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GUIDE FOR CULTURALLY ADAPTIVE ORGANIC MARKETING
IN JAPAN

Degree Programme in International business

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Opas kulttuuriin sopeutuvaan orgaaniseen markkinointiin Japanissa

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Tässä opinnäytetyössä kerättiin tietoa oppaaksi orgaaniseen markkinointiin ja sen soveltamiseen Japanissa. Opas tarkoitettiin sopivaksi internet-markkinoijille, jotka haluavat löytää keinoja saada näkyvyyttä Japanissa.

Teoreettinen osa sisältää Hofsteden kulttuuriteorian Japanin osalta. Siihen kuuluu lisäksi myös selvennyksiä orgaaniseen markkinointiin liittyvästä termistöstä, joihin kuuluvat sosiaalisen median, blogien, profiilihallinnan, sosiaalisen media hallintaohjelmien ja hakukoneoptimoinnin määritelmät.

Opinnäytetyön tarkoitus oli myös määritellä mitä on orgaaninen markkinointi ja mitä se sisältää. Erilaisia orgaanisen markkinoinnin kanavia käydään läpi teoriaosuudessa. Orgaanisen markkinoinnin strategiat eivät ole osa tätä opasta, jos ne eivät suoraan liitä Japanissa toimimiseen.

Japanille ominaisia piirteitä, jotka vaikuttavat orgaaniseen markkinointiin pyrittiin selvittämään mahdollisimman laajasti. Oppaaseen kuuluu osio Japanissa käytetystä sosiaalisesta mediasta, hakukoneista, blogialustoista ja lokalisointiin liittyvistä kysymyksistä.

Guide for culturally adaptive organic marketing in Japan

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For the purpose of this thesis information was gathered to create a guide for utilizing organic marketing in Japan. The guide was meant for internet marketers that wish to gain more visibility in Japan.

Theoretical part contains the Hofstede´s cultural theory for Japanese culture. It also includes organic marketing terms. These include definitions of social media, blogs, profile management, social media management software and search engine optimization.

Aim of the thesis was to define what is organic marketing and what is included in the term. The theoretical part of the guide shows different channels used for organic marketing. Organic marketing strategies are not included in this guide, if they are not directly related to operating in Japan.

Characteristics of Japan that affect organic marketing were intended to be incorporated as extensively as possible. The guide included information about social media, search engines, blogging platforms and localization in Japan and the related questions.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS USED

B2B: Business to business.

B2C: Business to customer.

Emoji: Smiley or ideogram in Japanese electric messages.

Freeware: Non-commercial software.

Hofstedes´s: Hofstede´s cultural dimensions is a research on national cultures and is used as framework for cultural localization.

ROI: Return of investment is a measurement for evaluating efficiency of a number of different investments.

RSS: Rich Site Summary. A one of the most common type of a web feed. RSS makes the feed compatible with many of the currently used programs and machines. See Web feed.

SEO: Search engine optimization is a practice that is used to make the desired web sites (or specific content inside them) as visible in search engines as possible. Not to be confused to search engine marketing such as Google Adwords.

Web feed: Also known as news feed or syndicated feed. It is a method that uses family of standard web feed formats to publish frequently updated content such as blog posts, news, audio and video. It enables an opportunity to syndicate data automatically.

XML: Extensive markup language is a way to encode documents in a way that they are readable by both machines and humans. It is needed for Web feed.

1 INTRODUCTION

Organic or inbound marketing means marketing by creating content and making it easily available. Examples of this include blogs, podcasts, eBooks, newsletters, whitepapers, search engine optimization, social media marketing and videos. The idea of organic marketing is to gain attention not by buying it, but by being interesting enough to gather it naturally. This is in contrast of buying attention in any way as in traditional marketing.

The aim of this thesis is to create useful guide for anyone interested in utilizing cost effective tool that is organic marketing and specifically so in Japan. Specific guides for culturally adaptive organic marketing are currently rare and making a specialized one for Japanese markets is the aim of this guide.

For anyone interested in expanding into Japanese markets there are many challenges. Japan is saturated market with distinct business culture. Many guides are currently available to help these companies with local business culture, but this one aims to help implementing organic marketing in Japanese locale.

Companies that will most likely benefit from this project are small and medium-sized enterprises that are not capable of hiring local marketing experts. Culturally tailored organic marketing offers inexpensive tools to gain visibility on new markets. Effort can substitute monetary investment, provided that the companies have the required expertise.

Companies operating in internet are good example of utilizers of organic marketing. Without showing on channels such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn etc. they risk becoming invisible as well as seeming untrustworthy or outdated.

Organic marketing itself is not simple, consisting of multitude of tools that can be used to create, organize, publish and spread content. The concept of organic marketing is not necessarily understood by many companies already operating in Japan.

2 PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Research objective, boundaries of the research and the research questions

The purpose of this thesis is to provide a useful guide that explains the theory behind organic marketing and provides information on how to utilize it in Japan, adapting into culture to improve its efficiency.

The information is also intended to introduce organic marketing as a tool that can be used in different cultural frameworks. Hofstede´s theory is used to clarify the Japanese culture specifically and is included to help localization part of the marketing both for B2B and B2C marketing.

The aim of the guide is to find information for internet marketers. Offline issues will not be included, even if they are part of organic marketing. This includes for example events, photography, video making and audio making.

Social media and blogging channels used in Japan, search engine optimization and website localization are the aspects of organic marketing this guide focuses on. Content creation and making content easy to find and consume are both covered in these aspects.

Social media marketing strategies, marketing model (such as SNeM2S) and definition of marketing structures go beyond the scope of this guide and are not included.

Theory part of the thesis will explain website localization in general but this research is limited to Japanese localization. Legal issues are only included if they are directly

related to companies marketing in Japan but not in other cases such as export-ing/importing issues of services/products that may be related.

The research questions are:

What is organic marketing?
How to localize organic marketing for Japanese customers?
What are the channels for organic marketing in Japan?
Which traits of Japanese culture affect organic marketing?

2.2 Conceptual frame of reference

The framework shows how marketer creates and optimizes content for organic marketing that is aimed towards customer. The content is created in one of many free internet traffic sources. At the same time it is optimized to be easily found by search engines. Blogs, social media and other media such as podcasts are all used to gain attention.

To reach the customer in the most efficient manner possible, online marketing is localized to fit for local audience. Marketer uses information of the local customer base that is targeted and cultural theory of Hofstede´s. Marketing and the content created is modified to suit the target.

After combining localization, cultural theory, organic marketing and optimization, the result is culturally adaptive organic marketing. After this the content created is aimed towards the wanted target group. Customers engaged start will contribute to content created. Interaction of the customers will contribute towards marketing effort.
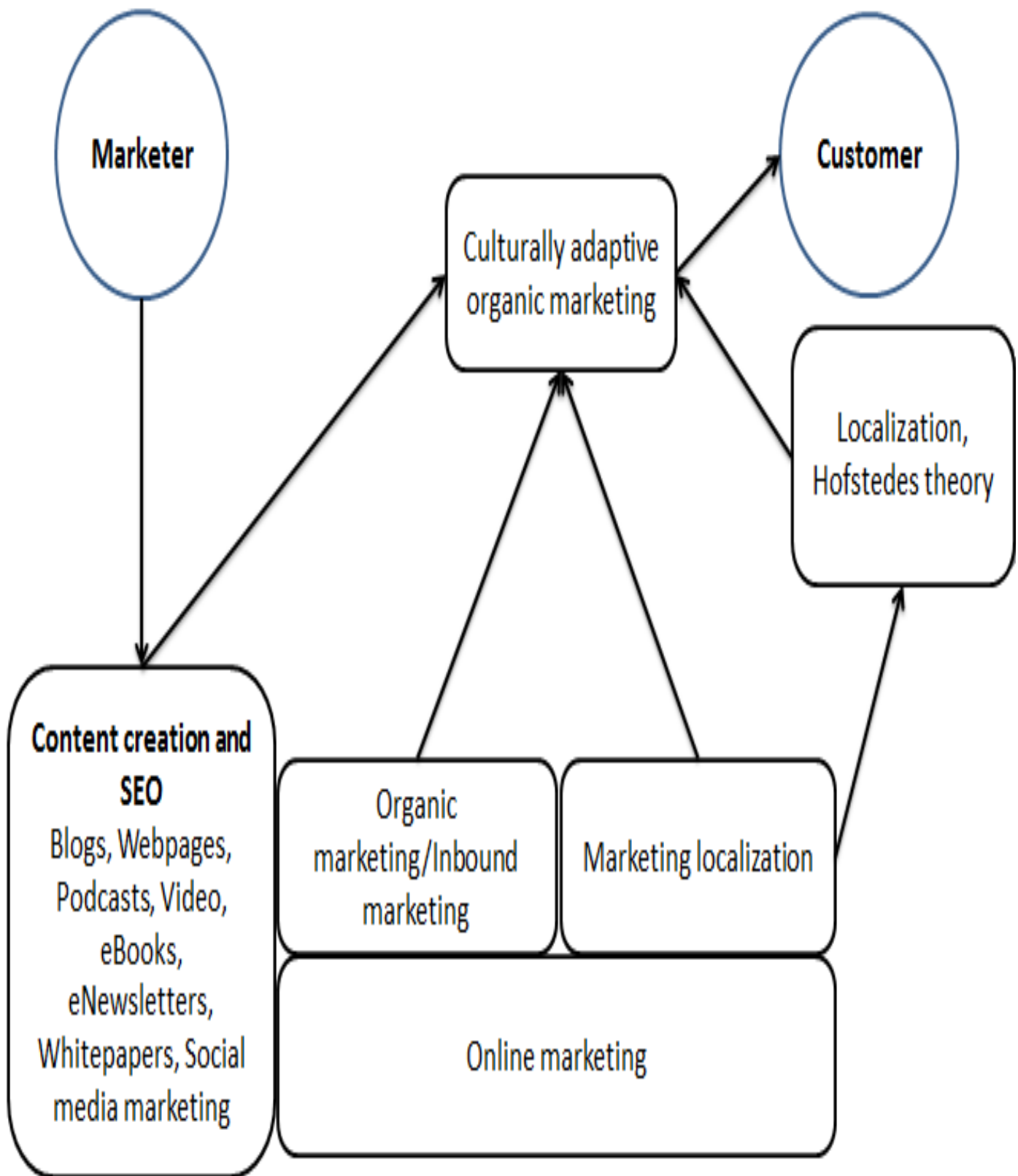
Figure 1. Culturally adapting organic marketing for customer. Conceptual framework. (Huuskonen 2015)

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data collection and analysis

Type of this thesis is guide. Aim is to gather reliable and valid information from wide array of sources and present it in clear manner.

The data in this thesis is collected from several articles, social media sites, articles and publications related to topic of organic marketing, social media, Japanese culture, search engine optimization and localization.

Large amount of information related to functions of social media, blogs and search engines is gathered directly from the respective sites. If possible the information is collected from the related sites thus avoiding second hand information.

Part of the advice in Japanese organic marketing portion of the guide is provided based on my experience of Japanese culture and working in Mondo Media Networks in Nagoya. Suggestions are based on practical problems faced during conducting organic marketing in Japanese environment.

Reliability was kept in mind when adding information from websites and articles. Many of the websites related to subjects were discarded due to possibility of them being commercially or ideologically influenced, thus damaging reliability. Most of the information gathered about various organic marketing services is easily validated due to services being open for all users.

Validity of the information in the guide was kept in check by comparing the numbers from different statistic providers. Statistics of the websites are provided by multiple sources. All of the statistics used are possible to validate by visiting the respective websites. eBizMBA and Digital Strategy Consulting are commercial e-business site which were used for some of the social media site statistics. Statistics related to Japanese internet usage were gathered from Internet Live Stats and Statista, both of which are commercial internet statistic companies.

3.2 Research design

For the purposes of this thesis, exploratory study was chosen as research design. In exploratory study, discovery of ideas and insights is the main point instead of hard facts. The advantage of this research method is flexibility, since research problems can change when finding new information. Importance of exploratory study is in defining problem and investigating to find new problems. (Kothari 2004, 35-36.)

Aim of this guide is to give insights into adapting organic marketing for Japanese markets. Explanatory approach enables the guide to provide recommendations and solutions for the different situations that are found to exist.

This guide was constructed using qualitative research method. Hypothesis was broad and whole picture of organic marketing in Japan was intended to be analyzed Content analysis, archival research and participant observation were all used as methods of this research. (Website of Explorable 2015)

4 JAPANESE CULTURAL VALUES AND HOFSTEDE'S CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

Dutch social anthropologist Geert Hofstede created a framework based on his research on national cultures and their differences. He categorized these different aspects to six different cultural dimensions. He called these dimension Power distance, Collectivism versus individualism, Feminity versus masculinity, Uncertainty avoidance, Long term orientation and Indulgence. (Hofstede 2010, 31)

These dimensions have on numerous occasions been used to compare and define different business cultures to help international business. Organic marketing is no exception and the following section tells Hofstede's views on Japanese business culture.
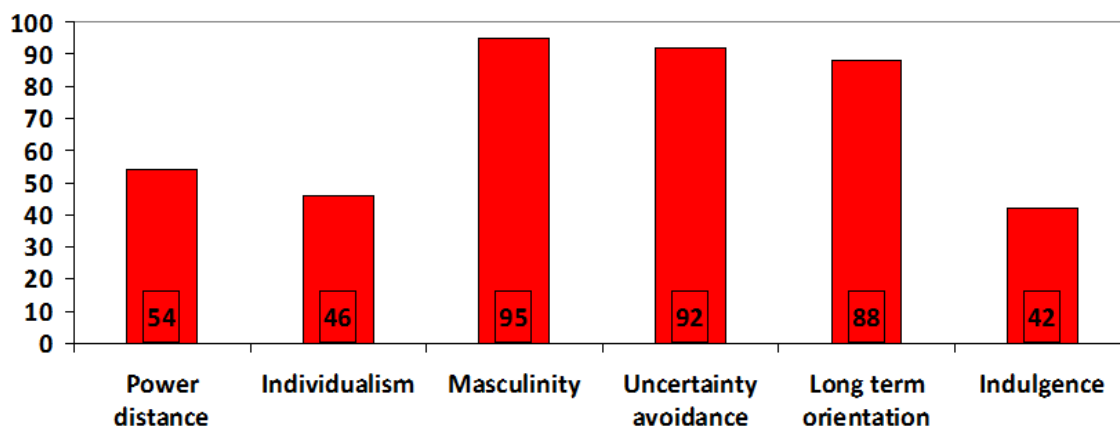
Figure 2. Hofstede's dimensions: Japan. (Website of Hofstede Centre 2015)

4.1 Power distance

Power distance score indicates the attitude of the culture towards inequality. It has to do with the difference of power between members of institutions, companies and organizations. It shows the extent the less powerful members expect and/or accept any kind of inequality. (Website of Hofstede Centre 2015)

Higher score indicates more power distance. Japans score is 54, which is slightly high power distance. They are hierarchical and aware of their status in their group, but to lesser extent than the majority of Asian cultures. Japanese are grown to think everyone as equal and are generally very meritocratic. (Website of Hofstede Centre 2015)

Decision making is a slow process in Japan. Every decision goes through every hierarchical layer all the way to the top, which may be perceived as higher power distance than it actually is. In practice, however, the top leaders are not making the decisions alone like in societies with higher power distance. (Website of Hofstede Centre 2015)

"Ringi" is the traditional Japanese system of decision making. Group is together responsible for their actions and the emphasis is in maintaining every members "face."

Decision making is concentrated on middle managerial level, but is affected by other levels. (Pukkila 2010, 64-65)

Higher than 50 score means that Japanese accept certain amount of inequality and do not easily demand more even distribution of power. It is not a norm to question the management's decisions or their role. (Website of Geert and Gert Jan Hofstede 2015)

4.2 Individualism versus collectivism

Individualism is the flip side of collectivism. This dimension is the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. In individualistic societies everyone is expected to look after themselves and their immediate families. Ties between separate individuals are loose. In collective societies individuals are more strongly integrated into cohesive in-groups. Group offers protection and expects loyalty from its members.

In essence, this value indicates the degree of interdependence the society maintains among its members. Collectivist individual defines his/her self-image as "we", while individualistic individual defines it as "I."

Japan scores 46, referring to slightly collectivistic society. Many of the characteristics of a collectivistic society can be seen in Japan. Harmony of group is more important than expression of individual opinions. Strong sense of shame for losing "face" is also present. However, it is important to note that Japanese society is not as collectivistic as some of her Asian neighbors. (Website of Hofstede Centre 2015)

Japanese don't have the extended family system that tends to be the norm among other Asian nations. Many view them collectivistic by Western standards. However, Japanese are more inclined to group behavior than many European or American nations. (Website of Geert and Gert Jan Hofstede 2015)

The phenomenon of famous Japanese loyalty to their companies is one example of why many view Japan as collective society. It is however important to know that the difference is based on individual choice and that Japanese in-group is situational. Hofstede Centre (2015) points out that in more collectivistic culture, people are loyal to their inner group by birth, such as their extended family and their local community.

Japanese generally tend to adopt "we" way of thinking. Recently this way of thinking has started to gradually disappear from Japanese society because the newer generations have begun to work in more western ways when doing business. The change is not instant, but is already noticeable. (Website of Hofstede Centre 2015)

4.3 Femininity versus masculinity

Website of Geert and Gert Jan Hodstede (2015) cites that "The IBM studies revealed that (a) women's values differ less among societies than men's values; (b) men's values from one country to another contain a dimension from very assertive and competitive and maximally different from women's values on the one side, to modest and caring and similar to women's values on the other." Modest, caring pole is considered feminine while more masculine pole is motivated by competitiveness and success.

High score indicates masculinity and Japan scored 95, which is in the world's higher end. Japanese society emphasises relentless competition, achievement and success. Individual success is not as important as success of the group. Typical Japanese is best motivated when he/she is part of what he/her perceives as "winning team". In many aspects of Japanese culture it is easy to see the drive for excellence and perfection. (Website of Geert and Gert Jan Hofstede 2015)

物づくりを通じ社会へ貢献

Contribution to the society through MONOZUKURI

Picture 1. Monozukuri. (Webshite of Shoei 2015)

Monozukuri is a term often encountered in Japanese business. Literally it means "producing things" as mono is 'thing' and tsukuru means "process of making." The the phrase has more precise connotation. It means having the mindset to produce excellent products (and to extent, services) and also improve while doing so. The term has become iconic in Japanese business culture´s strive to become perfect.

Japan is a nation notorious for extremely competitive workers, which is related of highly masculine work culture. Working to the point where mental or physical exhaustion causes death has a word in Japanese language, karoshi. Karoshi was estimated cause of death to 200 workers who died to heart attacks or cerebral hemorrhaging after long working hours. Nearly 22 percent of Japanese work more than 49 hours a week. (Kageyama 2015)

4.4 Uncertainty avoidance

The attitude of the society towards unknowable future determines the score of uncertainty avoidance. It dictates how willing the society is to take risks and how well it tolerates uncertain situations. The basis of this dimension is that extreme ambiguity creates intolerable anxiety, to which every society has developed different means to alleviate it. (Hofstede 2010, 189)

In this dimension Japan scores extremely high score of 92, meaning that they tend to avoid uncertainness. Constant threat of natural disasters has caused Japanese culture in general to be one to prepare for almost anything imaginable. The same mindset can be seen in business and customer behaviour. (Website of Geert and Gert Jan Hofstede 2015)

Easy predictability and trustworthiness are seen as very desirable traits with business partner. This manifests in expectation for each party to follow strict etiquette and manner of doing business to build up trust. It is also a slow process to steer Japanese businesses away from ways that have in history been deemed as safe. (Website of Geert and Gert Jan Hofstede 2015)

The Japanese businesses emphasise structure and codes of behaviour. They also have n natural aversion towards ambiguity. This is a critical point to keep in mind when conducting business in Japanese markets. Geert Hofstede Centre (2015) website points out that in corporate Japan risk factor and feasibility studies are carefully conducted before starting any meaningful projects.

4.5   Long term orientation versus short term orientation

Japan scores 88 in this dimension. This means that that the Japanese culture is very long term oriented. Japanese businesses maintain high rate of investment in R&D even in economically difficult times. Steady growth of market share is prioritized over quarterly profit to ensure maximum durability of the company. Companies are expected to serve stakeholders and society for many generations. (Website of Hofstede Centre 2015)

Long term orientation is a cultural attribute that emphasizes the future and persistence. Long term oriented businesses might be more interested in their profit ten years from now than this year's profit.

Long term oriented workers value learning, honesty, adaptability, accountability and self-discipline. They invest in lifelong personal networks and see leisure time as less important than their short term oriented counterparts. He/she sees virtue more important than truth and is prone to synthetic thinking (the combination of separate ideas into a complex whole.) (Hofstede 2010, 251)

Japanese fatalism is linked to this dimension. "Japanese see their life as a very short moment in a long history of mankind." One is supposed to do his/her best with the time he has. (Website of Hofstede Centre 2015)

4.6 Indulgence

This dimension has to do with the extent to which people are trying to control their impulses. High score means more indulgence, low score means the society is more restrained. It is related to feeling of happiness and perception of control/helplessness. Weak control is called indulgence and strong control is called restraint. (Hofstede 2010, 291)

Japan scores 42 indicating that she has a culture of restraint. Many traits of restrained culture are clearly visible. Low percentage of people are identifying themselves as very happy and perception of helplessness is stronger than feeling of control (fatalism.) Low value of leisure, tight society, moral discipline and cynicism are also traits of restrained society. Being a country with well educated population with low birthrate is also one of the traits. (Hofstede 2010, 291; Website of Hofstede Centre 2015)

Hofstede Centre website (2015) explains this restrained Japanese cultural dimension, which can be extended to business culture. While more indulgent societies emphasize leisure time, the restrained societies aim to control the gratification of their desires. Actions are perceived to be restrained by social norms and overly indulgence is perceived as unjustified.

4.7 Critique

Geert Hofstede is a noted authority on cultural research. His work has however been criticized for many reasons on numerous occasions. Even though Hofstede provides useful guidelines for understanding business cultures, it might be advisable not to rely entirely to it for when engaging business.

One example of critique is that some researchers point out that surveys are not an appropriate instrument for accurately determining and measuring cultural disparity. Variables that are being measured are culturally sensitive and subjective values. This critique is aimed towards the relevancy of Hofstede´s research. (Schwartz 1999, 23-47)

5 ORGANIC MARKETING

5.1 Definition of organic marketing

Term inbound marketing, synonymous with organic marking, was created by Brian Halligan, the founder of internet company Hubspot from Boston. The idea is to earn customers attention as opposed to interrupting him with sales fliers or spam like in outbound marketing. (Prescot 2012)

The attention of customers is gained by content creation and making the created content desirable and easily available to customer. From internet viewpoint, this means publishing interesting posts to various social media sites, creating pulses from your websites and making your content as easy to find as possible via search engine optimization. Any kind of multimedia (video, picture, text, podcast) is a tool for organic marketing, since the remarkable content is the key concept. (Halligan & Shah 2010, 31)

The point which makes marketers interested in organic marketing is the same as the older idea of Word of Mouth, which is "oral, person to person communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial, concerning a brand, a product or a service" (Arndt 1967, 3)

Gained attention base can be utilized in various ways. Bill Prescot from Times-Standard news points out one of the simplest ones. eNewsletter (newsletter that is sent through email) sign up can be added to website, blog or any virtual location. They are also easy to spread via signup sheets in events.

The difference of this type of eNewsletter list to outbound marketing spam lists is that everyone in the list has personally given permission to send them advertisement. This way the marketer avoids a part of the usual resentment towards unwanted distractions. By giving customers something extra, like interesting things to read or coupons the interest can be maintained. (Prescot 2012)

The attention gained has ability to grow exponentially. Links to company's posts and website will make it more visible in search engines, Google as the most important one, and start spreading in multiple different social media sites. This works both in B2C and B2B marketing. (Halligan & Shah 2010, 6)
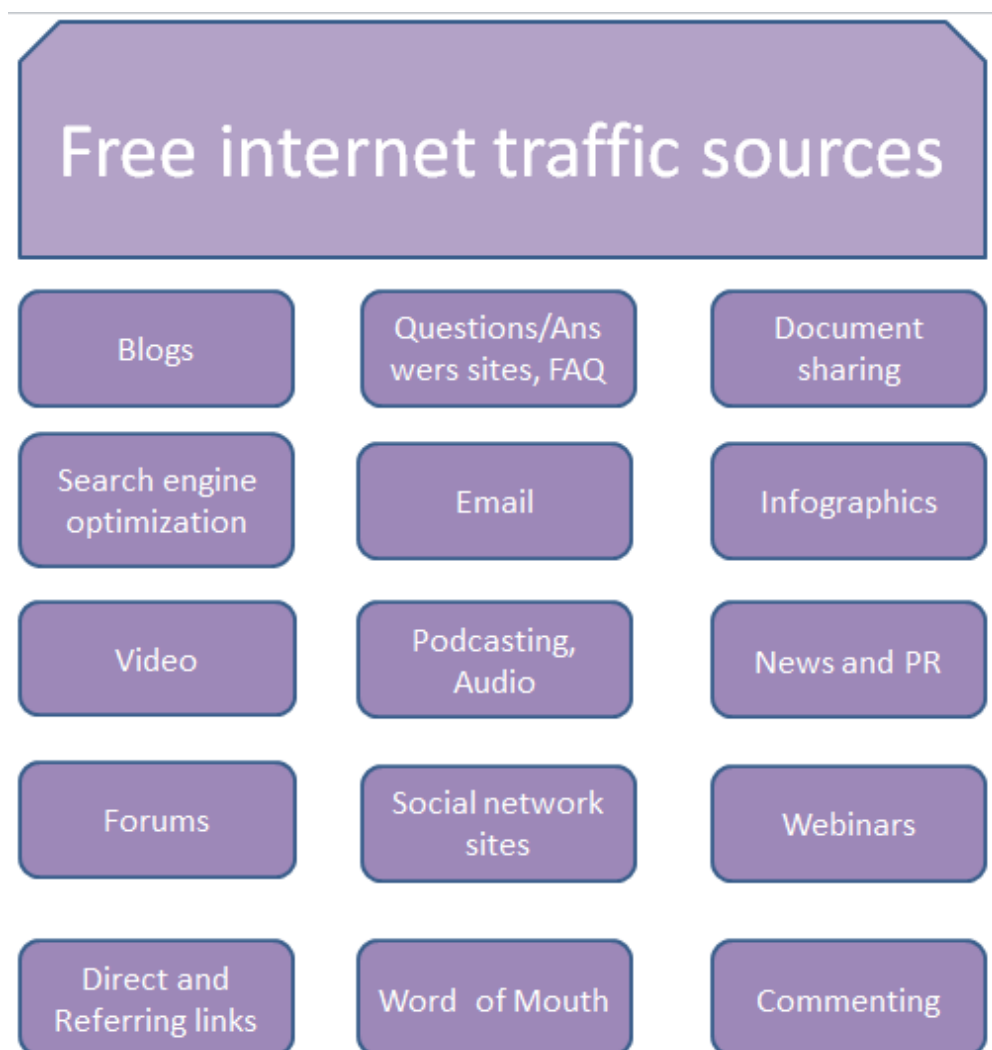

Figure 3. Examples of free internet traffic sources that can be utilized in organic marketing. (Huuskonen 2015)

Internet based organic marketing has massive amounts of different sources that can be used. This guide focuses on social media channels, blogging, search engine optimization and website localization. Social media and blogging aspects are focused on content creation and making contacts, while search engine optimization and website localization are related to making the content easier to find and spread.

5.2 Definition of social media

Social Media is internet-based software and interfaces available on multiple platforms. Social media allows individual interaction from one person to another or in groups. Data exchanged can include for example messages, personal photos, thoughts, biographical data and professional information. (Website of Investopedia 2015)

Social media is based on online conversations on different platforms such as computers and mobile phones. These conversations are often based on user created contents. These include creating, sharing, exchanging information, ideas, and multimedia in virtual communities and networks. (Pitt, 2012, 109–119)

Currently the most popular social media sites gather hundreds of millions of unique monthly customers. Website of eBizMBA a prominent internet business guide, maintains a list of the most popular social media sites. Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are currently the most used social media sites. (Website of eBizMBA 2015)

Social media sites tend to intertwine, creating links to other sites. Content is often transferred in-between the site and conversations can be made public. The users can make profiles as themselves or make alter egos, making it important to acknowledge the difference.
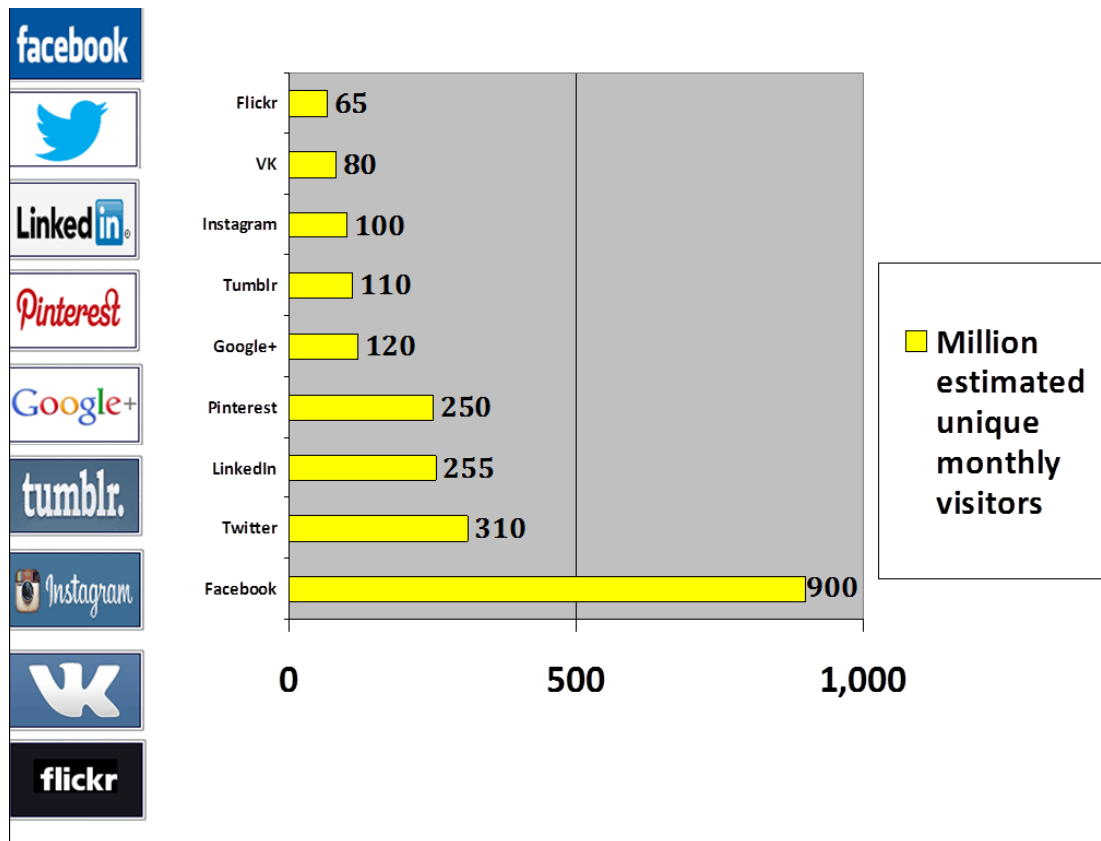
Figure 4. Comparison of popularity of top 9 social media sites. Facebook still maintains its dominant role in social media. (Website of eBizMBA 2015)

5.3   Online profile for social media

Operating in various social media sites requires creation of several user profiles. Profiles usually consist of username, avatar image, links and summary of personal information user wants to share. Profiles can gain attention similarly to posts and are sometimes similarly open for commenting. (Halligan & Shah 2010, 86-88)

For professional social media marketing, it is recommended to be careful in profile creation. They are part of building reliability and social media presence and affect the way users view their posts. Style and approach in social media should be considered when creating profiles. (McCoy 2015)

Important question is if the creator wants to act as himself/herself in person or use an alter ego. In many sites this is not a question, as they require the profile creator to use their real information. Consistency helps to create personal brand, so it is often the

best choice to stick to real name in most situations. For the same reason, it is beneficial to choose memorable and recognizable username that is easy to track. (Halligan & Shah 2010, 86-88)

Contacting and connecting in social media often rely on "friend" function. Accessing someone´s information and spreading the wanted posts and information first requires gaining the person as "friend" or "follower." Profile picture and bio are the main aspect of first impression the one gives online, giving them additional importance.

After creating many profiles the creator can link them to their other sites and/or profiles to create traffic in-between. While not helpful from SEO-point of view, it can be helpful when creating a brand and blending information. (Halligan & Shah 2010, 86-88)

Information presented on profile can be tailored to focus on desired contacts. Early decision on how to contact the desired targets and active content creation makes it possible to start building brand that starts to branch out to different social media used. (McCoy 2015)

Picture 2. An example of user profile aimed for marketing. (Website of LinkedIn 2015)

5.4   Search engine optimization

Search engine optimization, SEO, is a process of modifying a website so it is easier to find with various internet search engines. The idea is to appear as high in search result list as possible in order to attract the maximum amount of attention and clicks for the link of the website. (Website of Moz Inbound marketing 2015)

The term SEO only applies to practice of affecting the visibility of a website in a search engine's organic or natural search results. Google AdWords is one example of commercial marketing by purchasing better visibility from Google. This is different from SEO, which refers to modifying the websites to improve visibility naturally. (Salomaa 2014, 15)

1 | Google
1 - eBizMBA Rank | **1,100,000,000** - Estimated Unique Monthly Visitors | 1 - Compete Rank | 1 - Quantcast Rank | 1 - Alexa Rank | *Last Updated:* April 1, 2015.
The Most Popular Search Engines | eBizMBA

2 | Bing
15 - eBizMBA Rank | **350,000,000** - Estimated Unique Monthly Visitors | 5 - Compete Rank | 19 - Quantcast Rank | 22 - Alexa Rank | *Last Updated:* April 1, 2015.
The Most Popular Search Engines | eBizMBA

3 | Yahoo! Search
18 - eBizMBA Rank | **300,000,000** - Estimated Unique Monthly Visitors | *8* - Compete Rank | *28* - Quantcast Rank | NA - Alexa Rank | *Last Updated:* April 1, 2015.
The Most Popular Search Engines | eBizMBA

4 | Ask
25 - eBizMBA Rank | **245,000,000** - Estimated Unique Monthly Visitors | 14 - Compete Rank | 31 - Quantcast Rank | 31 - Alexa Rank | *Last Updated:* April 1, 2015.
The Most Popular Search Engines | eBizMBA

5 | Aol Search
245 - eBizMBA Rank | **125,000,000** - Estimated Unique Monthly Visitors | *250* - Compete Rank | *240* - Quantcast Rank | NA - Alexa Rank | *Last Updated:* April 1, 2015.
The Most Popular Search Engines | eBizMBA

Picture 3. The five most popular search engines. (Website of eBizMBA 2015)

Google is well known leader in search engine business, maintaining more than billion unique monthly visitors. It is more than the amount achieved by the four next competitors combined. (Website of eBizMBA 2015)

Search engines function basically as massive indexes of websites that can be used to find specific webpages. Users provide information, such as words or sentences, which search engines use to return list of results. Lists are ranked according to relevancy and authority of pages that are found to contain the topic. (Website of Brick Marketing, 2015)

Search engines utilize links by using automatized robots (lines of code) known commonly as "crawlers" to reach massive amounts of undocumented websites and compile them into databases. These robots are to be taken into account by keeping links open for them. By optimizing the site, crawlers can be helped to find the intended sites and files that are to be shown in search results. (Website of Moz Inbound marketing, 2015)

Search engines employ mathematical equations known as algorithms to find the most relevant material for searchers. These algorithms vary between different search engines, as does their criteria. The algorithms are complex and consist hundreds of variables, but they are the key to optimize websites to be as high in the search rankings as possible. (Website of Moz Inbound marketing 2015)

Search engines rely on the assumption that the more popular a page or site is, the more valuable the information it contains must be. The algorithms rank the sites for their relevance the searching, based on the words used when searching. The sites that are most relevant are further ranked based on their popularity (unique visitors per month, amount of links to the site) and after that the searcher is given a list of the sites that meet the criteria. (Website of Moz Inbound marketing 2015)

Relevance of the site is not simple aspect to define. The best way to increase site relevance is to achieve genuine interest for useful content that is optimized for the visitors of the site, which is in line with the philosophy of organic marketing.

Hundreds of factors influence relevance. These factors depend on the search engine and every of them provide detailed instructions in their sites. Anyone interested in SEO should read these instructions. (Website of Moz Inbound Marketing 2015)

5.5 Blogging

Blog (web log) is a website containing writer's or group of writers' own experiences, opinions and observations that often include images and links to other websites. They are found on platforms in which it´s administrators can publish contents, called posts, that usually can be commented upon by blogs visitors. Published content is presented in chronological order (newest first) and posts are archived separately with their own URL codes. This makes it possible for other bloggers or visitors to link to individual posts to spread them. (Byron. & Broback, 2006, 2)

Tumblr, Svbtle, WordPress, SETT, Blogger, Medium, Svbtle, Postach.io, Google+, Quora and Facebook Notes are all examples of sites that provide space for bloggers. eBizMBA (2015) estimates that the most popular blogs have tens to hundreds of millions unique monthly visitors.

Many businesses have adopted blogging as part of their marketing. Blogging can easily be linked to other social media activity and can be used for specific products, events and companies themselves providing great utility depending on the companies' interest. Blogs can be used to extend information about products, companies or brands into new markets and audiences. (Byron. & Broback 2006, 5-8)

Blogging is possible to do free or with trivially low cost, fitting into organic marketing's philosophy of attracting customers for free by content creation. Blogs are flexible tools that can be expanded upon with new contents or extensions with relatively low effort. They can be used to generate hot spots for social media attention. It is also possible to use it as a relay attention from them to intended website. (Byron & Broback 2006, 13)

Posting a blog post or commenting in popular blog can generate large amount of attention and spread to wide audience via social media. Inbound links can be encouraged in various ways, which can result in blogs increased visibility. This is highly advantageous in marketing perspective. (Byron & Broback. 2006, 25-27)

Idea of blogging is also supportive of other aspect of organic marketing, search engine optimization. Regularly updated content, links by other bloggers and often informal language are all advantages when showing up in search engine listings. Interacting with other bloggers may cause conversations to spread to other blogs and generate additional interest from users. (Byron & Broback 2006, 17)
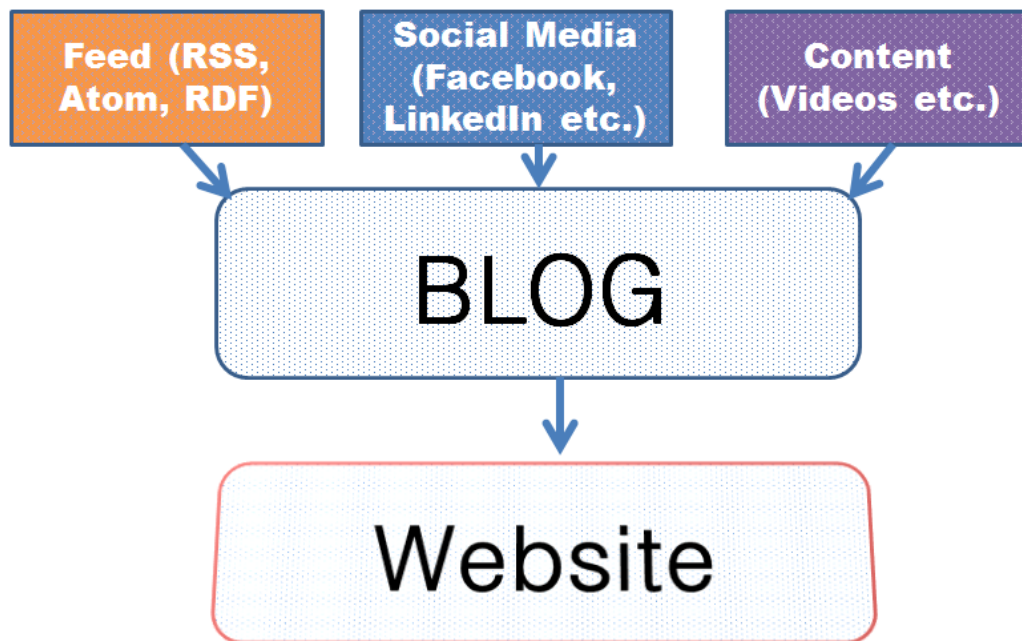
Figure 5. Blog can be utilized to spread content from multiple sources. (Huuskonen 2015)

From marketing viewpoint, blogs are a tool that can give a company an identity and a voice to gain visibility in the web. They provide a channel for genuine conversation, in which companies can take a role of narrators that can guide the flow of discussion. Owner of the blog also controls the content of the commentators, granting more control than most social media sites. (Byron & Broback 2006, 16-17)

5.6 Website feed

Website feed is a system that uses group of standard web feed formats to publish information that is updated frequently (for example blogs.) It is a machine readable (usually XML) content publication. It gives option for users to subscribe to website feed such as RSS to remove the need to manually check new content. Browser will

start monitoring the site and informing the user for any new updates. (Website of RSS Advisory Board 2015)
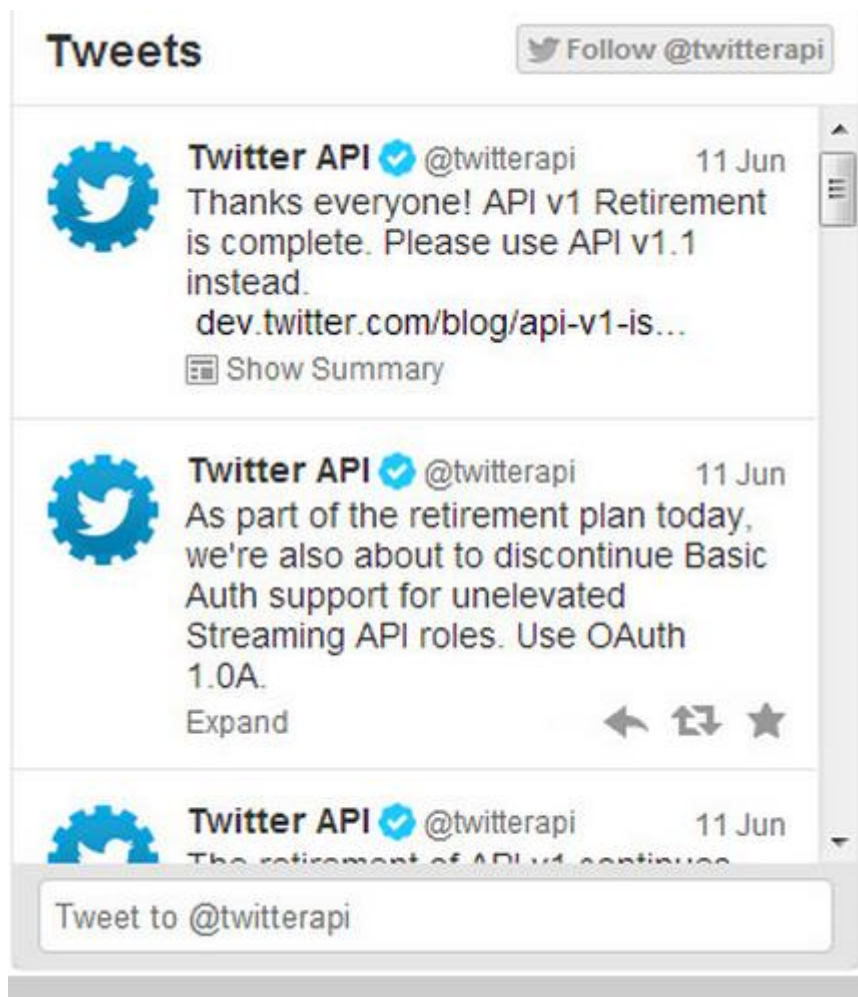
Picture 4. An example of a website feed from website of Twitter (2014).

5.7 Website localization

Localization is a term often used in conjunction with internationalization. Internationalization means preparing a product to make it suitable for efficient localization. (Website of GX Localizations, 2015)

In case of websites, localization can be defined as the process of modifying a website to fit a specific locale. In this case locale is a group that shares qualities which may require different version of a service or product. This may relate to countries, regions and languages. (Yunker 2002, 17)

Localization is multidimensional term by nature. It is used as general definition of preparing user interfaces, documentation, software, online text and websites in different locale. Localization can be divided into three sub-categories: Internationalization, localization and translation. (Website of GX Localizations, 2015)

Localization can be divided into three categories:

- Internationalization is making software compatible with local machines in target locale and making the software localizable.
- Localization is the process of making textual material readable by target locale.
- Translation is the process of translating the text into target language.

(Website of GX Localizations, 2015)

Website localization is thus highly subjective term depending on the context. The term is mostly used by international companies searching for new markets. Language, culture and regional traits are all to be taken into account when planning for website. It is important to take specific targeted consumers into account, as there are large differences between preferences of, for example, different nationalities.

There are many technical elements that are to be considered when localizing. Bert Esselink lists them in his Practical Guide to Localisation (2000) as follows:

1. Address formats.
2. Color conventions. The meaning of different colors in different cultures.
3. Connection speeds. Size of the files used in website should be altered to make it possible to view them without unnecessary delays in regions with slower internet connections.
4. Content. Local information that shows depending on the website viewer's location. German visitor might be interested in new branch opening in Berlin for example.
5. Currency formats and tax information.
6. Date and time formats and calendar.
7. Iconic conventions. Different ways to show exits or other points with graphics.
8. Language. For example, website can view American and British English separately.
9. Legal conventions: Copyright and personal data protection differ from country to country.
10. Name formats.

11. Number formats. For example decimals and separators. Telephone number formatting.
12. Paper sizes for printing.
13. Sound files. Different audio and music for different cultures.
14. Units of measure. For example pounds and kilograms.

Layout of the page is also one of points to consider. Western cultures read in F-shaped pattern from left to right, which can be seen in layouts of the websites and magazines for example. Layouts and text placements have to be reconsidered when localizing the page to different language. The way people read, the length of the words and meaning of phrases change from culture to culture. (Rozwens 2014)

Text characters are another issue that needs to be solved to ensure intended display of the website. By encoding your website correctly it is possible to avoid viewers seeing non-intended symbols. UTF-8 is encoding that is generally seen as working solution, but for Asian viewers UTF-16 helps to reduce the bandwidth due to not primarily using Latin characters. (Rozwens 2014)

Language	2013 Internet population (In millions)
English	600.85
Simplified Chinese	564.22
Spanish	217.54
Arabic	110.38
Portuguese	104.60
Japanese	104.56
Russian	104.15
French	80.22
German	78.10
Hindi	77.65
Korean	44.90
Wu Chinese	37.39
Italian	37.19
Vietnamese	34.77
Traditional Chinese	30.23
Urdu	28.32
Egyptian Arabic	26.55
Bengali	25.57
Indonesian	25.39

Figure 6. Increasing amount of internet population is non-English. Localization can help companies reach wider audiences. Japanese stands currently as the sixth most prominent language. (Website of Hang-Teng Liao 2015)

Legal concerns also related to localization. When translating and localizing it is important to ensure the legality of the content in the target area. Hiring legal specialist from the target are is expensive but effective way to not violate any regulations on terms of service, complaint procedures, taxes, customer support, data protection , privacy or refund policies. (Rozwens 2014)

5.8   Social media management tools

Different internet traffic sources that can be used for social media marketing amount to thousands. There are many programs that can be used to manage multiple different social media sites simultaneously. This reduces the effort and time invested. This kind of software can potentially simplify the process of social media management by combining several different social media accounts into one interface.

Number and type of social media sites that can be managed simultaneously differs from program to program and companies need to make a decision on which program they should invest in. There is large amount of different social media management software in the market, both freeware and commercial software.

From marketing point of view, it is beneficial that many of the software also provide detailed data for analyzing the numbers behind social media marketing. Data can be used to monitor the current situation and the attention that has been gained via organic marketing. Return of investment is impossible to determine exactly when using organic marketing. Social media management software still makes it possible to evaluate the value of time used for social media marketing.

Website of Search Engine Journal (2015) provides one of the many lists for widely used social media management tools. HootSuite, SocialOomph, Tweepi, Spredfast, Buffer, Sprout Social, Everypost, Bitly, SocialFlow and Crowdbooster are all examples of software that can be used to manage or analyze data for organic marketing.

Another point that may interest marketers is that some tools can be used to track conversations on social media. Programs such as Engagio are able to track conversations based on keywords, making it possible to search for both negative and positive feedback for products, persons, events and brands. (Website of Engagio 2015)

6 ORGANIC MARKETING CHANNELS IN JAPAN

6.1 Japanese internet user statistics

Japan boasts fourth largest internet population in the world. The amount is over 109 million internet users when counting every individual accessing internet via any device as of 2014. Number of internet users is growing fast despite of declining population.

Japan

Year (July 1)	Internet Users**	User Growth	New Users	Country Population	Population Change	Penetration (% of Pop. with Internet)	Country's Share of World Population	Country's Share of World Internet Users	Global Rank
2014*	109,252,912	8%	7,668,535	126,999,808	-0.11%	86.03%	1.75%	3.74%	4
2013*	101,584,377	1%	993,486	127,143,577	-0.08%	79.90%	1.78%	3.75%	4
2012	100,590,891	0%	-60,697	127,249,704	-0.05%	79.05%	1.80%	3.99%	4

Figure 7. Japan has high internet penetration. Even though the amount of internet using is rising fast, it cannot continue growing for long as the population becomes saturated. (Website of Internet Live Stats 2015)

Age distribution of the Japan reveals that only 32% of the country's internet users are under age of 35. This may be due to Japans early adaption of internet and mobile services. (Webstite of Statista 2015)

Distribution of internet users in Japan as of August 2014, by age group

This statistic gives information on the age distribution of internet users in Japan as of August 2014. During this period of time, 15 percent of internet users in Japan were between 25 and 34 years old.
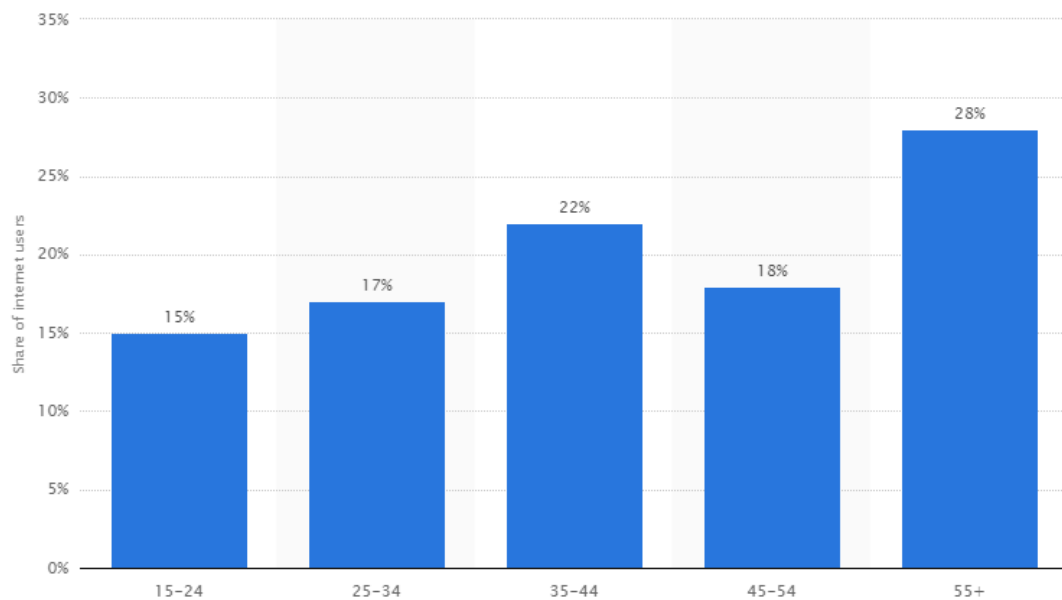

Figure 8. Most of Japans internet users are 34-55+ years old. (Website of Statista 2015)

Text based communication is popular due to Japanese cultural traits. Talking on mobiles during commuting is against the etiquette. This has resulted on many Japanese commuters to spend their time with text-based communication. (Simcott 2015)

6.2 Japanese social media marketing channels

When conducting social media marketing in Japan it is important to remember that much of the social media behavior is mobile-centric. Large part of the social media users engage in social gaming. Many marketers aiming for Japanese social media consumers have already noticed that. (Digital Strategy Consulting 2013)

Japanese social networking scene is not entirely dominated by Facebook or any single large and global social media service. Many different networks occupy positions in markets and need to be taken into account when doing social media marketing.

Facebook is growing however and already belongs to the top players in the field. (Digital Strategy Consulting 2013)
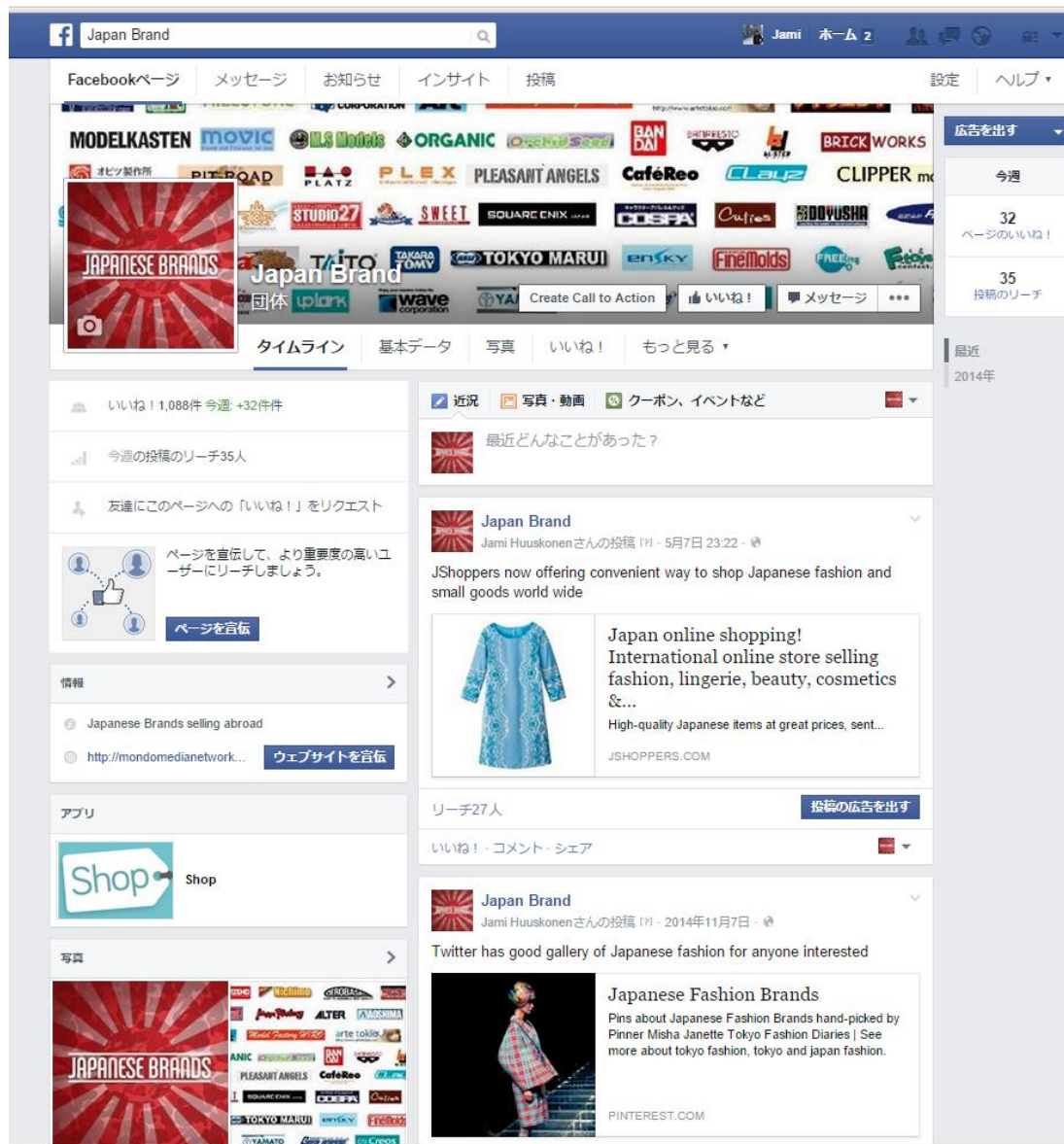
Picture 5. Example of Japanese Facebook channel used to market brand. This group is maintained by the writer of this thesis on behalf of Mondo Media Networks, an organic marketing firm operating in Nagoya where he conducted his working practice period. (Website of Facebook 2015)

Social media marketing strategies, marketing model (such as SNeM2S) and definition of marketing structures are not included in this guide. Instead, this section focuses on distinctive features and channels that are used in Japanese social media.

When planning to utilize organic marketing in Japan, it is important to know which channels to use. The array of social media is different from any other country.

6.2.1 Line

Line is an application for instant communications on wide array of electronic devices. Usable on computers, tablets and smartphones, the Line launched in Japan in 2011 and has grown to become a massive success story. The amount of users has reached 560 million worldwide with most active users being from Japan, making it one of the largest social networks operating there. (McCracken 2015)

Line currently operates as mobile application on Android, iOS, BlackBerry, Firefox OS, Nokia Asha, Windows Phone and iOS tablets. There are also versions for Microsoft Windows and Mac OS platforms. (Website of Line 2015)

Line has promoted itself by incorporating into Japanese pop culture and making revenue from wide array of sources. The application allows purchase of virtual stickers depicting original and popular character that act as emoji in conversations. It also sells games that can be played solo or with other Line users online. CEO of Line Corp mentions that "Merchandise featuring Line's own characters is now a major business for the company." (McCracken 2015)

Application features option to establish groups up to 200 people and share media and chat with them. Bulletin boards for chatting, liking and commenting can be created. Features include direct messaging box for communicating with other users that are added as friends (that can be added by using QR codes, line ids or even by simultaneously shaking phones), video, photo and music sharing and free voice and video calls. (Website of Line 2015)

Of all features, games provide the majority of Line Corporation's revenue. True to the philosophy of pay-to-win games, games in Line are "free to play, with the option to fork over money to progress more rapidly than you could through raw skill." (McCracken 2015)

Picture 6. Example of Line conversation to the left, showing stickers used as emoji. (Website of Line 2015)

Account making and content creation is free for anyone and there are pre-determined channels on conducting business within the app. It is therefore a strong choice for anyone targeting Japanese social media audience. November 2013 Line reported having 50 million users from Japan. (Akimoto 2013)

6.2.2 Mixi

Perhaps the most distinctively Japanese service on the list, Mixi is social networking service that was established in 2004. The idea of the service is to pair people with similar interests. It gives option to write blog, comment on other blogs and write and read messages with other users. It offers also friend feature and forums. (Website of Mixi 2015)

For foreign social media marketer, complications may arise due to fact that registering to Mixi requires a valid Japanese cellphone number. In practice, this prevents anyone who is not or has not been a resident of Japan from signing in to the service. (Website of Mixi 2015)

Mixi, unlike other social networking services in this list, is based on anonymity. Profiles usually do not reveal the actual user, instead showing a pseudonym. Signing up to service requires invitation from other user. (Website of Mixi 2015)

Mixi has been declining service in recent years. According to Stephen Karnas from Akihabara news (2015) "it's been announced that they will effectively merge with iStyle, an online marketing company best known for its cosmetics sales site" This along with the difficulty of entering the service as a foreigner, the service is not recommended for social media marketing in Japan. As a curiosity it can be mentioned that Mixi tsukare（ミクシィ疲れ）is an actual phrase in Japanese language meaning the feeling of getting tired of Mixi and wishing to stop using the service.

6.2.3 Twitter

Twitter has gained large and increasing popularity in Japan after its launch in 2008. Website of eMarketer (2015) presumes that Japans Twitter population will reach 25.5 million in 2016. This number is the largest in the Asia.

Twitter is social media service that is based on short messages (tweets) of maximum 140 characters. Tweets are by default publicly visible but can be made to be visible only to followers of the publisher. In addition to computers, Twitter is available for Android, BlackBerry, Firefox OS, iPad, iPhone, NokiaS40 and WindowsPhone. (Website of Twitter 2015)

Like Mixi, Twitter accounts do not necessarily require real name. (Website of Twitter 2015) Aliases can be used, which is likely one of the features that has attracted Japanese users. This is also useful for organic marketers wishing to utilize alias or company name for tweeting.

Twitter is a channel that can be recommended for any company and strategy wishing to utilize social media marketing, due to nature of tweets (openness of the service)

and potential for high amount of publicity. It´s popularity in Japan also means that language barrier is the only thing to overcome when utilizing it.

Picture 7. Search engine provider Bing utilizing tweet for marketing and supporting Japanese disaster victims. (Website of Twitter 2015)

6.2.4 Facebook

Like Twitter, Facebook is a success story of big international social media service entering Japanese markets. Currently it has growing user base of 28 million users (Website of Statista 2015) and fully translated site features for Japanese users. (Website of Facebook 2015)
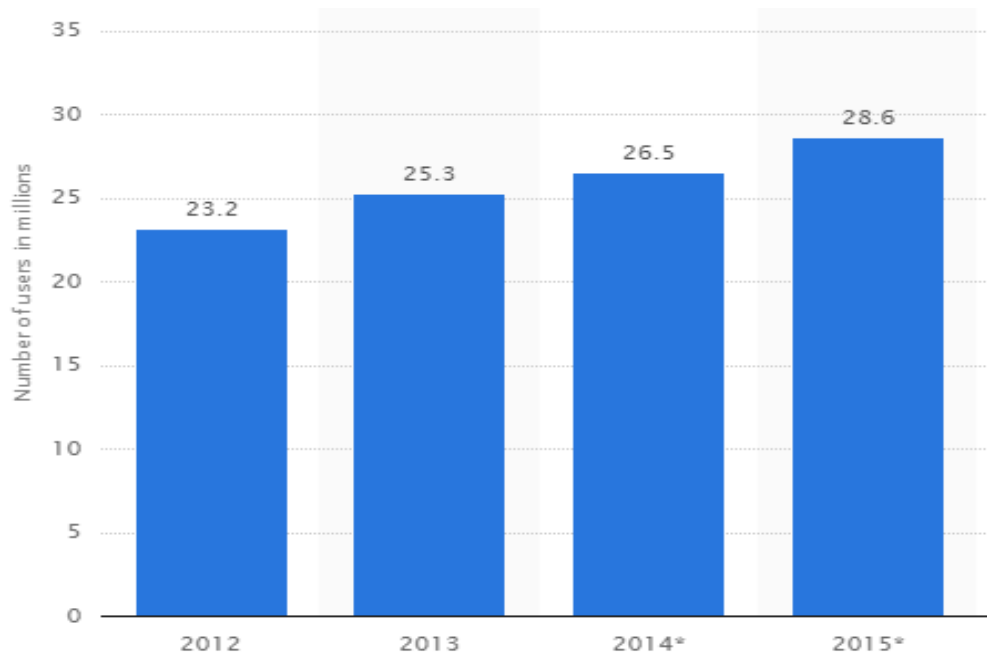
Figure 9. Facebook has steadily grown from 23 million to 28 million users between years 2012-2015. (Website of Statista 2015)

Facebook is the most popular social media site worldwide (Website of eBizMBA 2015) and it offers multiple channels for marketer to use. User can make use of personal timeline to share his feed (including newsfeed of the user activities) with his friends and followers. Alternative is to create communities and/or applications, which will become more visible by amassing more followers or likes. (Website of Facebook 2015)

Community following in Facebook has huge growth potential. Interestingly, statistics provided by website of Socialbakers (2015) point out that some of the most popular and fastest growing communities are in English. This means Japanese translation is not necessarily needed in all cases when conducting content creation in Facebook.

Largest Audience

pairs - ペアーズ   Facebook   楽天市場（Rakuten, Inc.）

Total fans
7 729 593   4 934 687   4 916 593

Fastest-Growing Pages in Japan   Last Day

ZEKKEI Japan   楽天市場（Rakuten,...   Tokyo Girls'...   Dragon Ball Z ...   Kei Nishikori

+7 426 Fans ↑   +4 726 Fans ↑   +4 126 Fans ↑   +2 088 Fans ↑   +1 749 Fans ↑

Picture 8. The biggest groups and the groups that are the currently growing fastest in Japanese Facebook. The groups written completely written in Latin script are in English and the ones written partly in Kanji or Katakana are in Japanese. (Website of SocialBakers 2015)

Any marketer utilizing social media in Japan should consider implementing Facebook into their strategy. Its steady growth and easy to implement marketing channels make good basis for organic marketing.

6.2.5 Mobile gaming

Japan has very visible mobile gaming culture, which is partly social gaming. Japanese word keitai denwa (携帯電話) means mobile phone, which has led calling the mobile phone gaming as keitai culture.

Website of Digital Strategy Consulting (2013) points out that the two largest mobile gaming platforms in Japan are Mobage with 40 million users and Gree with 29 million users. Organic marketers that intend to do content creation related to gaming should take these platforms into account.

6.3 Blogging and FC2

Blogging is very popular internet activity in Japan. This can be seen in the fact that the Japans biggest blogging host FC2 (Abbreviation of Fantastic Kupi-Kupi クピク ピ) had average of 28 million unique monthly visitors during year 2013. (Website of FC2 2015)

Even though FC2 is obviously the most used blogging host in Japan, it is important to note the marketer´s blog can be hosted anywhere. Domain names are available for low monthly cost. Free domains are also available from for example WordPress. Difference is that free domains will show the blog hosts name in site address which might be undesirable.
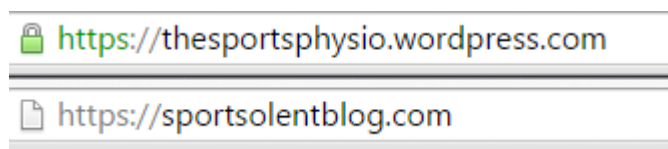
Picture 9. Addresses of two sports blogs. Both are hosted by WordPress, but the upper one has free domain name, thus showing ".wordpress" in address. (Website of WordPress 2015)

Starting a blog with templates offered by FC2, WordPress or one many other blog hosts is relatively simple way to get web presence and engage Japanese internet audience. It requires no coding experience and by adding user-made plugins it is possible to modify the blog. (Website of FC2 2015)

Hosting a site in FC2 has a few built in advantages. FC2 offers a way to make "blog friends" in similar manner as friends-function in many social media sites. This opens possibility for private messaging. These features combined with visitor list and active blog communities gives extra incentive to stay active in other blogs. This can help to gather attention to marketers own blog. (Website of FC2 2015)

FC2 also makes it possible to simplify social media management. Twitter and Facebook accounts can be connected to automatically bundle information entries. This

means that if used together, time can be saved compared to posting everything separately. (Website of FC2 2015)

After starting blog, FC2 is obvious target to search for relevant blogs to comment on. This is a simple way to start making presence in Japanese blogging world. The blogs targeted should be relevant to product/service offered. Basic blog marketing guidelines apply in Japan the same way they do elsewhere.

7 JAPANESE LOCALIZATION AND SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

7.1 Content translation

First challenge faced when trying to contact Japanese customers through internet is the language barrier. Only around 1 percent of Japanese population has enough skills in English or other foreign languages to fluently use foreign websites. There is also tendency to skip portions not written in Japanese. This makes it near-mandatory to arrange translation for any serious attempt to contact Japanese audience through internet. (Website of Intelligence Bridges 2015)

Japanese language also sets unique challenges for website localization. Difficulties may stem not only from the translation itself, but also from the extensive system of honorifics in Japanese language. Style of the text needs to be correct and is often difficult even for native speaker to construct properly.

Japanese use their own writing system consisting their two syllabic scripts, hiragana and katakana. They also use Chinese characters, kanji. This will change the layout of the text when translated. Text can be written either horizontally (yokogaki) or vertically called (tategaki.) (Website of Omniglot 2015)

There are different ways to speak and write Japanese. Arguably the most neutral way to do so is to use "teineigo", polite Japanese. It is a form that is used for example by

television presenters. Number of informal ways to speak also exist and dialects also affect the manner of expression.

Customers are often addressed in "songeiko." This form expresses respect and is used when speaking to superiors. This is important for marketer, because the user of this form implies that he/she is acting in professional capacity. It is also notable that songeiko can only be used to refer other people. This is not to be confused with "kenjōgo", which is form of expressing humility. It usually implies that the user is devoting his actions to assist another person.

In business language it is especially important to note the use of honorifics. In Japanese language the use of honorifics is relatively complex system. For example, it requires many companies to arrange training even for native speakers to use them correctly.

For contacting customers humor should be used with care. Japanese people are not accustomed to sarcasm the same way western people are and many styles of humor may miss the point. When wishing to utilize humor to market in Japan, it is advisable to research Japanese comedy beforehand. (Rudlin 2014)

Harmonious communication is important in Japanese culture, which means that additional care must be taken to ensure the style used in internet marketing is correct. As is the case with any language, automatic translators are not sufficient for translating content even in small scale. Automatic translation tends to have result that is confusing, incorrect style and outright misleading. This is emphasised by the fact that Japanese is agglutinative language, making it arguably even harder to translate automatically.

Complexity in style of speech leads to conclusion that if the content creator is not confident in his/her language ability, professional translator should be arranged. Care must be taken to ensure both the content creator and translators understand the intended style.

Cost of professional level Japanese website translation tends to vary from 0.05 to 0.16 euros per word, depending on the quality of service. Subtitling and video translation rates also vary depending on the service provider but are usually priced per minute. Because rates depend on the type of the service, precise price range is not possible to tell. (Website of ProZ 2015)

7.2 Content design

Showing respect to Japanese customers is important, as noted in translation section. Japanese are culturally sensitive, so effort has to be made to present the services/products in a favorable way. Even though western style is appreciated, it is recommended to show the marketed product/service on "Japanese platter." (Website of Intelligence Bridges 2015)

For this reason, it is advisable to know at least few basic principles for site design when customizing organic marketing for Japanese customers. Japanese websites, blogs, forums and social media posts often look very distinctive.

Japanese design in general has many unique forms. For aesthetic design there are two relevant terms that should be taken into consideration when creating content for Japanese. These are shibui and kawaii.

Shibui (渋い) is an adjective for subtle, unobtrusive and minimalistic beauty. Luke Barley from Architizer lists the seven key elements of shibui design as "simplicity, implicitness, modesty, silence, naturalness, everydayness, and imperfection." (Barley 2013)

Picture 10. Website of Osaka is good example of simplistic and modest shibui design. (Website of the Osaka 2015)

Kawaii (かわいい) is Japanese adjective for cute or lovable. In Japanese context it has become global artistic subculture. It can be seen in Japanese popular culture, clothing, entertainment, behavior and mannerism. Rounded shapes, big eyes and bright and simplistic design are all features of kawaii style. (Website of JapanToday Insight 2015)

Picture 11. Example of very kawaii café & bar site design. (Website of Maidreamin 2015)

Amount of details that a typical Japanese consumer is accustomed to is very high. Marketer should not hold back product/service information in their websites even if it seems excessive. This is in contrast to usually favored simplistic designs. (Website of Intelligence Bridges 2015)

Quantity of information on screen in many Japanese websites may sometimes feel overwhelming for non-Japanese, but Japanese are used to look for specific information from what may seem like mass of kanji, hiragana and katakana (Japanese syllabary.) to a viewer that is not accustomed to it.

Style of organic marketing depends greatly on type of service/product, so no hard guidelines can be given on what works best in every situation. Researching the situation is always advisable. For example, Japanese celebrities or pop culture phenomena's such as anime figures (Japanese cartoon) can provide ways to express messages efficiently.

Many existing companies provide services for internet content localization and design. It is worth considering for organic marketer if reaching the Japanese customers requires more that simple translation, such as customization of style and expression for local audience.

Picture 12. Comparison of Amazon Japan and Amazon Global. It is easy to see difference between the site aimed for Japanese users and English speaking users. Japanese sites are often tightly packed with information. (Website of Amazon 2015)

7.3 Domain name

.JP is the official Japanese domain name that can be used by any individual, group or organization with permanent Japanese postal address for general use. CO.JP is domain for registered companies (kaisha) and for registered foreign companies (gaikoku kaisha.) Both can be ordered from Japan Registry Services. (Website of Japan Registry Services 2015)

Country Code Top Level Japanese Domain Name (ccTLD:.jp) is a domain name that allows the usage of Japanese characters when typing the address. It works in following format: EXAMPLE.HOKKAIDO.JP, EXAMPLE.TOKYO.JP. This makes it

possible to market to Japanese audience much easier, since they can use their own writing system. (Website of Japan Registry Services 2015)

It is not possible to get Japanese domain name legally without having a postal address. It is recommended to use .com domain for simplicity if there is no intention to register company or get a postal address in Japan.

One option for getting postal address is to use virtual office address, which can be used as postal address when registering domain names. Executivecentre.com (2015), servcorp.co.jp (2015) and tokyocheapo.com (2015) are all examples of websites where one can order virtual office address from Japan.

7.4 Mobile support

Much of the internet traffic in Japan is mobile-centric. This makes it important to make sure the content created for organic marketing is accessible by mobile devices. (Digital Strategy Consulting 2013)

Most blog and social media platforms are already mobile friendly, either by default or by use of simple plugins. If marketer has his own website, it is recommended to make sure it supports mobile use, or it is possible to miss large part of potential traffic. This also hurts SEO, as for example Google algorithms take mobile support into account (Website of Google 2015)

Many guides exist related to making websites mobile friendly. One such example is article from Dmitri Lau (2014) which offers good basic rules for mobile optimization.

7.5 Color connotations and symbols

When localizing website for Japanese audience, one important thing to take into consideration is that color connotations and meanings of symbols used in site might be

totally different in Japan. For example, red is color of luck, purple is color of danger and four is unlucky number that tends to be avoided in general.

Care should be taken when using any kind of symbolism to convey message. It is good idea to "proof read" the site with Japanese person. This includes the possible audio used. Many Japanese might for example feel uncomfortable if a sound effect is used to imply error.

7.6 Search engine optimization for Japanese customers

Google tends to dominate search engine markets in general, but Japans most used search engine is surprisingly Yahoo. Even when Google lumps together its monthly unique users from YouTube, Google search engine and Gmail-email service it still falls short of Yahoo´s popularity. (Matsutani 2012)

The strong base of Yahoo may be due to Yahoo Japan being majorly owned by Softbank, Japanese telecommunications and Internet corporation. This has led the Yahoo Japan develop largely independently from Yahoo. This has allowed advertisers from Japan to benefit from using Yahoo, which can offer synergy and strong content package under same portal. (Matsutani 2012)

Interestingly, Yahoo Japan and Google Japan use the same search engine. This makes it possible to target over 90% of Japanese search engine users by optimizing a website for Google search engine. It is still important to remember that the two sites will show different results due to their different policies in showing the search results. (Hunt 2015)

This makes SEO in Japan relatively simple due to Google always offers up-to-date information on its optimization. Search Engine Optimization Starter Guide and Webmaster Tools Help are both readily available on Google´s website. (Website of Google 2015)

The most unique challenge for SEO in Japan is that to get top results the site must have proper Japanese translation with correct keywords. Yahoo Japan in particular heavily uses keywords to come up with pictures and emphasized search results. This means that websites with good keywords get more attention in search engine listing. (Hunt 2015)

Picture 13. Side by side comparison of search results. Search was made for sushi (寿司）in Yahoo Japan (2015) and Google Japan (2015.) Google (right) does not show pictures in search engine listing like Yahoo (left.)

Conclusion is that it is good to aim for good results in both Yahoo Japan and Google Japan since both have strong market base. This is however simple due to both using the same search engine. The results will look different in both search engines due to different display policies, but it is better idea to aim to look good in Yahoo search. Otherwise the SEO for Japan is not noticeably different after breaching language barriers.

8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This thesis is a guide. It was constructed using exploratory study and qualitative research method. The main idea of the guide is to explain the idea of organic marketing and show how to efficiently use it in Japan. Organic marketing channels used in Japan were searched and explained. Localizing organic marketing for Japanese culture was also taken into account.

Organic marketing is a type of marketing that focuses on creating and spreading interesting content. It is a good tool to be used especially in internet marketing by small and medium-sized enterprises. It requires little to no monetary investment for startup and can become tremendous asset for gaining attention.

Flexibility, low cost and high potential for gaining loyal customer following are all strengths of organic marketing. It is non-invasive and permissions based form of marketing. It can be seen as committing time, creativity and effort instead of money for marketing effort.

Organic marketing can however be time consuming and hard to monitor. Especially precisely determining return of investment has proven problematic. The analysis of successful organic marketing always remains in some aspects subjective and intuitive. Many tools however exist for gathering data for analysis from multiple channels.

Channels for organic marketing are potentially endless. Internet alone offers thousands of platforms for it. Social media sites, blogs, videos, search engines, podcasts, newsletter and company websites are just few examples of tools that can be used. Creativity and carefully choosing the correct channels for intended target market should be combined for best results.

Theory portion of this guide includes definitions of organic marketing, social media, SEO, online profiles, website feed, website localization and social media management tools. For cultural theory, Hofstede´s theory was used.

Hofstede´s theory is one possible way to analyze traits of the Japanese customers. This can provide insights for both B2B and B2C business in Japan. It is not advisable to rely on single source of information when looking for traits of Japanese culture however.

Empirical portion of the guide included statistics of Japanese internet users. It offers help for localization and search engine optimization. Analysis of different social media channels used in Japan and their distinctive traits were also included.

Localizing organic marketing for Japanese customers is a complex process. Japanese language, writing system, distinctive design and unique preferences all present challenges for localizer. Study and care are required for satisfactory results. Localization is required at least in case of language due to Japanese internet user's high preference to use internet in Japanese.

Japanese are avid internet users. Internet penetration is high and this is the case in all age groups. Japanese have preference for mobile devices and this should be taken into account when localizing and conducting SEO.

Line, Mixi, Facebook, Twitter, Mobage, Gree and FC2 are possible channels for social media marketing in Japan. All of them have their own policies and possibilities that can be utilized for marketing. There is currently no single social media channel dominating Japanese markets.

Search engine optimization for Japanese customers should take Yahoo Japan and Google Japan into account. Special care should be taken when choosing search words to maximize the potential for gaining visibility in Yahoo Japan.

9 FINAL WORDS

This thesis started as attempt to help organic marketers interested in Japanese markets. In the beginning the idea was to also include organic marketing strategies, but it was quickly deemed too ambitious for the scope of this guide. There already exists material and guides for content creation and organic marketing in general. The focus was shifted on finding marketing channels in Japan. Traits in Japanese culture and markets that should be taken into account when conducting organic marketing were also part of the focus.

Japan is as unique challenge for organic marketer as it is for any marketer. As a country with western economy and education combined with very unique and distinctive culture creates interesting scenario. Finding information about Japanese customer behavior and business culture is certainly beneficial for both B2B and B2C marketing.

Researching information for this guide continuously revealed more factors that should be taken into account when conducting organic marketing in Japan. The channels used and the customer behavior is in constant state of change. Japanese follow their own set of rules and no assumptions should be blindly followed.

Any marketer operating in internet and aiming for Japanese audience should constantly keep their eyes open. It is helpful that there are many reliable e-magazines and forums from which to find recent and reliable information. Japanese markets are always guaranteed to generate lots of interest.

Information presented by this guide, with possible exclusion of Hofstede´s cultural theory, is rapidly changing. The information should prove useful for internet marketers, but more recent data can always be found in the internet. The basic idea of culturally adaptive organic marketing is however very usable and is flexible idea that can utilized again in the future.

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