. Establish ourselves as a thought leader in the industry, providing valuable content and insights to our target audience.
4. Increase engagement and interaction with our target audience on WeChat.

Target Audience

Aseanic Trading Oy target audience is B2B companies in Helsinki that are interested in selling or consuming Asian food products in their businesses. The company can focus on companies in the food industry, such as restaurants, supermarkets, and specialty food stores. (Londoño 2023.)

Strategy

1. Creating a WeChat account and optimize the account for search and discoverability. Use a custom URL, post high-quality profile pictures, and cover images, and include keywords in the company's account name and bio to increase visibility. (China Channel 2021.)
2. Create and share valuable content that will appeal to the target audience. Using a mix of formats, such as articles, videos, and infographics, to keep the content fresh and engaging. Also create content that addresses common pain points and challenges that the target audience faces when selling or consuming Asian food products. (WalkTheChat 2022.)
3. Use WeChat advertising to reach the target audience. Using targeted advertising to reach companies in the food industry in Helsinki, using parameters such as location, industry, and job title to refine our targeting. (HubSpot 2021.)
4. Leverage WeChat influencers to amplify company's reach and promote the brand. Can partner with WeChat influencers who have a large following among the target audience and have them promote the content and products to their followers. (Chinify 2022.)
5. Engage with followers and respond to inquiries and comments in a timely manner. Use WeChat's messaging and comment features to engage with the followers and build relationships with potential clients. (WalkTheChat 2022.)

Metrics

1. Increase in WeChat followers and engagement rates.
2. Number of inquiries and leads generated through WeChat.
3. Number of content views and shares.
4. Increase in website traffic and conversions from WeChat.

7 Conclusions

In this chapter, the author will present a comprehensive overview of the thesis process, encompassing an evaluation of the product and offering recommendations for future research. The focus will be on assessing the product's performance and providing insightful suggestions for further research

7.1 Product Assessment

This thesis was created to provide commissioning company Aseanic Trading Oy a digital marketing plan as they do not have one, and their marketing activities are very few. Analysing and improving their digital marketing actions. By implementing this plan, it should address the company's problems. This study was based of the findings while reading online channels and digital versions.

The theory part of this thesis was focused on explaining contents of digital marketing, content marketing and social media marketing, which are important to support a digital marketing plan.

The plan's primary objective is to enhance brand visibility and boost sales by using different digital channels that have been identified as crucial in the company's marketing strategy. Additionally, the plan incorporates a well-defined recommendation for executing each marketing initiative, ensuring that the company remains aligned with its objectives and achieves them within the predetermined timeframe.

Overall, the digital marketing plan for Aseanic Trading Oy is a well-rounded strategy that incorporates various channels and tactics to achieve the company's marketing objectives. With a focus on valuable content, email marketing, and social media engagement, the plan has the potential to establish the company as a leading brand in its field and drive significant business growth.

7.2 Recommendations for Further Research

The thesis was focused on digital marketing, including social media marketing and related concepts chosen by the author.

As Digital marketing is most likely a new field and new information arise constantly, therefore, the commissioning company needs to keep an eye on future trends to stay updated and become relevant quickly. Aseanic Trading should focus on developing their existence

on different channels to improve their brand awareness and conduct surveys to understand customer needs, preferences, and feedback on the company's products and services.

Aseanic should as well analyze keywords and phrases that potential customers use to search for food products online and optimize the company's website and content accordingly and use analytics tools to track website traffic, conversion rates, and other key metrics. Lastly, Aseanic can monitor competitors' activities, including marketing strategies, product offerings, and pricing. This will help the company to identify potential threats and adjust its strategies accordingly.

The author recommends the commissioning company to implement a deep use of social media channels such as, Facebook, Instagram, and WeChat marketing to stay up to date on competitor's online activities.

The end of this thesis could be to add an implementation phase, which was not possible due to time management, but that would add a different value to see the benefits of the company due to digital marketing plan what works and what could be improved. After this, the company should use this plan to create an improved digital marketing plan consisting of the implementation phase. To stay constantly developing their social media channels.

Before the implementation of this plan, the commissioning company should firstly designate a team or individuals who will be responsible for executing and managing the digital marketing plan. This team should have a clear understanding of the plan's objectives, strategies, and tactics.

It is very important that all the stakeholders are aware of the digital marketing plan and its importance. Share the plan with key departments, such as marketing, sales, and customer service, so that everyone understands their role in its implementation.

This digital marketing plan is aligned with the company's overall business strategy and goals. This will help create a cohesive approach and ensure that digital marketing efforts support the broader objectives of the company.

The key priorities need to be identified within the digital marketing plan and allocate resources accordingly. Determine what is the budget, and the technology required to effectively execute each strategy and tactic.

Aseanic needs to establish clear metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs) that will be used to measure the success of the digital marketing plan. By setting specific and measurable goals for each metric and regularly track and analyze the results to assess the plan's effectiveness.

Utilizing tools such as Google Analytics or other marketing automation platforms to gather data and gain insights into the effectiveness of the campaigns to set up robust tracking and analytics systems to monitor the performance of the company's digital marketing activities and continuously monitor the performance of initiatives and make data-driven decisions to optimize the strategies in this plan. Regularly review the analytics data, identify areas for improvement, and make necessary adjustments to maximize results.

The digital marketing landscape is dynamic, so Aseanic must be prepared to adapt the strategies as needed. Monitor industry trends, consumer behavior, and competitor activities to stay ahead of the curve and make informed adjustments to this plan.

By following these recommendations, Aseanic can effectively implement this digital marketing plan, drive results, and achieve their desired objectives. Regularly evaluate the plan's performance, make data-driven decisions, and adapt future strategies to keep up with the ever-changing digital landscape.

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