

# **DIGITAL MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN MICRO SOCIAL ENTERPRISES**

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## ABSTRACT

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<p>Micro social enterprises play an important role in our society. Therefore, understanding how they utilize digital marketing in today's highly competitive environment becomes vital. The author wanted to fill the gap in the current research on micro social enterprises and their digital marketing (Gogula, 2014; Shaw, 2004; Mitchell, Madill &amp; Chreim, 2014; Sim, 2015) by conducting a qualitative research. The aim of the research was to understand the digital marketing strategies of micro social enterprises in Finland as well as shedding light on the factors affecting the adaptation of digital marketing strategies among the case companies.</p> <p>In order to find answers to the research questions, the author chose to interview seven micro social enterprises that bear the Social Enterprise Mark in Finland. The mark was chosen as a selecting factor as it provides the social enterprises that fit the characteristics chosen by the study. The detailed description of the case companies was included to allow the reader to understand what types of micro social enterprises were investigated.</p> <p>The main findings of the study reveal that the case companies utilize various digital marketing communication tools and the degree of utilization of digital marketing activities varies among the case companies. Some case companies prefer one digital marketing communication tool to another contingent on their product/service, target customer and goals. The study revealed different objectives of online marketing among the case companies with brand building, raising awareness and communication of social cause being most prominent ones.</p> <p>The utilization of online marketing among the case companies depended on the resource-related, owner-manager, and environmental factors. Resource-related constraints were found to be the prevailing reason for the case companies that obstruct the greater adaptation of digital marketing. Being micro social enterprises with the goal of promoting social cause rather than making profits, the case companies were bootstrapped and could not invest a lot of resources into marketing. Owner-manger factors and environmental factors had also an effect on utilization of online marketing practices, with the former being more important than the latter.</p> <p>The results of the findings also show that the case companies did not have consistent digital marketing strategies, content marketing strategies and did not utilize analytics regularly. The reasons for that were also linked to resource-related factors.</p>	
Keywords Micro enterprises, social enterprises, digital marketing, online marketing, online marketing strategies, digital marketing strategies, Social Enterprise mark, digitalization	
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Study Background

The digital revolution has shaken marketing to its core (Wind & Mahajan, 2002). Offline marketing has shifted to online marketing, with consumers having more power than ever. A new technology is confronting the fundamental basis of traditional marketing discipline (Wind & Mahajan, 2001). With new technologies, the Internet being available to almost half of the world, online habits of consumers are changing. In order to keep up with the consumers, businesses had to find a way to be present online to be closer to consumer. According to Charlesworth (2014), digital marketing can bring great benefits for businesses. Having a successful digital marketing communication strategy is important to warrant a success and can be source of good opportunities to companies which are able to adapt and exploit the changes (Chaffey & Smith, 2013). Ryan and Jones (2009) state that every company needs a digital marketing strategy simply because without it, a company can miss opportunities and even lose its business. For majority of companies, the changes that has to be implemented are substantial, including how to manage digital marketing adeptly through adjusting existing organizational culture, structure, and resourcing, both external and internal (Chaffey & Smith, 2013).

While there has been some research on how digital marketing affected organizational marketing, the literature shows a deficiency of research regarding the role of the internet in relation to organisations marketing activities and business performance. Though there have been growing numbers of studies on the use of the internet, there is an absence of actual research on such issues as constraints, successful e-marketing techniques, the role of the internet in relation to organisations marketing activities; and the viability of e-marketing for SMEs (Ching & Ellis, 2004, McCue, 1999; Avlonitis and Karayanni, 2000). Moreover, majority of digital business adoption studies have concentrated on larger companies, therefore, there is paucity in research that is dedicated to micro-enterprises (Donnelly et al., 2015; Bordonaba-Juste, Lucia-Palacios, and Polo-Redondo, 2012). Micro-enterprises are not usually studied by government officials or scholars for various reasons, partially since they are too small to expect owner-managers to dedicate time into filling out comprehensive questionnaires (Clark & Douglas, 2013). While some may argue that results of the studies on SMEs may be correlated with micro-enterprises, however micro-enterprises function in a different manner compared to SMES; it is vital for micro-enterprises to be recognized and studied in their own right, independently of SMEs (Clark & Douglas, 2013).

Literature signifies that digitization in its numerous usages has a positive effect on small business growth, performance and competitiveness (Karjaluo et al., 2015). Big companies have digital marketing communication strategies to some extent, as is easier for them to utilize new technologies due to greater access to resources. In fact, a positive relationship was found between size and the

adoption of new technologies (Teo & Pian, 2004; Al-Qirim, 2007). But what about smaller companies? Have they adapted their online marketing activities and what were their reasons? Digital marketing and social media offer good opportunities for small businesses to attract new customers as well as retain existing customers more effectively (Karjaluoto et al., 2015). For micro-enterprises, digital marketing is presently an extremely important opportunity (Nikkuinen et al., 2017). However, it appears that many SMEs do not utilize the full potential of the new digital tools (Gilmore et al., 2007). This could be unfortunate as the new digital tools can be very beneficial for micro companies, especially due to their resource constraints. In fact, financial constraints have been identified as one of the biggest challenges for micro and SMEs (World Bank/IFC 2010). According to a study performed by Tioago and Veríssimo (2014), external competitive pressure plays the most prominent role in a firm's decision to utilize digital media for marketing purposes. Therefore, companies are forced to keep up in order to stay competitive, even though their might not have sufficient resources for it.

There are currently over 340,000 micro-enterprises in Finland, comprising 95 per cent of all companies in Finland (University of Oulu). Micro-enterprises can be defined as the smallest category of SME, with less than ten employees and a turnover or balance sheet total equal to or less than €2 million (European Commission, 2011). In recent years, micro-enterprises have been able to grow and develop despite the bad economic situation. Moreover, when analysing the number of employees in Finnish companies between 2001 and 2014, it can be observed that almost half (49%) of all new jobs were created in micro-enterprises, while the number of jobs in large enterprises visibly decreased (MicroEntre). In Europe 99 % of companies are SMEs (of which 92 % are micro-enterprises) and those companies provide more than 75 % of private sector jobs (European Commission, 2011). Therefore, micro-enterprises play an important role as employers in economic growth. Consequently, it is important analyse the way they operate and adapt to the new digital era.

The author chose to analyse micro-enterprises in the filed of social entrepreneurship as research of their online marketing strategies are even more scarce (Gogula, 2014; Shaw, 2004; Mitchell, Madill & Chreim, 2014). Moreover, additional research is still needed concerning topics as social entrepreneur abilities, competences, or knowledge (Matei & Sandu, 2013). Brooks states (2009) that marketing is an important market-based tool for social entrepreneurs to create social value. As social entrepreneurs add social value to the society and provide social improvements, which is why how these companies are adopting digital marketing strategies in their operations is important to understand. Azmat, Ferdous and Couchman (2015) state that social entrepreneurs produce value in resource-constrained subsistence markets, which results in inclusive growth. Social enterprises have to promote themselves as well to attain funding, attract customers and new members (Kalb, 2015). Marketing can help social enterprises distinguish themselves in this competitive landscape (Garton, 2016). Social enterprises do not generally embrace digital marketing to the same wide extent as for-profit companies due to the inadequate resources and the targeted customers or service users who often are not everyday users of the Internet via



mobile phones, tablets and computers (Sim, 2015). Implementing digital marketing strategies in the context of social enterprises is considered to be a relatively new concept and idea (Sim, 2015). As there is very little research about social enterprises' marketing activities, both in online and offline space, the author decided to utilize also the papers regarding marketing in non-for profit organizations to adopt knowledge that might be applicable to social enterprises.

In Finland, there are around 5000-10000 social enterprises contingent on the definition utilized for measurement purposes (Russell & Pattiniemi & Koivuneva, 2014). The Social Enterprise Mark's definition matches the one provided in this paper which is why the companies bearing the Social Enterprise Mark were selected.

## **1.2 Why companies need digital marketing strategy**

Even though the Internet is an efficient tool for accomplishing goals and supporting organizational mission, the Web is not a unique functional area in and of itself, just having a Web site is not a strategy (Hart, Greenfield & Johnston, 2005). Maturing digital businesses aim at incorporating digital technologies, such as social, mobile, analytics and cloud, in the service of transforming how their businesses work while less mature digital businesses are concentrated on resolving individual business problems with individual digital technologies (Kane et al., 2015). The capability to digitally reimagine the business is established mostly by a clear digital strategy supported by leaders who promote a culture able to change and create the new (Kane et al., 2015). Therefore, the companies must incorporate digitalization and digital strategy into their culture, and not just use some of the digital technologies to reach certain goals. This view is also supported by Fan (2016) who states that digital business adoption is evidently a strategic business issue instead of being a technical issue. Companies should ask themselves: how can we utilize technology as a strategic asset to allow new competencies or maintain a competitive advantage (Mithas & Lucas, 2010)? Companies can use IT investments, IT infrastructure, and IT-enabled information flows to penetrate new markets, create new products and services, and expand their productivity, profitability, customer satisfaction, and organizational competences (Mithas & Lucas, 2010).

Nevertheless, making strategic marketing choices is more challenging for a social entrepreneur than it is for either a traditional non-profit or a commercial business, both of which are mainly interested in a single bottom line (Boschee, 2006). A traditional non-profit will keep on providing products and services that have an important social impact even if they lose money; commercial enterprises will not. Social entrepreneurs, contrarily, are equivalently involved with both bottom lines, signifying that they must concurrently examine the social impact and economic viability of each product and service, and only afterwards make decisions about which ones to expand, nurture, harvest or kill (Boschee, 2006). The digital strategy for different social enterprises will vary depending on their

product, target market and how the product or service meet wishes of their target market.

Digital marketing strategy should be a part of overall digital strategy. Preparing a digital marketing strategy can help a company to form a cognizant decision about its venture into digital marketing arena and make sure that its efforts are focused on the elements of digital marketing that are most relevant to the business. By adopting digital marketing strategies, companies are not only equipped to detect and focus on the market needs correctly, but also convey information to customers in real time. The digital marketing strategy should be based upon the objectives of the company, what it wants to achieve and where it sees itself in the future. Unlike conventional ways of mass media marketing, digital marketing can broaden the scope of the marketing reach and narrow its focus at the same time. (Ryan & Jones 2009.)

The interaction and incorporation between Internet channels and traditional channels is a crucial part of digital marketing strategy development. Digital marketing strategy is fundamentally a channel marketing strategy and it should be incorporated with other channels as part of multi-channel marketing (Chaffey et al., 2016).

### 1.3 Study Objectives and Research Questions

The author's objective is to find out how micro social enterprises adapt their digital marketing strategies in the new digital era. Among other things, the author made a research if micro social enterprises have a comprehensive digital marketing plan and how they manage their online activities overall.

The central research question of the study concerns how micro social enterprises implement digital marketing communication strategies. It is important to study what the reasons for micro social enterprises for implementing (or not implementing) digital marketing strategies are and how they perceive the effectiveness of digital marketing activities in their companies' communication with external parties.

The main research question is the following:

“How do micro social enterprises employ digital marketing activities as part of their marketing activities?”

The research aims to reveal not only the extent of implementation of digital marketing in the selected companies but also the factors influencing the implementation (or not implementation) of digital marketing strategies in micro-enterprises as well as. So the sub question is:

“What are the reasons influencing the use of digital marketing strategies in micro social enterprises?”

## 1.4 Finnish Social Entrepreneurship

While having a higher media profile nowadays, social enterprises have been present for a long time (Shaw, 2004). Social entrepreneurship diverges from traditional entrepreneurship in that the social entrepreneur is somebody who acknowledges a social problem and uses entrepreneurial principles to organize, create, and manage an enterprise to make social change (Mallin & Finkle, 2007). There is no sole definition of social entrepreneurship which are agreed upon by all scholars. Social enterprises are compared with non-profit, charity and profit-making enterprises (Luke & Chu, 2013; Ridley-Duff & Bull, 2011), originating from all of these organisational structures. Common across all definitions of social entrepreneurship is the fact that the underlying drive for social entrepreneurship is to generate social value, rather than personal and shareholder wealth (Thake & Zadek, 1997), and that the activity is distinguished by innovation, or the invention of something new rather than merely the imitation of existing enterprises or practices (Austin et al., 2006). While social entrepreneurs are commonly defined as people, who recognize and exploit opportunities, combine resources, and act creatively to solve social problems, and generate social value in order to achieve their social mission (Singh, 2016). Though these organizations' main purpose is not to generate income but help society against certain problems, these organizations also face competition. According to Weerawardena and Mort (2005), nowadays not for profits are working in an extremely competitive environment that is characterized by growing needs in their target areas, and a typically stricter funding environment with rising competition for donors and grants. In order upkeep their fund raising efforts, they must "sell" their ideology, programs, and sponsorships to prospective donors and volunteers (Mallin & Finkle, 2007). Consequently, these organizations have to compete and often act as for profit implementing required changes in their operations in order to compete for donors. Social entrepreneurship are economically practical and sustainable businesses that are strongly dedicated to protection of certain values.

It is estimated that there are thousands of social enterprises in various sectors of economy in Finland. Social entrepreneurship is spreading in Finland with myriad number of companies in the environment, health and culture sectors who are making their mark (Sayej, 2014). In Finland, social entrepreneurship and the prerequisites of social enterprises are promoted e.g. by Finnish Association of Social Entrepreneurs SYY ry, the Finnish Institute in London and SYFO Ltd., and the Ministry of Employment and the Economy. According to a study by the Finnish Institute in London conducted by Karjalainen and Syrjänen (2009), one third of Finnish SME feels that they are pursuing social or environmental goals, and 15% put their profit back to promote the same goal. Four per cent of the respondents belonging to SME, feel the social or environmental goal of their activity is very important. According to the survey, Finnish social enterprises can be estimated to be about 12,000 and their share of the total turnover of all companies is about 7 billion (Karjalainen & Syrjänen, 2009).

Social entrepreneurship is a trend that is growing worldwide, e.g. the

United Kingdom, initiated Social Enterprise Mark which is similar to the Finnish Social Enterprise Mark. In spite of the fact, that Finland has a tradition of social entrepreneurship via cooperatives, the concept of social enterprise is relatively unknown in Finland (Suomalainentyö). According to Houtbeckers (2014), the origins of social entrepreneurship in Finland dates back the late nineteenth century. The attention to social entrepreneurship is generally reflected as a response to the aging population and to the growing need for social services. The welfare state was transforming and with the transformation was supplemented by a need for new types of businesses (Houtbeckers, 2014).

Social enterprises have different legal forms and ownership structures. The most common legal form that the social enterprises adopt are limited companies, although there are also cooperatives and foundations. Some social enterprises (limited companies) are fully owned subsidiaries of foundations and/or associations. Some of social enterprises adopt a mixed ownership structure, with owners including both foundations and associations (Russell & Pattiniemi & Koivuneva, 2014).

A special logo (Figure 1), the Finnish Social Enterprise Mark, designed to assist these businesses and social entrepreneurs which is why the association Finnish Work in Helsinki invented the Finnish Social Enterprise Mark, a symbol of certified social entrepreneurs. Research on enterprises possessing the Social Enterprise Mark reveals that social enterprises goal is to create social value by promoting either social or environmental goals, which can be seen as the very essence of social enterprises (Kostilainen & Tykkylainen, 2013).

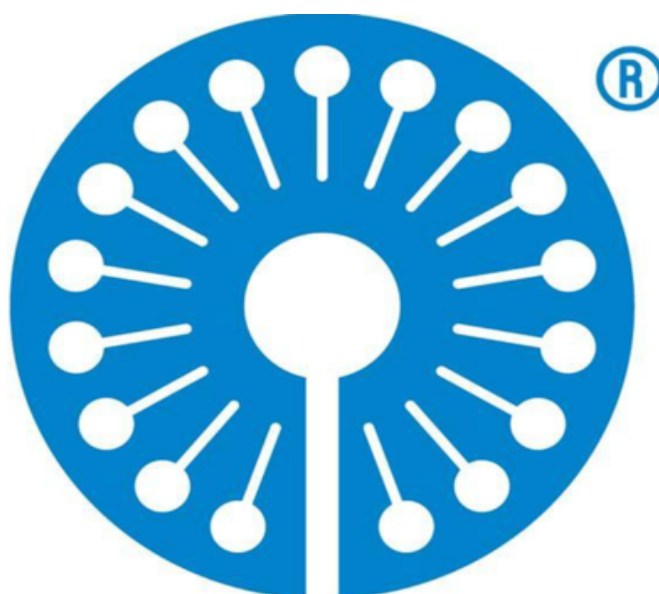


FIGURE 1 The Finnish Social Enterprise Mark (Suomalainentyö)

The blue-and-white logo conveys prestige and is hard to attain (Sayej, 2014). The prerequisites for social enterprises who want to obtaining the Mark, beside tackling environmental and social problems, are to use major portion of its profits for the benefit of society either by growing their own operations or by offering a share of its profits to charity fitting to its business idea (Russell & Pattiniemi &

Koivuneva, 2014). The purpose of the Finnish Social Enterprise Mark is to help social enterprises to differentiate themselves from other businesses and exhibit that the enterprise applies the Finnish Social Enterprise business model (Suomalainentyo). The association of Finnish work first awarded the certifications in spring 2012. The membership fee is 97-9,800 euros per year depending on the company's turnover and the Mark licences (Suomalainentyo). The social entrepreneurs in return can use the logo on their website and receive marketing benefits, training seminars and touring events that showcase and promote their businesses (Sayej, 2014). At the moment, there are almost 170 Finnish Social Enterprises that possess the Mark and the number has been growing since the introduction of the Mark in 2011. This scheme is voluntary. Social Enterprise Mark holders are slightly larger than the Finnish enterprises are in average: 96,6 per cent of social enterprises are SMEs, whereas 99.8 per cent of all enterprises in Finland are SMEs (Russell & Pattiniemi & Koivuneva, 2014).

## 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section provides an overview on the theoretical framework of the study. First marketing in non-for-profits and social enterprises are examined. The concept of Digital Marketing is explained in the following subchapter with attention to new digital space, new consumer 2.0 and his journey. It is followed by the introduction of Digital Marketing Communication tools with the emphasis on digital marketing in social micro enterprises. Special attention is allocated to content marketing and the channels for content marketing. The chapter concludes with the summarization of theoretical framework in chapter 2.5

### 2.1 Marketing in non-for-profit and social enterprises

There is a gap in research regarding marketing activities of social enterprises with even fewer researcher done about their online marketing activities. Which is why the author examined also literature on marketing activities in non-for-profit sector to borrow some knowledge from there.

More hands-on marketing in a for profit model, incorporating the usage of online media, such as Facebook, blogs, and Internet advertising, has grown to be an important aspect in aiding not-for-profit organizations to cope with their financial problems (Levine & Zahradnik, 2012). Levine & Zahradnik (2012) and Schneider (2003) found “the positive relationship between higher market orientation via online media presence and improved financial viability for the sampled group of non profit organizations”. Nevertheless, non-for-profits are not utilizing the sites to their full possibilities and fail to keep pace with the private and public sectors in embracing new social interaction technologies (Burt & Taylor, 2003; Schneider, 2003; Fine, 2006; Waters, 2010). The reasons for that include financial capacity as a barrier to the implementation of technology among non-profits (Hackler & Saxton, 2007).

Although many non-profits consider marketing as a business activity, Kotler and Levy (1969) think that marketing has a crucial role in the lives of non-profit organizations. For non-profit organizations, it is quite challenging to acknowledge that they are in need of marketing activities to become more visible (Matei & Sandu, 2013). Three stigmas can hinder the adoption of marketing approaches among non profits (Andreasen & Kotler, 2003). The first stigma is that marketing is waste of money which is especially central for organizations that receive public funding and see marketing is a redundant activity that deters financial resources from realizing the main mission of the organization (Mitchell, Madill & Chreim, 2014). The second stigma is that marketing can be invasive. For instance, market research often incorporates interviewees with (potential) customers to better comprehend their needs and wishes (Mitchell, Madill & Chreim, 2014). Some people might consider such data gathering is being burdensome on individuals, with notion that marketers invade the privacy of others (Mitchell, Madill & Chreim, 2014). The third stigma is about manipulation

as marketing activities, particularly advertising, performed improperly, sometimes are considered to be manipulative in nature (Mitchell, Madill & Chreim, 2014.)

Social enterprises also may have a negative view on marketing and some general resistance to marketing and self promotion can exist among them (Allinson, 2011). Bull (2007) determined that marketing seemed to be an informal practise in social enterprises since they considered marketing as too 'business-like'. Bull (2007) also posits that social enterprises lack the technical ability, skills and knowledge to practise marketing appropriately. In fact, study by Smallbone et al. (2001) demonstrated managerial limitations of social enterprises, asserting that management skills, especially in marketing, finance and decision making, amongst others, were problematic matters for the sector.

One of the challenges for social enterprises is the fact that their target group tends to be more intricate with more than one market segment that has to be addressed and satisfied. The end user of the products or services might differ from those that choose, buy, and assess them (Kalb, 2015). Moreover, the markets in which social entrepreneurs work are extremely uncertain (Newbert, 2012). Consequently, the necessary data (e.g. data on demographics, market demand) that traditional marketing analysis counts upon are frequently unreliable and/or unobtainable to social entrepreneurs (Newbert, 2012). In addition, social entrepreneurs have a certain mission and their products or services are often related to that mission, hence, they cannot simply adjust their product in accordance to ever changing market needs. Therefore, social entrepreneurs have to understand marketing better so that they are able to effectively market their products to identified market segments that need to be satisfied (Kalb, 2015). This cannot happen if social entrepreneurs have a negative view on marketing. Instead, the importance of marketing needs to be established among social entrepreneurs, with marketing becoming more common and competently performed (Kalb, 2015).

A lot depends on owner-manager traits, the social entrepreneur who is in charge, to decide upon what is going to be implemented in the marketing filed. Dees (2001) stressed the importance of social entrepreneurs' competence and creativity in mobilising resources, who have to be able to do more with less, and convince others to deliver resources on favourable terms. The lack of resources may even induce social entrepreneurs to discover solutions that are not naturally arrived at by other, better financed types of organizations (Yujuico, 2008). Eventually, "what is important is not so much a matter of having but rather what one is capable of being or doing (capabilities) and actually being or doing (functioning)" (as cited by Yujuico 2008, p.500).

Matei and Sandu (2013) believe that for social enterprises, admission that they need marketing is even more challenging, because of the complexity of their socio-economic activities and performance. For social enterprises, in addition to economic value, marketing also should generate value for society (Srivetbodee et al., 2017). Brooks (2009) state that marketing is a vital market-based instrument for social enterprises to generate value for society. According to Srivetbodee et al. (2017), social enterprise marketing delivers two roles. The first role which is also the most vital is the creation and scalability of social value for people in need.

Marketing can assist social entrepreneurs in creating social value via the utilization of marketing tools (Rasmussen 2012; Brooks, 2009). For example, products can be used to help people with low income to generate more income (Newbert, 2012). The second role is maintaining the business operations in market-based setting (Brooks, 2009).

## 2.2 Digital marketing

E-marketing can be considered as equivalent to online and digital marketing (Chaffey et al., 2016). According to Wymbs (2011, p. 94), the Digital Marketing Institute (DMI) defines digital marketing as “the use of digital technologies to create integrated, targeted and measurable communication which helps to acquire and retain customers while building deeper relationships with them”. Digital marketing is not primarily about understanding technology, it is about understanding people, how they utilise the technology and how one can take advantage of that to engage with people more efficiently (Ryan, 2016).

Digital marketing communication tools are an important asset for any organization and can become a beneficial tool enhancing value for the customers at the same time. Digital marketing communications are essentially the digital marketing equivalent of the marketing communications mix, which include product, price, place, physical evidence, people, process and promotion. In the digital marketing context all the P's are challenged, improved or merged by digital technologies (Chaffey & Smith, 2012). In digital space, product may be extended online providing new information-based services and interaction with the brand producing new brand experience (Chaffey & Smith 2012). The main implications of the Internet for the price aspect of the mix are: increased price transparency and its implications on differential pricing, downward pressure on price (including commoditisation); new pricing approaches (including dynamic pricing, price testing and auctions) and alternative pricing structure or policies (Chaffey et al., 2016). In an online context, due to easiness of navigating from one site to another, the scope of Place is less clear since Place also relates to Promotion and Partnerships (Chaffey et al., 2016). Indeed, a company can extend their presence online by having links on other's websites and microsites, thus increasing its reach. However, the concept is more or less the same, companies need to increase their representation online, employing multi-channels thus making themselves widely and ready available for target customers (Chaffey & Smith, 2012). The people, process and physical evidence elements of the mix are related and often classified as 'the service elements'; they are important as the degree of perceived service will influence a customer's loyalty and the likelihood of them recommending the service (Chaffey et al., 2016). People of the company offer online service and its quality can be key differentiator, so the company must decide how much of automated and how much of human service the company wants to allocate to keep quality high. The Process variable of the marketing mix indicates the methods and procedures companies implement to achieve all marketing functions – such as new product development, promotion, sales and



customer service. In online context it is especially important to adjust the Process by incorporating front and back office systems to offer an efficient response to customer support requests and fulfilment (Chaffey & Smith, 2012). The Physical evidence in online space refers to the quality of website and customers experience of the company through their website, including the issues such as ease of use or navigation, availability and performance (Chaffey et al., 2016). The Promotion variable of the marketing mix indicates how marketing communications are implemented to inform customers and other stakeholders about an organisation and its products.

Promotional mix	Online executions
1 Advertising	Interactive display ads, Pay Per Click search advertising
2 Selling	Virtual sales staff and chat and affiliate marketing
3 Sales promotion	Incentives, rewards, online loyalty schemes
4 PR	E-news releases, e-newsletters, social networks, links and virals
5 Sponsorship	Sponsoring an online event, site or service
6 Direct mail	Opt-in email, e-alerts, e-newsletters and <i>web response</i>
7 Exhibitions	Virtual exhibitions and white paper distribution
8 Merchandizing	Web site design, promotional ad serving on retail sites, personalized recommendations
9 Packaging	Photographs of real packaging displayed online
10 Word of mouth	Social media plus viral, affiliate marketing, e-mail a friend, reviews

FIGURE 2 The main elements of promotional mix (Chaffey et al. 2016,p.81)

The Internet and digital marketing techniques are extremely vital and have important implications for marketing communication planning (Chaffey et al., 2016). This will involve selection of target markets, positioning and integration of different communications tools. The Internet offers a new, additional marketing communications channels to inform customers of the benefits of a product and assist in the buying decision. The main elements of promotional mix are summed up by Chaffey and Smith (2012) in Figure 2.

## 2.21 Digital Space or Web 2.0

Web 1.0 refers to the first stage in the World Wide Web and it is generally believed to indicate the time when the web was composed of a set of static websites that were not yet delivering interactive content. Web 1.0 was an era of cognition where the information was delivered to mainly passive consumers (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). The precise time of transition to Web 2.0 cannot be determined as the transition happened gradually with the Internet becoming a more interactive place. Since 2004, Web 2.0 has been used as a term describing the social web, where social networking sites hold a vital place in users' online activities. The change to a more interactive web from Web 1.0 mostly happened due to technological changes that made the Internet and the capability to create content more attainable. These changes incorporate broadband internet, better browsers, AJAX and the mass development of widgets. In Web 2.0, applications are often open source, giving users a better capability to impact the web.

(Technopedia). Examples of Web 2.0 applications include social networking sites, wikis, blogs, podcasts, instant messaging, discussion forums, audio and video conferencing, group diaries and address books, hosted virtual offices, collaborative whiteboards and presentation systems (Barnes et al., 2012). Web 2.0 has provided many opportunities for organizations to interact with public in a new and more effective way. The World Wide Web provides non-for-profits with the exclusive chance to interactively reach numerous audiences without huge financial burdens (Kang & Norton, 2004).

The difference between Web 2.0 and Web 1.0 can be understood in terms of technology that has allowed a shift in focus from companies to consumers, individuals to communities, nodes to networks, publishing to participation, and intrusion to invitation. Rather than just accessing information as was the case in the early state of the World Wide Web, consumers now both create and consume information. The newer interactive websites offer a richer context to users with help of user friendly interfaces that incite and stimulate participation. Web 2.0 technologies have triggered three outcomes: (1) a change in activity from the desktop to the Web, (2) a change in locus of value production from the firm to the consumer, and (3) a shift in the locus of power away from the company to the consumer. Web 2.0 has had two key outcomes of importance to global marketers. Firstly, it introduced what has been termed as 'social media,' and second, it has permitted the phenomenon that has been termed as 'creative consumers' to bloom. (Berthon et al. 2012.)

Some argue that Web 3.0 will come next. The two words that appear to be used as a rule to describe Web 3.0 are "semantic" and "personal." Semantic implies an Internet that understands user intent and makes it easier to uncover information. For example, Google's Instant Preview tool which gives a visual preview of search results without having to leave the page, can be viewed as a step in that direction. It is possible to arrange the information into personal arrays, for instance bookmarking services such as Delicious and the Firefox Bookmarks add-on. (Roberts & Zahay, 2012.)

## **2.2.2 Digital Customer**

Nowadays, the modern consumer has completely new shopping and buying experience compared to consumers of the past. The transformation in the buying behaviour has been profound, with the Internet changing not only how we interact, but how we buy and select the companies we trust. Knowing your consumer is important in order to plan an effective digital marketing strategy. Whether one plans a campaign that will be executed only in social media or for one where social media is just a component of integrated market communication, understanding the needs, the behaviour, and beliefs of targeted consumer is important (Tuten & Solomon 2017). Consumers have to cope with the profusion of products and services brought through all the communication channels on the Internet (Onete et al., 2017). The new consumer is no longer passively sitting in front of TV, or broadcast media being influenced by who has a better marketing message. With Web 2.0 broadband and rich media content, consumers are more

in control than ever before (Ryan 2016, p.15). Creative consumers are the new locus of value in Web 2.0; they often generate much of the value-added content in social media, and it is their networks of friends and connections that comprise the social. (Berthon et al., 2012.)

Consumers are now actively searching for products and services, and evaluate a company on different criteria such as peer reviews and recommendations, attractiveness and user-friendliness of websites, activity on social media etc. They are better informed, connected to other consumers and more social which is why it is crucial to engage with them through full sales funnel with digital relationship strategies. Communication via social media for example is one of the most significant sources in making a purchasing decision, even insignificant amount of negative information from some postings can have considerable impact on consumer attitudes (Onete et al., 2017). Companies and organizations are faced with multiple challenges, forced to compete much harder for consumer's 2.0 attention and retention, as it all might come down to how attractive is your website or how well you deliver your message, providing value to the customer. Often, the experience in the online environment define customer preferences (Onete et al., 2017). Therefore, companies and organization have to take special care how they position themselves online, as often consumers think that if you are not online, you do not simply exist.

As consumer behaviour has changed, companies must seek new ways how to engage with demanding Consumer 2.0 so that to stay relevant. The companies need to be cognizant that digital technology is an influential tool in shaping and changing consumer behaviour (Onete et al., 2017). Businesses have to understand how to market themselves better, using new digital marketing communication tools in digital spaces. There is a fine line between being relevant and being irritating with Ad banners popping out, therefore business must elect the right ways of marketing themselves known using special algorithms, so that Consumer 2.0 would not be annoyed but interested in the Ads appearing on Social Media or Search engines. Not taking into consideration the new consumer role disregards changes that business organizations have to experience to become better players, missing out on opportunities to connect with a new generation of consumers who appreciate convenience, personalization, collaboration, and value co-creation (Onete et al., 2017).

### **2.23 Digital Customer Journey**

Customer journey or RACE framework was developed by Smart Insights originally in 2010 and then further updated in 2015. RACE framework captures key online marketing activities that need to be managed as part of digital marketing (Figure 3).

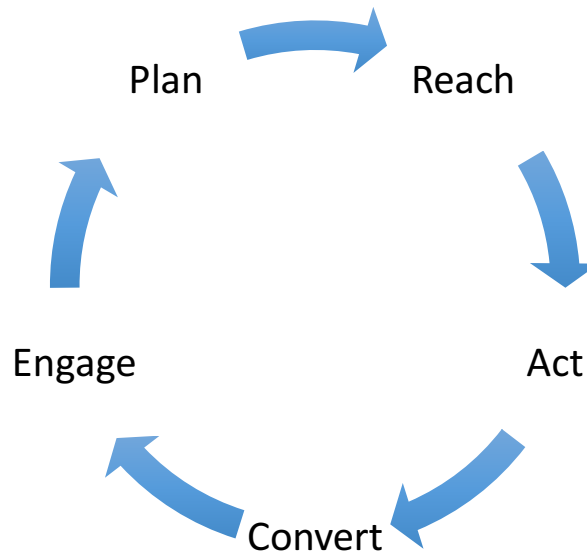


FIGURE 3 RACE Framework (Smart insights 2016)

The framework covers full customer lifecycle (customer journey) and it starts with Plan. At this stage, a company creates a comprehensive digital strategy, objectives and plan. Here digital channels are optimized against set goals, targets, SMART KPIs and a dedicated investment on content marketing is made. During Reach stage brand awareness is being built, as well as awareness about products and services on other websites and in offline media for the purpose of building traffic by driving visits to different web presences like main website, microsites or social media pages. The Reach stage includes increasing reach over time to generate numerous exchanges using different paid, owned and earned media points of interaction. (Chaffey, 2017.)

Act stage, which is short for Interact, signifies a distinct stage stimulating interactions on websites and in social media in order to generate leads which in turn represents a big challenge for online marketers. On this stage, it is crucial to motivate site visitors or prospects to take the next step, the next Action on their journey when they originally reach the site or social network presence. The action can be various, from lead generation to finding more about the company, its products or reading a blog post. Different companies can have different goals and actions they want to generate. Google Goals can include "Viewed product", "Added to Basket", "Registered as a member" or "Signed up for a newsletter". Act stage is also about stimulating interactions and participation such as sharing content via social media or customer reviews. Audience should be engaged via relevant, convincing content and clear navigation pathways so that they do not press the back button. It is important to decrease bounce rate which is often more than 50 % on many websites. (Chaffey, 2017.)

During Convert stage conversion happens. It can be a sale, donation, in other words the goal of the website is reached. Last stage is called Engage where the aim is to develop long-lasting engagement and relationship with first-time buyers/clients to create customer loyalty as recurrence purchases using communications on site, social presence, email and direct interactions to increase

the customer lifetime value. It can also be measured by recurrence activities such as repeat sale and sharing content through social media. (Chaffey, 2017.)

The framework helps to separate each part of the customer journey into different segments and see what happens in each of the stages. According Chaffey (2017), digital channels generally function at best when combined with other channels, therefore digital channels should be integrated with the traditional offline media and channels. The most essential aspects of integration are, firstly, to make usage of traditional media in order to raise awareness of the value of the online presences and attract new audience to the website at the Reach and Engage stages. Next, at the Convert and Engage stages customers may want to interact with company as part of the buying or customer service process. (Chaffey, 2017.)

### **2.3 Digital marketing communication tools**

There are different mixes of communication tools that comprise digital marketing. The modern tools of digital marketing allow companies to target people they want to target, so the marketing efforts are more focused on the people a company wants to reach. According to Corniani (2006), digital marketing communication should be focused at profiled targets, which are active in the communication process. However, even though it is easier to measure the response from the consumers, consumers have become more powerful as well with the access to vast quantity of information, so they are able to make more considerate purchase decisions, which makes it even more challenging for marketers. Sharing information on the Internet has permitted everyone to share an opinion, which has resulted in people trusting the peers more than organizations (Greenberg, 2010a). Companies now recognize the need to listen to their customers more, interact with them, become more transparent and communicate with them openly and empathetically (Karjaluo et al., 2015). If consumers are online, that means businesses have to be online as well, or else, they may be considered not-existence in the eyes of consumers.

Digital marketing communication tools (DMC) are equivalents of traditional media and are also know as digital media channels which are a fundamental component of many marketing campaigns nowadays (Chaffey et al., 2016). In the Figure 4 online communication and offline communication tools and presented.

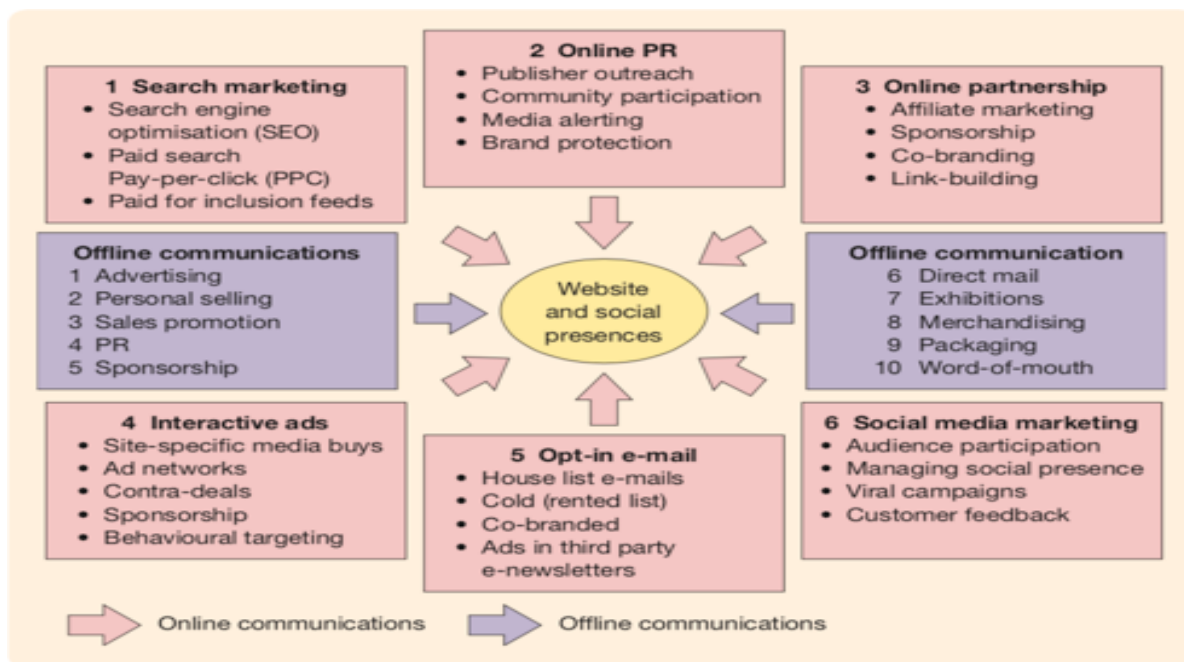


FIGURE 4 Six categories of communication tools or media channels (Chaffey et al. 2016, p. 33)

Even though marketing is moving online, offline communication tools are still being used by some companies and often work hand-in-hand with online marketing strategies. Offline channels involving the mass media of print and broadcast, marketer-related events, sponsorships and public relations constitute an essential part of integrated communication process. (Roberts & Zahay, 2012.)

Among offline marketing channels, word of mouth marketing is a very important channels as people tend to trust more their friends and relatives' advice about the company. Social media platforms deliver the excellent opportunity exploit word of mouth marketing and to see it proliferate (Oyza & Edwin, 2015). By smartly integrating offline and online marketing channels, social enterprises can reach more audience, stir interest and attract more people to their social cause.

There are six main digital media channels: search marketing, online PR, partnership (affiliate) marketing, display advertising, email, and social media marketing (Chaffey et al., 2016). These communications methods are best used in an integrated form with website being at the core.

### 2.3.1 Website

Websites have become an essential communication channel for companies. An online website serves as a central point for a company's online identity, not only displaying the products and services offered but also showing the visual image and values of the company (King et al., 2016). Website is a chance for a company to present themselves as they see fit and make a good impression on visitors. For micro social enterprises, Websites are especially important as they are often first impression visitors have of the organization which can be positive or negative

depending on the quality of the webpages. Micro social enterprises with limited financial resources are not always able to design a good website. Carelessly designed website might deter visitors from examining the products and services company has to offer and leave the page.

Company websites can carry on multiple objectives like providing information, building images for companies and their brands and also serving customers (Hwang et al., 2003). A good website is in the alignment between business goals and needs of the market (Ryan, 2016). In the academic literature, the quality of website has largely been recognized as a crucial step to drive business online (Bai et al., 2008; Lee, 2006). Website represents the face of any business, where often first indirect interaction with a potential customer is happening. Therefore, it is important for any company to make a good first impression and have clear, user friendly interface with right information and clear value proposition which could increase the conversion rate.

Usability of a website is expected to inform the stakeholder how much information can be offered to visitors and how much of it is able to satisfy the curiosity of the visitors (Ganiyu et al., 2017). Flavian et al. (2006) discovered that the trust of the user grows when the user observed that the system was usable and that there was a resulting rise in the degree of website loyalty; greater usability ensures a positive influence on user satisfaction, which also created greater website loyalty. In line with Flavian's (2006) results, Bai et al. (2008), discovered that the quality of website has a direct and positive impact on customer satisfaction, and that customer satisfaction has a direct and positive impact on purchase intentions. Hence, investing resources in user friendly website has proven to be crucial step in attracting and maintaining customers.

Beside the importance of usability of a website, interactivity of a website has been found a significant aspect in user experience. Interactivity is a favourable design factor that has been implicitly connected to website usability (Palmer, 2002). Interactivity is defined as reciprocal communication between at least two parties, with website interactivity usually concerning communication between a human user and the website (Liu et al., 2002). A website is designed to be interactive for several reasons such as provide user with easily accessible and visual information, help user to try out the interactive product, perform a transaction or entertain the user. Van Noort et. al (2012) presented several features distinguishing of interactive website versus static website (Table 1).

TABLE 1 Website features in high and low interactive websites (van Noort et al. 2012, 227)

Level of interactivity		
	High	Low
Contact	Online contact form	E-mail, phone number and address
Registration	Possible to register to receive (product) updates	No possibility to register to receive (product) updates
Recommendation	Option to recommend the website to a friend	No option to recommend the website to a friend
Product order	Option to order the product online	No option to order product online
Product catalogue	Non-linear product catalogue with internal hyperlinks	Linear product catalogue
Stores	Interactive store locator	Linear list of stores
Language	Option to choose language	No option to choose language
Navigation guide	Site map	Unfolded menu bar
Product presentation	3d product presentation	Static product pictures

There are three subcontracts of interactivity: two-way communication, active control and synchronicity (Liu & Shrum, 2002). Two-way communication means two-way flow of communication between the communicators. Active control exists when a user is given the ability to select information and direct the interaction (Lowry et al., 2006). Synchronicity suggests the timing of information exchange, a more simultaneous exchange between two parties is a more synchronous interaction than an exchange with lengthier gaps between responses (Lowry et al., 2006). Lowry et al. (2006) found that users who went through higher levels of interactivity than they had anticipated and desired achieved much better satisfaction than those who got less than their expectations and wishes, thus proving the more interactive a website was, the more likely a user was to experience satisfaction. In addition to the significance of interactivity on the website, the question of what makes websites efficient varies depending on the goals that are established for the website and also depending on the context and target audience of the website (Lipiäinen, 2014).

For micro-enterprises having an interactive and user friendly website is especially important, as those companies often have lower recognition and credibility which is why quality website can make visitors linger more on the web pages. Though high-revenue companies could normally offer more functionality at their websites compared to low-revenue companies, there is



some indication that the web could essentially help to balance the playing field for smaller companies. (Hwang, 2003.)

According to Hwang's research (2003) normally, low-revenue companies succeeded in coming rather close to high revenue companies in the number of sales-related functions they offered which indicates that smaller companies are more resolute in using the web as sales tools than are their larger competitors. In addition, low-revenue companies appear to do better than high-revenue companies in delivering web-based information about how to do business with them, for instance, many low-revenue companies offered information about the locations of their offices (Hwang, 2003).

### **2.3.1 Search marketing**

Search marketing is a form of digital marketing that composes of different strategies to promote a business or an organization by increasing visibility of the content to the searchers (Wilde et al., 2012). When searching for information in search engines, two search results appear which are organic search and paid search. Paid search results appear at the top or on the right side of search results while organic search results are found on the second or third line. Paid search results are usually identified with an "a" word so searchers know that it is an ad. Search engine optimization (SEO) and pay-per-click refers to search engine marketing, with former being free of charge (organic) marketing and latter (paid) being a paid marketing tool.

People using search engines (e.g. Google) for information tend to rely more on the first result page, rarely do they follow the links displayed on the second and consecutive pages of the search results. In order for a website to be found, search engine optimization (SEO) should be employed. Good search engine optimization allows a higher organic ranking position when websites or companies' name are searched in search engines. Companies can improve their listings on the search results pages by changing their site codes to make them more relevant and consequently, more search-engine friendly (Sen, 2005). Optimizing the website to be SEO friendly may be a daunting and time consuming task, especially without the knowledge how to do it, which is why some companies use a third party to do it for them, which can be costly. Thus, some companies prefer to invest in search engine marketing more as opposed to making their websites more optimized for organic search. They explain it by stating that SEO is more expensive than paid placements, achieve results that do not validate its cost, and does not necessarily guarantee high search-results rankings (Sen, 2005).

Search engine marketing (SEM) is an effective way for companies to target consumers by having ads on search engines which has confirmed to be a successful audience acquisition strategy (Boughton, 2005). Pay-per-click (PPC) refers to when a company's ad is displayed in search engine results pages as a sponsored link. This technique allows advertisers to place bids on specific keywords or phrases and have their advertisements appear alongside the organic

search engine results (Sen, 2005). Paid placements on search engine results pages are unobtrusive, more successful than banner ads and pop-ups, and a cost-effective way to reach buyers (Sen, 2005).

Companies that prefer a SEM strategy as part of their marketing mix do so for various reasons. First of all, an SEM account is very simple to set up and can generate traffic very rapidly, contingent on the level of competition in a given market. SEM conveys ads to people who are already looking for the products or services that the company is offering, implicating that they are only getting qualified traffic. Unlike traditional banner ads, companies pay based on the number of clicks they receive, not on the number of impressions (number of times an ad appears). Additionally, many marketing campaigns prioritise branding which is why PPC ads can become a very powerful in terms of driving home a brand name because they appear alongside search results for myriad of various terms. (Boughton, 2005.)

Both SEO and SEM are effective on their own in reaching the people who are looking for information in search engines. Whichever method company prefers to use in its search marketing, either organic or paid, when properly implemented, search marketing has proven to be a fundamental part of any well-developed interactive marketing strategy.

### **2.3.1 Online PR**

Online PR (or e-PR) aims at boosting positive mentions of companies, brands, products or websites on third-party websites such as social networks, blogs, podcasts or feeds that are likely to be visited by the target audience. For organizations without a marketing communications budget, PR, both online and offline, can be an efficient way to bring visibility to their organisation. Online influencer outreach nowadays is an important activity to find companies or individuals with a strong online following and then, using these contacts, influence the audience. Online PR also incorporates responding to negative discussions and managing public relations via a site through a social media news centre or blog, for instance. (Chaffey et al. 2016.)

Online PR revolves around building lasting relationship with the audience. The results of relationship building can be evaluated with regards to knowledge, attitudes toward the organization, communication activities, and the implementation of routinized behaviours that benefit the organization and user (Hallahan, 2014). Besides promotion and relationship building, online relations are especially essential to organizations when managing crises and issues. In today's world, people do not want information to be pushed (push function) at them. Push function is identified as outbound marketing. Outbound marketing denotes any kind of marketing where a company starts the conversation and sends its message out to an audience (WordStream). Outbound marketing instances incorporate more traditional forms of marketing and advertising such as TV commercials, radio ads, print advertisements (newspaper ads, magazine ads, flyers, brochures, catalogs, etc.), tradeshow, outbound sales calls (cold

calls), and email spam (WordStream). Instead of being bombarded with outbound marketing, people prefer to look for information (pull function) themselves, often relying on third party websites to gather additional information on the company. Today, 'pull function' is often identified as inbound marketing. Since there are many sources and channels of information compared to the past where there was primarily TV and press, it takes more efforts for the message to be seen (Chaffey et al., 2016). Promotion can be tolerated but for a public relations practitioner or marketer to think that a message can be 'pushed' to visitors without the utter and individual acceptance of the recipient is to be arrogant and naïve (Philliphs & Young, 2009).

Online PR is also connected to other communication techniques. For instance, social media offers plentiful opportunities for public relations practitioners (or just company's employees) to interact with the public while adopting new forms of technology and incorporating them into their everyday lives (Curtis et al., 2010). Social entrepreneurs are also active in the field. In fact, Curtis et al. (2010) found that social media tools are becoming useful method of communication for public relations practitioners in the non-profit sector. In addition to social media, online PR can also have in influence on search engine optimization. The more links exist from websites of others to company's website, the higher the company's website will be ranked in the natural or organic listings of the search engines.

While there are numerous advantages of online PR such as better reach, better SEO, brand and credibility enhancement through positive commentary, there are certain disadvantages as well. The main disadvantage of e-PR is that it is not a controlled method like online advertising techniques such as pay-per-click marketing or display advertising where the returns generated are identified for a given expenditure. Namely, it could be regarded as a high-risk investment. (Chaffey et al., 2016.)

### **2.3.2 Online Partnership**

Partnerships are an important part of today's marketing mix for any organization including a social enterprise. The relationship with other social enterprises, local public authorities and private organisations or NGOs is essential in developing partnerships (Matei & Sandu, 2013). Partnerships are vital in gaining financial support, in instigating projects or in promoting the social mission (Matei & Sandu, 2013). Online partnerships refer to creation and management of enduring arrangements to advance company's online services on third-party websites or through email communications. In smaller organisations, partnership management is often overlooked, which is a missed opportunity. Various types of partnership include link building, affiliate marketing, aggregators such as price comparison sites, online sponsorship and co-branding. (Chaffey et al., 2016).

Affiliate marketing has become a major strategic consideration for a lot of companies (Duffy, 2005). Numerous companies utilize affiliate marketing as a

way of advancing their website, selling products and services online. Affiliate marketing may be regarded as an online version of the practice of paying finder's fees for the attraction of new customers to a company (Salta, 2012). An "affiliate" is someone who joins or registers with a web merchant's affiliate marketing program and is compensated for referring or directing visitors, subscribers and/or customers to the web business (Salta, 2012). In various affiliate marketing programs, the finder's fee compensation may be based on a certain value for each visit (often known as Pay-per-Click), for each registrant (often known as Pay-per-Lead), or a commission for each customer purchase or sale (often known as Pay-per-Sale) (Salta, 2012). The key to fruitful affiliate marketing lies in the building of a win-win relationship between the advertiser and the affiliate (Duffy, 2005).

Online sponsorship is another form of online partnership. The comparative unobtrusiveness of sponsorship can reduce the probability that advertising will be inferred as a persuasion attempt by consumers (Carrillat & d'Astous, 2009). Meenaghan and Shipley (1999) also stated that consumers perceive sponsorship as being less commercially-oriented than advertising. Therefore, a company's communication effort divided between advertising and sponsorships may be less likely to activate persuasion knowledge from consumers than an advertising effort only (Carrillat & d'Astous, 2009). For the advertiser, online sponsorship is beneficial because his/her name is linked with an online brand that the site visitor is already acquainted with. Therefore, for users of a publisher's site, with which they are acquainted with, sponsorship shapes the existing relationship and trust. (Chaffey et al., 2016.)

Co-branding of sites or emails are closely related to online sponsorship. Co-branding can generate essential value for companies by letting partners to share industry-specific competencies (Nunces et al., 2007). The sponsorship called contra-deals usually happen where there is an association between two brands and they are complementary but not competitive (Chaffey et al., 2016). For example, one online publisher may offer subscribers the chance to sign up with newsletters from another company, a process known as 'co-registration' (Chaffey et al., 2016). Co-branding can be an effective form of online marketing, but certain resources such as 'online partnership manager' have to be established and administer the relationships between partners (Chaffey et al., 2016).

### **2.3.3 Interactive ads**

Interactive ads or display advertising represent usage of online ads such as banners and rich media ads to reach brand awareness and encourage click-through to a target site (Chaffey et al., 2016). In display advertising, an advertiser pays for an advertising placement on third-party sites such as publishers or social networks; the process usually implicates ad serving from a different server from that on which the page is hosted (Chaffey et al., 2016).

The Internet allows marketers to pay only for real and quantifiable activities by consumers, for instance clicking on a web link, an image or a video, placing a call, or buying something. Based on advertiser's goal, proven formats include search ad, ad networks, online video and targeted media. Especially, the success of Google search ad formats like AdWords Sitelink and AdWords InVideo ads has ultimately resulted in the significant growth of online advertising. However, differentiation is integral for an increased market share. Good branding should decide who belongs to the target audience. Audience division is propelling the growth of geographic, demographic, contextual, and behaviour targeting in online advertising. The Internet, with its ability to record behaviour and obtain demographic information for a geographic location, is fundamentally accountable for the increase in targeted ads. (Wang et al., 2014.)

While interactive ads and display advertising are an effective way to draw traffic and acquire new customers, marketers should be careful not to be obtrusive with them as they sometimes could do more harm than good. Obtrusive ads might seem to consumers as if an advertiser wants to manipulate them, thus this could result in reduced purchase intentions (Campbell, 1995). Targeted ads could be effective if the information they provide seem beneficial to the consumer (Cho & Cheon, 2003; Edwards et al., 2002; Wang et al., 2008).

There are several ways an audience can be targeted. Audiences can be targeted through their profile via serving personalised ads, or ad in email if guests have registered on a site (Chaffey et al., 2016). Behavioural re-targeting leverages information gathered on a person's web-browsing habits, such as page views, search queries and ad clicks, to choose the ads most relevant to user to display (Liu & Tang, 2011). Therefore, behavioural re-targeting options are utilized to specially serve an ad to someone who seems to have an interest in a topic from the content they are interested in. According to Goldfarb and Tucker (2011) consumers are more tolerant to targeted ads, however the authors found out that that obtrusiveness and targeting do not work well in combination which is why two alternative viable routes should be embarked upon to online display advertising success: (1) putting resources into increasing the visibility (obtrusive) of ads and (2) putting resources into the targeting of ads to context, but not doing both.

The effectiveness of online advertisement can also depend on where the potential customer is in his purchase funnel journey, as if he/she is not ready to purchase yet, the ads can be ineffective. Hoban and Bucklin (2014) found that display advertising has a positive influence on visits to company's website for individuals in most stages of the purchase funnel, but not for those who previously visited the site without creating an account, so the user who have already visited a website, has an account there is more likely to click on the ads. Therefore, while display advertising can be an effective way to make a conversion, companies and organization that are not known to user, or not matching his/her stage in the purchase funnel may not see the positive effects of display advertisement.

### 2.3.4 Opt-in emails

Email as a promotional activity has skyrocketed in recent years, and most forecasters think that its growth is likely to continue in the future (Roberts & Zahay, 2012). E-mail marketing can be a powerful tool to attract prospects to company's website and convert them to customers. Email is most extensively used as a prospect conversion and customer retention tool utilizing an opt-in house list of prospects and customers that have agreed to receive the e-mails from an organisation (Chaffey et al. 2016). Among the reasons for the popularity of email advertising are its low cost compared to traditional direct mail with costs ranging from \$5 to \$7 per thousand consumer addresses, as opposed to \$500 to \$700 per thousand for direct mail (Gartner, 2002). In addition, email advertising has been known for producing faster response times from consumers (Brown, 2002; Rickman, 2001). However, emails should not just be sent randomly to everyone, as they might end up in the spam folder. In fact, e-mail marketing is in risk of being overrun by annoying commercial email i.e. spam (Pavlov et al., 2008). Instead, people should subscribe to emails giving companies and organizations permission to send those emails, called opt-in emails. In opt-in email marketing visitors are encouraged to leave their e-mail addresses to sign up for e-mail newsletters. Opt-in emails marketing is a good way to generate a lead and increase the conversion rate. In fact, permission-based emails are effective because by signing up to an email list, the consumer is seeking the information from the advertiser rather than merely being bombarded by it (Martin et al., 2003).

There are different techniques used for an effective e-mail marketing. Rettie and Chittenden (2003) suggested three stages for the successful email marketing: encouraging the recipient to open the email, motivating them to pay attention to the email and convincing them to click through the URL link, henceforth the response rate should depend on the email header as shown in the in-box, the email contents and the recipient. If the company executes e-mail marketing correctly, it is more likely that its prospects and customers will remain being customers for a longer period of time. Though email marketing is progressively recognized as vital, suggestions for what specific content advertisers should use tend to be rare and unclear. For instance, email content should be "targeted" (Waring & Martinez, 2002), "relevant and clear" (Carmichael, 2000), or "irresistible" (Yager, 2001). An exception was given by Garden (2002) who suggests (1) providing relevant product information, (2) advertising special deals, and (3) offering invitations to company functions. There are numerous advantages of e-mail marketing such as low costs, shorter turnaround (the time involved to prepare, send the messages and receive the responses), high response rates and customisable campaigns (Rettie & Chittenden, 2003). While opt-in mails can be an effective marketing strategy, getting people to sign up for e-mails is not an easy task. Normally, website visitors provide opt-in permission at a very low rate, except in the case where the buyer is receiving some form of compensation for granting opt-in permission (Lawe, 2007). For instance, a relevant incentive such as free information or a

discount can be offered in exchange for prospects providing their email address by filling in an online form. That said, email marketing requires knowledge and skill from a company that is implementing it, however, if executed correctly, email marketing can be a powerful additional tool in company's online marketing activities.

### **2.3.5 Social Media Marketing**

The ways and tactics for interacting with customers have altered considerably with the appearance of the phenomenon known as social media, also known as consumer-generated media. Social media incorporates a vast variety of online, word-of-mouth forums including blogs, company sponsored discussion boards and chat rooms, consumer-to-consumer e-mail, consumer product or service ratings websites and forums, Internet discussion boards and forums, moblogs, and social networking websites. (Mangold & Faulds, 2009.)

Social entrepreneurs resolving some of the hardest problems can benefit immensely from social media, use it to communicate their story and receive support for their initiatives. Kenix (2008) stated that NGOs use social networking websites to stimulate activism and generate an opportunity for advertising, fundraising and for the marginalized to voice their concerns. Social media marketing is marketing that takes place on social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram and some other social media websites. Lazer and Kelly (as cited by Neti 2011, p.3-4) defined social marketing as "concerned with the application of marketing knowledge, concepts, and techniques to enhance social as well as economic ends concerned with the analysis of the social consequences of marketing policies, decisions and activities". Participation and advertisement on such websites is a good way to reach and engage with targeted group and is seen by marketers as a great opportunity to market their products while engaging with customers on a new level. Social media marketing is one of the most cost-effective approach for social enterprises to influence the digital community (Emergent Digital).

Each of the social platforms has special tools that help businesses in reaching their audience. Marketers can set up a business page on social media platforms and start advertising their content there. Facebook, for example, offers its own form of advertising with Facebook ads, which are shown in the side columns of the Facebook site. These classic ads are known more specifically as Marketplace Ads. In addition to that, a marketer can promote posts with a flat fee rate through Facebook Ad Manager to reach a certain number of users, increasing a specific post's reach and impressions. Boosting posts does not require an account in Facebook Ad Manger and is done by allocating advertising budget to a post already on the business page. The post on its own would only reach a very small portion of the current audience so boosting the post allows to ensure a much larger targeted audience sees the post in its news feed. On other social platforms such as Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn, there are also options to create an ad or advertise via different type of content. Each of the social

platform's business pages also provides analytics where marketer can track how the posts or ads have been performing in terms of the reach (the number of people who see the content), target audience, engagement (the number of interactions people have with the content, impressions (the number of times the content is displayed), etc.

Even though there are many options for advertising on social media, social media marketing can be challenging because of the constant changes happening on the platforms. For example, Facebook introduced numerous changes throughout the years to its algorithm. Even if a company is active in Facebook and has following, the followers of the page will not necessarily have the company's updates shown in their newsfeed, as Facebook algorithm shows the users more of the content they previously "liked" or engaged with more. In 2018 the situation has exacerbated even more for businesses with Facebook introducing further changes to its algorithm, which have made organic reach more difficult for businesses to achieve. New algorithm downplays posts by publishers and brands to instead emphasize content by friends and family. This change makes it harder for the businesses and brands to reach their audiences.

In the context of social media, virality can be both a positive and negative thing. On the one hand, viral marketing or online word-of-mouth messages signify how quickly content is shared or messages are forwarded to assist in achieving awareness and inciting a response (Chaffey et al., 2016). However, on the other, virality of social media marketing can be a double-edge sword. It takes effort and care to manage online communication in an effective way. Companies have to be cautious with advertising, as poor advertisement can generate negative response from consumers and cause viral consumer backlash in the networking sites. It is further exacerbated by the fact that even when a marketer deletes a post, it is still can be print screened or copied so the evidence of the post will still be online.

It is in the company's interest to shape customers' discussions to make sure they are aligned with the company's goals. To avoid the risk of ruining the brand's image rather than improving it, the company should align its social media marketing with its global marketing strategy. To achieve this, the company should select the profile of people that matches its target segment and communicate with them correspondingly. (Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi, 2012.)

A key objective in implementation of social media marketing for promotional objectives is to assist in moving the consumer through the purchasing process. Marketers focus in various phases of these cycles to grow brand awareness, increase brand liking and image, built brand equity, incite desire and move consumer to action. Consumer attitudes, behaviour, movement through the cycle can be influenced by promotional messages targeted throughout social media channels (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). Figure 4 shows how marketers can use each zone of social media marketing.



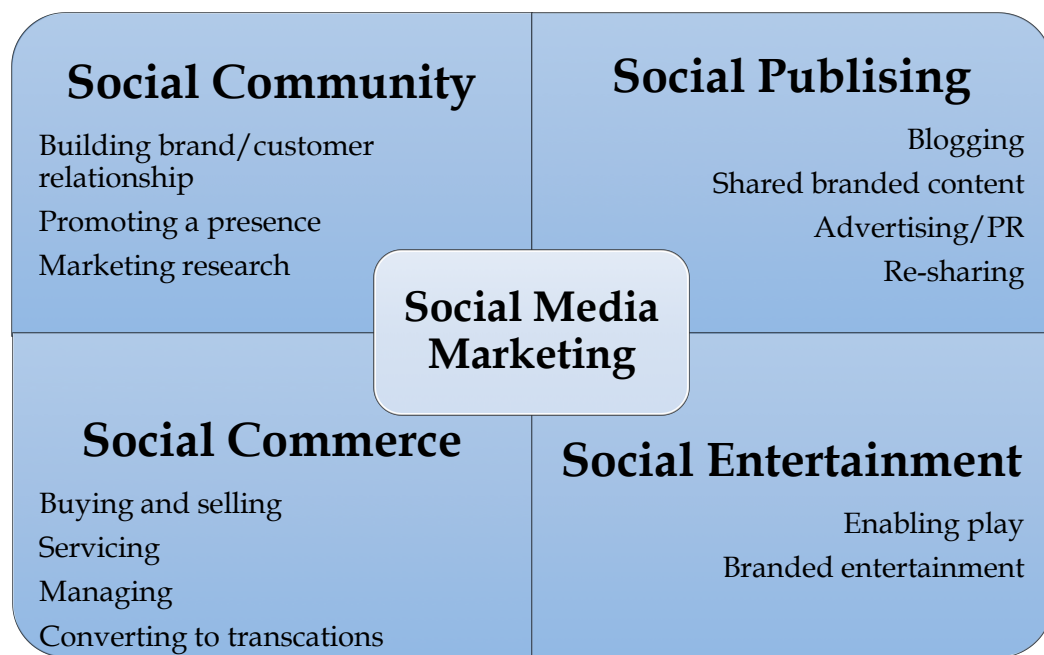


FIGURE 4 Marketing Applications Across Social Media Zones (Tuten & Solomon, 2017)

Considerably unlike other conventional marketing strategies, Social Media Marketing (SMM) has three distinct advantages. First of all, it offers a way to marketers not only to present products / services to customers but also to listen to customers' complaints and recommendations. Secondly, marketers are able to identify various peer groups or influencers among different groups, who in turn can become brand ambassadors and help in organic growth of a brand. Lastly, all this is done at nearly zero cost since the social networking sites are free (Neti, 2011).

Social media marketing is a strategic and methodical process to create the company's influence, reputation and brand within communities of potential customers, readers or supporters (Neti, 2011). Smaller companies can especially benefit from social media marketing as it requires less financial expenditures. However, it still requires investment in form of time as social media pages have to be constantly updated with new content that followers feel engaged with. Content is the backbone of social media; without publishing fresh, germane information consistently for the followers to consume, company's online and social media platforms will not generate traffic (Oyza & Edwin, 2015). Social media accounts that do not create content consistently are regarded as dead (Oyza & Edwin, 2015). Therefore, having consistent social marketing strategy with planned posts publishing and engaging with the audience can prove to be rewarding in the long-term.

## 2.4 Content Marketing

Content marketing is the fundamental tool of digital marketing (Baltes, 2015). Contradictory to advertising, which is usually broadcasted around someone else's content, content marketing is the creation of valuable, relevant and captivating content by the brand itself on a regular basis, used to create a positive behaviour from a customer or prospect of the brand (Pulizzi, 2012). Content marketing can be a very effective tool for brand building and a business-building tool (Ryan, 2016). It allows companies to share their unique story. "Strong brands are based on a story that communicates who is the company; authenticity is to communicate what you really are" (Denning 2011, p.163). Moreover, in the digital age, becoming a publisher of content has become extremely easy. Content marketing works for everybody, no matter the size of the business (Ryan, 2016). Furthermore, although content marketing is not free, it is generally a less expensive alternative to many other options like pay-per-click advertising and other outbound marketing activities (Mccoy, 2016). Moreover, content marketing also produces up to three times as many leads compared to outbound marketing whereas the conversion rates are six times higher for business that use content marketing as opposed to those who do not (Mccoy, 2016). Having more content on one's website or other channels is also beneficial for better ranking in Google, as it helps to improve website for a better SEO.

There is different kind of content that exist in digital space, static (webpages) and dynamic rich media which encourages interactions (Chaffey et al., 2016). Videos, podcasts, user-generated content and interactive product selectors which should be refined to engage issues (Chaffey et al., 2016). The difficulty is in successfully selecting and managing relevant type of content in different platforms. Content marketing is one of the small number of marketing channels that can work along the complete customer journey, so a good content strategy should speak to the customer at all points along the cycle (Ryan, 2016). The content type and content agility have substantial effect on number of likes and number of comments (Chauhan & Pillai, 2013). Marketers can easily track the successful content by utilizing Analytics tools which help them see what content works best on different platforms.

Contrary to the majority of for-profit consumer businesses, social enterprises do not start their businesses by creating a product that is filling an unfulfilled consumer need, their starting point is always the mission (Redfworshop). Miller (2013, xxvi) provided the following definition for content marketing for non-profits which can be also applied to social enterprises:

Content marketing for non-profits is creating and sharing relevant and valuable content that attracts, motivates, engages, and inspires your participants, supporters, and influencers to help you achieve your mission.

To efficiently market the product, social enterprises need to identify their target audience, and concentrate their energy on selling to them. Marketers of social

enterprises have to truly get to know their consumers and develop both products and communications that engages with them. Therefore, social enterprises have to attract their target audience with the most captivating messages and posts numerous times in as many diverse platforms as their resources permit. Social enterprises are doing good, but they are still competing, for this reason smart marketing is crucial. (Redflworkshops.)

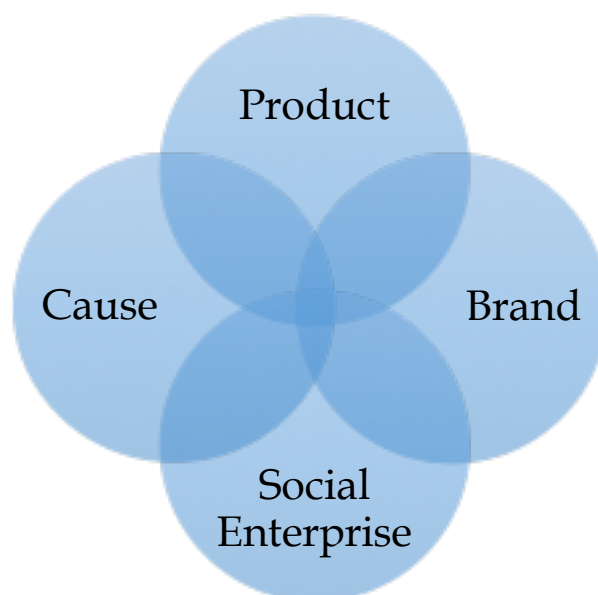


FIGURE 5 Marketing in social enterprise (Redflworkshop)

Social enterprise is selling a product and a mission while also building a brand (Figure 5). Brand gives the company reputation and credibility. Consumers are not going to just buy the product or contribute to the cause only because social enterprise doing something good. Valuable content helps companies generate interest that transforms into lasting relationships (Baltes, 2015). When social enterprises are creating a community around themselves in online spaces, they can create opportunities and build strong relationships with numerous of its members as individuals (Miller, 2013). Consequently, when those individuals really become friends of the cause, they will spread the word for social enterprise, contribute to friend raising and fundraising (Miller, 2013).

#### 2.4.1 Channels for content marketing

It has been confirmed that social media influences purchase decisions (Georgieva, 2017). Selecting the right channels for business is an important task. "Social entrepreneurship can strongly benefit from a wise use of social media and social network and networking" (Oprica 2013, p.664). The selection of the channels will depend on whether business is B2B or B2C oriented as those two groups of customer segments may prefer different platforms. In addition, depending on the goals of the businesses, some channels may work better than

others. Below, the summary of the most important social media channels are presented.

**Facebook** is the “King of Social Media”. Users are consuming a lot of content in Facebook, with the content consumption increasing by 57 percent in the last two years (Spence, 2017). As of April 2018, Facebook has 2.2 billion monthly active users (Statista). The social networking site has the highest rate of active users with 70 percent of Facebook users logging on a daily basis, including 43 percent who do so several times a day (Spence, 2017). As far as age groups, Facebook is essentially utilized by those between the ages of 18-49, so it is the best place to reach Millennials and Generation X (Creswick, 2017). Originally, Facebook has been more disposed towards personal networking, such as keeping-in-touch with loved-ones, however, as of late, it has become more of a widespread media network, offering businesses a platform to advertise (Creswick, 2017). If businesses’ goal is to raise awareness and extend reach, paid promotion is an effective tool to do that. Facebook’s advertising platform, for instance, has a great reputation for producing remarkable ROI. Facebook generally used to market to B2C segments but in some cases can be used also for B2B. When it comes to small businesses, they definitely prefer Facebook with more than 40 million small businesses having active pages there (Aslam, 2018a).

**Twitter** has been an effective tool for businesses, for both B2B and B2C, to reach their audience and have conversation with them. As of April 2018, Twitter has 330 millions of active users (Statista). Most of the users are between ages 18 and 29 years old, with male adults using Twitter slightly more than females (Spence, 2017). The primary issue with Twitter is the large amount of Tweet activity happening every second (Creswick, 2017). As of June 2018, as indicated by Internet Live Stats, there are around 8,064 Tweets every second, and the number keeps on rising - making it extremely difficult for brands and organizations to cut through the noise, be heard and seen by their intended interest groups (Creswick, 2017).

However, there are ways to get noticed on Twitter. Twitter is very effective for advertising and marketers often enjoy a lower cost per click (CPC) than an AdWords campaign (Smith). Twitter advertising is somewhat different from Facebook advertising in terms of pricing models and types of ads. The three types of advertisements to choose from on Twitter are promoted tweets, promoted accounts and promoted trends (ThriveHive, 2017). It is important to know what targeted audience is interested about, promote and share only tweets or trends they are interested about. There is a poll option available on Twitter which help companies to ask their audience questions and then utilize the knowledge to their advantage. One should bear in mind that 53% of Twitter users never really post any updates but use the platform for keeping up-to-date with news, events and developments in real-time, retweeting, and connecting with like-minded individuals (Creswick, 2017).

Twitter is a platform for discussion, making it the ideal online networking channel for engaging with the audience and listening to the consumer. Organizations should utilize the channel to contact their customers

straightforwardly, as opposed to disorderly communicating with anybody and everybody. (Spence, 2017.)

**Instagram** is a perfect tool for businesses to build an inspiring visual brand story through quality photos or videos. It is ideal for B2C segment. With 53% of Instagram users following brands on the platform, it is a great way for organizations to develop brand awareness and showcase products, services, events, offer discounts and much more (Creswick, 2017). It is the fastest growing social media network and it keeps on growing fast (Spence, 2017). As of April 2018, Instagram has 813 million active users (Statista). Among them, 90% are under 35 years old, with slightly more females (Creswick, 2017).

Despite the huge number of Instagram users, not every business views Instagram as a must have for their businesses. Only 36 percent of marketers use Instagram, compared to 93% of marketers who use Facebook (Rule, 2018). However, the businesses might be missing out. On Instagram, brands have steady engagement with 4 percent of their total followers as opposed to Facebook and Twitter, that have engagement less than 0.1 percent (Buffer). Instagram introduced advertising option in 2015, so brands can advertise their products through quality video or photo content on the platform. As Instagram is owned by Facebook, the two platforms have rather similar features and ad targeting options, which makes it a great choice for brand awareness and engagement (McLeod, 2017). Depending upon business goals, Instagram can be a very efficient tool in helping businesses to meet their objectives, particularly if businesses have the appropriate branding (Spence, 2017).

**LinkedIn** is well-known for being a champion in social media lead generation for B2B sector (Smith). In fact, 80% of B2B social media leads originate from LinkedIn, which makes it an essential platform for organizations in B2B sector (Agius). It offers businesses, especially B2B, a shortest line to fellow industry professionals making it a viable and useful approach to produce high-quality leads in a cost-effective way (Creswick, 2017). LinkedIn's active user base is smaller compared to other social media platforms. As of April 2018, LinkedIn has 260 million active users of its 500 million user accounts (Statista). LinkedIn is "the only major social media channel for which usage rates are higher among 30- to 49-year-olds than among 18- to 29-year-olds" (Spence, 2011). LinkedIn has slightly more males (28%) users than females (27%) (Aslam, 2018b).

There are different options for businesses to get noticed on the platform. LinkedIn, as other social media platforms, provides tools to create an ad and generate leads. Because of its professional, business-orientated nature, LinkedIn has essentially less content 'litter' than other platforms, providing meaningful, important content at each opportunity, which means organizations have a more prominent chance of being seen and connected with (Creswick, 2017). Among other highlights LinkedIn offers for businesses, LinkedIn Group option allows one not only to share company information and content with like-minded people, but also it gives a superb chance to introduce a company to prospects (a.k.a. new customers) (Spence, 2017).

**YouTube** is the world's second largest search engine with over 3 billion searches a month (Mushroom Networks). It is second just to Google, and owned by Google. YouTube is saturated with content. Every minute 300 hours of video

are uploaded to YouTube (Aslam, 2018c). As of April 2018, it has 1500 billion active users (Statista). Almost everybody watches YouTube with 80 percent of people aged 18–49 watch YouTube daily (Edmondson, 2018). The platform is predominantly male with 62 percent of males watching YouTube (Aslam, 2018c). Only 9% of small businesses are on YouTube (Aslam, 2018c). Even though, small businesses might not see value in YouTube for their business purposes as opposed to other platforms, YouTube can be an efficient marketing tool for any businesses no matter the size. Creating and posting video content on YouTube is a great way not only to boost the visibility and credibility of the business, but also do it in the inexpensive way as YouTube is one of the most cost effective online marketing channels (Edmondson, 2018). Thus, small businesses can especially benefit from using YouTube as it requires low financial resources. By posting a video online, sharing the company's knowledge, organizations and businesses can position themselves as experts and viewers can be incentivized to go to companies' website and start using their services. In addition, having YouTube account helps with SEO.

**Blog or blogging** has become an influential tool in companies' content marketing strategy. Blogs can be written by a company to describe an issue or provide information or it can be written for a company by blogger or influencer as a subtle way of marketing. Blogs can be read, shared and commented on, making it a good source of social media (Hammis, 2015). Furthermore, blogs are a perfect way to share the company story, putting face behind the company and giving the company identity as well as authority in its field of operations. By creating educational posts about what a company has to offer and how to use its services or products, what benefits it provides, a reader might want to connect with company and become a customer (Hammis, 2015). In fact, small businesses with blogs enjoy 126% more lead growth than small businesses without it (Market Path, 2016). In addition, blogs also increase SEO rankings with more user generated content and provides more visibility on the web. Nowadays, most of the blogs are integrated into company's websites. If an influencer or blogger writes a blog about a company, it may contribute to an increase in traffic to the company's website and elevated interest towards the company.

However, writing a successful blog is not an easy task. Difficulties of blogging are connected with its high time consumption, lack of ideas what to write about and overall the ability to write in interesting, entertaining and consistent way about the issues that the target audience is interested about.

## 24.2 Content strategy

Halvorson & Rach (2012) state that content strategy is a legitimate practice in any organization the generates and distributes the content online. Content strategy guides marketers plans for the creation, distribution and control of the content (Halvorson & Rach, 2012). Brands are beginning to understand that all the technology tools available are useless without a content marketing strategy at the centre of marketing (Pulizzi, 2012). Good content strategy helps content strategists to better comprehend all aspects of the content which means that

smarter, more knowledgeable decisions about how the tactics are going to be implemented and chosen can be made (Halvorson & Rach, 2012).

There is a difference between content marketer and content strategists. The content marketer creates the story and plans the channels that would be utilised to cultivate the customer relationship with the brand (Rose, 2013). The content strategist, on the other hand, warrants that story, language, and organizational procedures work regularly and proficiently across multiple teams, languages, and every publication the brand controls (Rose, 2013). Essentially, the content strategist must define not only which content will be published, but why it is being published in the first place (Halvorson, 2008).

A unified content strategy can assist companies in mitigating the costs associated with creating, distributing and managing content, assuring that the content supports companies' organizational and customer's needs. (Rockley & Kostur & Manning, 2003). Without a content strategy, there is a risk of producing the content that is not aligned with company's goals; the content that nobody really wants to read because it does not provide any value for the reader. Moreover, the absence of content strategy can result in delivering generic content which is not relevant, engaging and does not rank organically (Smith, 2014). When content is not engaging with the target audience, it is unlikely to deliver against companies' broader marketing objectives (Smith, 2014). Outlining content strategy requires from a company, firstly, to define its assets, and then to conclude what supplementary value can be originated from leveraging those assets in the service of its mission, purpose and principles (Brandon, 2008). Done correctly, content strategy can benefit any company no matter its size and goals.

## **2.5 Marketing for micro social enterprises in the digital age**

Marketing is an important way for any businesses to get noticed. Micro-enterprises could only flourish if potential customers know about them (Needham et al., 2015). Marketing as an organizational activity plays a vital part in regards to how the organization communicates its compatibility with environmental norms, both through value creation and the way of interaction with relevant stakeholders (Penaloza & Mish, 2011; Mish & Scammon, 2010). Social enterprises must compete in the market, which is why they need marketing to obtain financial viability (Matei & Sandu, 2013).

It can be presumed that digital marketing is helping micro social enterprises in reaching their goals. Digital technology has unlocked new channels for selling products (Wind & Mahajan, 2001). Digital marketing provides an opportunity for organisations, no matter the size, and businesses should take it into consideration; it is extremely essential for small businesses to realise the potential and impact of advanced digital business since digitally evolved businesses are more likely to grow and be competitive in the future (Fan, 2016).

Competition and raising funds is one of the main challenges for micro social enterprises. The pressures to demonstrate the competence and compete for

funding have resulted in social enterprises' adoption, application and incorporation of typical business practices (Bull, 2006). The situation is exacerbated in Finland with very little funding available for social enterprises (Lumituuli interviewee). Competition, insufficient resources and the drive towards sustainability via not-for-profit commercialisation has resulted in an accent on competitive strategies and financial management, with models and tools imported or copied from the business world (Bull, 2006). The most appropriate business tools for non-profits are strategic planning, technological capacity building, fund-raising, databases, internet and e-mail, marketing and new management practices (Conti, 2006).

According to Karjaluoto et al. (2015) the marketing activities of SMEs is much smaller compared to large corporations, consequently, digitalization is more challenging for them. Therefore, it can be deduced that for micro-companies in field of social entrepreneurship the challenge is even greater. Indeed, those organizations have limited financial and human resources to allocate time to digital marketing. In addition, their know-how about digital marketing can be inadequate as well. However, this can be overcome by investing in digital literacy, or in other words in ITracy (Mithas & Lucas, 2010). There are a lot of platforms and channels in online space for micro social enterprises to get acquainted with and use. Modern social platforms (Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, etc.), blogs, digital marketing communications tools can be successfully utilized by social enterprises depending on their goals. However, the decision whether to implement them often depends on social entrepreneurs and their view on the benefits that such tools bring for the company.

There are numerous reasons that affect the decision to embrace digital marketing strategies and activities. Firm size has a significant effect on the adoption of digital marketing channels, in that micro firms are the slowest adopters (Bordonaba-Juste et al., 2012). Large companies are more likely to possess the essential resources and knowledge to successfully adopt new digital channels and tools (Barnes et al., 2012). In addition to size, return on investment (ROI) can also affect the company's decision to invest in adopting technology for marketing. Due to resource limitations, micro-enterprises have to carefully decide where they want to allocate the human and financial resources to, as misallocation of those can prove to be costly, and micro-enterprises often can not simply afford to make costly mistakes. However, not investing in digital literacy can prove to be even costlier as it can put companies in a disadvantageous position compared to others who do invest in digital literacy and incorporate digital strategies into their companies' operations.

Karjaluoto and Huhtamäki (2010) have categorised the motives to implement digital channels in micro firms under three main categories; 1) firm-specific and owner-manager factors, 2) resource-related factors, and 3) environmental factors. Karjaluoto and Huhtamäki (2010) state that these can act either as facilitators or inhibitors of adoption. In these paper, the author followed the classification to understand the reasons for adoption or not adoption digital marketing strategies among micro social enterprises.

Firm-specific and owner-manager factors can have an effect on companies' adaptation of new technologies. Small businesses are often owned by



relatively few shareholders, with power and decision-making held in the owner-manager hands (Dyer & Handler, 1994). Micro firms have attributes such as low levels of formality, a high degree of personal authority of the owner/manager on communication, restricted ability to have an impact on their business environment and restricted organisational ability for specialisation (Barnes et al., 2012). Therefore, innovativeness of the company and the innovativeness of the owner-manager is often correlated, and how innovative a company is, depends on innovativeness of the owner (Verhees & Meulenberg, 2004). Grandon and Pearson (2004) discovered that the commitment of top management, the degree of IT knowledge they possess, and their outlook on innovation had a major impact on the implementation of e-commerce. In fact, numerous authors found that the owner-manager's motivation is one of the most instrumental factors responsible for the e-channel use in a company (Karjaluoto & Huhtamäki, 2010; Rao, Metts and Mora Monge 2003; Fillis, Johansson and Wagner, 2004). In a study of Korean SMEs by Jeona, Han and Lee (2006), the authors proposed that the CEO's knowledge of IT/e-business and positive attitudes toward innovation were one of the main influential reasons for digital business adoption. In addition to this, other essential influencers on adoption are usability of the new channels and having an opportunity to try the channels in action (Karjaluoto & Huhtamäki, 2010).

Resource-related factors have been identified by Karjaluoto and Huhtamäki (2010) as human, financial and technical resources. Human resources are about the availability of technical-savvy workforce with sufficient know-how (Kurnia et al., 2009). Financial resources are concerned with the accessibility of capital to perform activities without any financial liability (Kurnia et al., 2009). Technological resources are associated with the level of complexity of IT usage in an organization (Kurnia et al., 2009). Not having enough of those resources may inhibit the adaptation of new technologies. Micro firms are at special risk because they often experience resource-constraints. The lack of resources is one of the most frequently mentioned barriers for SMEs (Stankovska et al., 2016).

Information communication technologies for SMEs and micro-enterprises may also bring advantages such as cost-reduction or increasing productivities. However, many companies view ICT as being costly to adopt. Even if companies are willing to embrace digital technologies, they often lack know-how to successfully take full use of new technologies.

Environmental factors are factors that are outside of company's control. The research has acknowledged the significance of numerous environmental factors that affect adoption of online marketing such as supplier incentives (Gatignon & Robertson, 1989), intense competition (Thong & Yap, 1995), and pressure from demanding customers (Premukumar & Roberts, 1999). Pressure from the customers are one of the most important environmental factors as the customers are in the centre of all business operations. Customers behaviour is constantly changing as more and more people are spending their time online. According to Statistics Finland (2017), Finnish people between the ages 16 - 89 use Internet in 2017; 73 % of them use the Internet many times per day with mobile phone being the most popular device for using the Internet.

## 3 RESEARCH METHOD AND DATA

### 3.1 Method

Choosing the appropriate research methodologies is vital as the whole work rests upon them. In order to receive answers to the research questions, the author utilized a qualitative research method. Qualitative method is used when the purpose is to gather more detailed answers of the issue being examined. Qualitative method is often used to find out about behaviour, attitudes, opinion of people being studied (Krishnaswami & Satyaprasad, 2010). In this research, the author aimed to find out what kind of the practices the social entrepreneurs implementing regarding digital marketing and digital marketing strategies, find out about their opinions on the matter which is why qualitative research is the best suited for this type of study.

This research paper represents a case study. Yin (1984, p.23) defines the case study research method “as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.” Case study allows the researcher to thoroughly scrutinize the data within a specific context. In majority of cases, a case study chooses a small geographical area or a very limited number of individuals as the subjects of study (Zainal, 2007). Case studies explore contemporary real-life phenomenon through thorough contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions, and their relationships (Zainal, 2007).

Case study research is appropriate for answering questions that start with how, who and why (Farquhar, 2012). Stake (2005, p. 443) states that “a case study is not a methodological choice, but rather a choice of what is to be studied – by whatever methods we choose to study the case.” Case study research is about examining single or multiple units of study, using well-known research methods for data collection such as interviews or surveys (Farquhar, 2012).

Case studies were divided into three categories by Stake (1995): intrinsic, instrumental and collective case studies. Stake (1995) positions that intrinsic case represents a situation where one wants to learn more about a specific case, so it is more exploratory in nature. Instrumental case is utilised when the researcher wants to accomplish something other than understanding a particular phenomena and aims to recognize how a particular case works in a special context. Collective case is used when a researcher wants to find out about particular phenomena from a number of different cases. Collective case studies resemble multiple case studies, allowing the researcher to explore differences within and between cases (Yin, 2003).

This Master’s thesis represents a collective study as the goal is to produce an understanding of the use of digital marketing strategies in different social enterprises, with drawing comparison between the cases.

## 3.2 Data collection

The author collected the data from seven social entrepreneurs who possess the Finnish Social Enterprise Mark. A list of social enterprises possessing the mark was systematically extracted from Association of Finnish Entrepreneurs website. The companies were chosen using what could be labelled as purposive sampling, meaning that the participating companies were chosen because they were recognized as being the most suited for the research objectives, which was to interview micro social enterprises. Purposive sampling which is also known as judgment, selective or subjective sampling is a sampling method in which researcher counts on his or her own judgment when selecting members of population to take part in the study (Dudovskiy). Since the aim of this research work is understand under-researched topic, purposive sampling was considered well suited approach for selecting participating micro social enterprises. The interviews were conducted in Finland, most of them in Helsinki. It took seven weeks to conduct all the interviews as arranging them according to social entrepreneur's schedule took some time. Once the organizational names were selected from the list, the author visited websites and LinkedIn profiles of selected companies to make sure the companies in question corresponding to the criterion of being a micro-enterprise. If a company did not have a LinkedIn profile, company's information was checked in Finder.fi where, among other things, the information of companies' turnover and size can be found. The author contacted companies individually, an e-mail invitation was sent to some of them, while in other cases, the author filled a contact form on their website requesting an interview.

Face-to-face interviews were chosen as the primary method of collecting the required data. There are three types of interviews: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. The main difference between them is in the degree the participants have control over the process and content of the interview (Corbin & Morse, 2003). In the *structured interview* the interviewer asks interviewees a number of pre-established questions, permitting only a limited number of response categories (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Structured interviews are rigid as the interviewer reads from a script the same questions in the same order and diverges from it as little as possible (Qu & Dumay, 2011). In an *unstructured interview*, sometimes referred to as open-ended or narrative interviews, there is no predetermined set of questions and participants are given substantial control over the progression of the interview (Corbin & Morse, 2003). *Structured* interviews represent a set of predetermined open-ended questions, with additional questions developing from the conversation between interviewer and interviewees (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Semi-structured in-depth interviews are the most commonly used interviewing style for qualitative research and can take place either with an individual or in groups, lasting between 30 minutes to several hours (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Since the interview is based upon human conversation, it permits the skilled interviewer to adapt the style, pace and ordering of questions to induce the richest answers from the interviewee (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Above all, it allows interviewees to

deliver responses in their own terms and in the way that they think and use language which is particularly important if the researchers want to recognise the way the interviewees perceive the social world under study (Qu & Dumay, 2011).

The author decided to choose semi-structured in-depth interviews with the interviewee having liberty to answer the questions as desired. The in-depth interview gives the chance to gather more detailed answers from the respondents. In addition, by using this method, the wrong interpretation of the question can be eliminated as interviewer can clarify the questions which are misunderstood. Moreover, it gives interviewer more control of the situation, as it allows greater adaptability and flexibility.

In addition to interviews, the author also performed desk research regarding social media marketing among the case companies to cross-check the interviewee results. The case companies' own interpretation of being active or having a high engagement might be different from author's, which is why the social media's websites of each case companies were studied and analysed. This data triangulation allowed for better and deeper understanding of issues under examinations.

The background information of the interviewees is presented in Table 2. Most of the interviews happened face-to-face in companies' offices which was the perfect setting as it allowed for in-depths conversation with the interviewees. One interview occurred in a café due to the fact that the company did not have their own office. One interview occurred in White House in Helsinki (house used by the hearing associations) as the interviewee, whose company is located in Oulu, was there on a business trip. One interview happened via Skype due to different locations of the interviewer and interviewees. All interviews except one involved one interviewee. In Summary's case, 2 interviewees were present via Skype.

TABLE 2 Background information of the interviewees

Organization	Job Title	Interview date	Duration	Interview place
<b>Lumituuli Ltd.</b>	Managing director	04.04.2018	35:02	Company facilities
<b>The Helsinki Foundation</b> (foundation)	Executive director	06.04.2018	53:04	Company facilities
<b>Green Key Finland</b> (educational institution)	Account Manager	10.04.2108	34:47	Company facilities
<b>Qlu Ltd.</b>	CEO (co-founder)	10.04.2018	38:07	White house in Helsinki
<b>Minduu</b> (AtCare Ltd.)	CEO (founder)	20.04.2018	40:52	Company facilities

<b>Summaryx Ltd.</b>	HTA Information specialist, Health Economist	09.05.2018	40.58	Skype
<b>Vaikuttava Yritys Ltd.</b>	CEO(founder)	17.05.2018	37:19	Cafe

At the beginning of each interview the interviewees were reminded about the purpose of the thesis and asked the permission to use the company's name in the thesis. The author asked the interviewees the questions that had been prepared in advance. The interview progressed more like a conversation with interviewees rather than following the questions in order as during the discussions most of the questions were answered. In rare cases, the author had to allude to her interview guide, the list of questions with the topics that needed to be covered during the conversation. Rather often one question naturally led to another issue or specifying questions were asked to refer to something an interviewee had mentioned before. This form of discussion was natural and in-depths which allowed for rich responses. During the interviews, interesting stories led to additional unplanned but still important questions. However, the author made sure that all the essential questions were answered. Sometimes the author skipped some question because of their irrelevance. All interviews were recorded with the permission of interviewees to allow for thorough analysis of the data.

The number of cases chosen for this research work was not haphazard but rather considerate, the author stopped interviewing companies when data saturation has been reached. Data saturation is achieved when there is enough information to duplicate the study when the capacity to attain further new information has been achieved, and when more coding is not possible anymore (Fusch & Ness, 2015). In addition, regarding the sample size for case studies, "the sample size is regarded less important in as much the depth and fullness of the research is covered by one or the very few sample size characteristic of the qualitative genre" (Njie & Asimiran 2014, p.38). In the author's case, data saturation was reached on the seven interview.

After the interviews, the author grouped the answers into emerging themes, so that by the end of data collection, the author could already start interpreting and conceptualizing the data. The collected data was analysed using deductive approach. Deductive approach is based upon deducting from premises or propositions. It starts with an proven theory or generalisation, and aims to see if the theory pertains to particular context (Hyde, 2000). After the interviews were conducted, it became apparent that there were both similarities and differences between the case companies which is indicative to collective case studies.

This research is focused on social enterprises companies operating both in the business-to-business and business-to-customer field. Still, the selected context is broad encompassing different industries and business models. In the following sub-chapter, the case companies are shortly described in the sequential order according to the date of the interview.

### 3.21 The case companies

**Lumituuli OY** was established in 1998 in Finland. It is Finland's first nation-wide customer owned wind power producer. It has more than 1,000 shareholders who have the right to buy a share of the company's wind power, which is produced by the 2 MW power plant in Lumijoki and at the 800 kW power plant in Ii Laitakari. Owners have an option to buy 500 kWh of wind electricity per share in a year. In the sale of electricity, Lumituuli works together with Ekosähkö Oy which was the first Finnish electricity company to offer green electricity. Lumituuli is looking into developing wind power also in Helsinki, the capital of Finland. The company consist only of one employee, who is the founder and CEO. (Lumituuli webpages.)

The social aspect of the company is in promotion of the wind power which represent half of the company's operations. The company invest all the profits back into the new wind power. The company is one of the early adopters of the Mark. According to the managing director of Lumituuli, the consumer owned wind power has very little competition in Finland; there is one competitor in Åland Islands but its business model is different.

**The Helsinki Foundation** is a non-profit charitable foundation founded with the aim of either directly or indirectly promote the preservation of nature and the environment. The foundation has one full time employee, the CEO, and five full time volunteers. In addition, the foundation has 12 part-time volunteers. The founder of the foundation is passionate about environment and the conservation of as much land as possible. At the heart of operation is the Greenspace Guardian program, which allows people to become the Guardian of the chosen Greenspace and name it on an interactive map. It is also possible to name a friend as a Guardian or give Guardianship as a gift. Every Guardian maintains actual control over the land, with a right to veto planned land use changes. In comparison to other conservation methods, this method allows each Guardian to have more impact over the area's future. Each Guardian obtains the exact coordinates of their Greenspace, so that they can visit the land if they wish. The Guardianship of land allows people to make a contribution and provides them a real connection to a physical piece of land. Being a Guardian helps people to display that they cared and wanted to make a difference, even if they do not have millions to spend. The funds raised help the foundation with the next land purchase. At the moment, people could obtain Guardianship of land in Finland, Australia and Estonia. (Helsinki Foundation webpages.)

The Foundation is planning to expand to all countries. Currently, in Finland there are no organization performing the same activities. Internationally, there is people who do similar things but not for land conservation (The Helsinki Foundation CEO).

**Green Key Finland** is an organization that awards Green Key as the recognition of the leading standard of excellence in the field of environmental responsibility and sustainable operation within the tourism industry. Currently there are almost 80 Green Key awarded sites in Finland. Finnish Green Key is awarded to hotels, hostels, camp sites and other lodgings who are resolute to work for more sustainable hospitality industry (Greenkey Finland interviewee.)

The high environmental standards expected of these companies which is sustained through demanding documentation and frequent audits (Greenkey Finland interviewee). In Finland two employees are working for the organization. However, Green Key award is known worldwide, it has been awarded to around 2700 hotels and other establishments in 56 countries (Greenkey Global webpages). All Green key operators are owned by a local NGOs. In Finland is owned by FEE (Greenkey Finland interviewee).

Green Key Finland closest competitor in Finland is Nordic Swan, however the Nordic Swan can be assigned to 60 different product categories from hand soap, furniture to hotels, restaurants and conference facilities.

**Qlu Ltd.** is a Finnish high-tech start-up founded in 2013. The company has eight full-time employees. Qlu focuses on accessibility solutions and services for hearing impaired people. The company has developed the technology which visualizes the hearing environment in various types of venues (e.g. concert halls, meeting rooms) which allows for the best possible hearing experience for the hearing aid users. Hearing aid users will know exactly where to sit to get the most out of their hearing aids. Qlu's services and products are internationally recognized and the induction loop quality measurement and mapping system is the de-facto standard in the industrialized countries. With its international partners, Qlu measures the operational quality of induction loops in public venues and, when needed, instructs how to repair the system. In addition, by publishing induction loop quality-maps of venues via company's global Web-portal, the company helps hearing aid users identify venues with good hearing environment (Qlu webpages).

When it comes to competition, Qlu has a competitive advantage with its patented system. Qlu do not have direct competition, but there are other ways of doing the same thing. The goals of the company are to make their system be de-facto standard globally (CEO of Qlu).

**Minduu** is a social enterprise that helps people find a psychotherapist that suit their needs. It acts as a portal connecting people to psychotherapists. Through the website, people get access to online scheduling, so that one gets help right away. The platform has more than 500 psychotherapists registered and provides help to people who come from either public or private sector. There is a matching system, so that people get the right kind of help, they can check the profile of psychotherapists and see if the psychotherapists is available for booking. Minduu also provides tools for psychotherapists, so they can put all the information about their patients into the system. In addition, there is also a video therapy available, so that people can get help anywhere. The enterprise is run by its founder, and several employees depending on the situation.

Minduu provides a unique platform with no direct completion in Finland. There are no existing search engines for psychotherapists, so Minduu really filled the gap in the market providing needed services. Being a social enterprise Minduu is dedicating 51% of its profits to develop new mental health services and / or support mental health work (Minduu webpages).

**Summaryx** is health technology assessment consultancy (HTA) which was founded in 2013. The social enterprise aims to generate information which benefits society and offer meaningful, as well as rewarding work for assessment

professionals. The approach of the social enterprise is both academic and pragmatic: collection of research data, information synthesis and critical evaluation are performed by applying robust methods, with the level of detail being determined on a case by case basis (Summaryx webpages).

Summaryx was originally one-woman company from 2013-2016. Then the founder became unwell so new shareholders came in. The company has currently five shareholders with joint responsibility for the running of the company. Some of the shareholders are more active than others. One member works full time (HTA Information specialist), with four remaining working part-time (Summaryx Health Economist). Most of company's clients are from Finland, among them are hospitals, pharmaceutical companies, companies making and selling medicine and also those who are marketing medical devices (Summaryx HTA Information specialist). When it comes to competitors, there are companies that are doing similar things, however, Summaryx has the most health technology assessment practitioners and the aim to work more with public sectors unlike other companies (Summaryx Health Economist).

**Vaikuttava Yritys** performs social impact evaluation. The enterprise run solely by founder who established the company in 2016. The founder is training, coaching different kind of organizations, from NGOs to start-ups and public sector organizations on how to create and evaluate their social impact. The founder organizes web seminars and web courses on social impact evaluation methods, and on how to build an effective impact story.

Unlike other case companies, Vaikuttava Yritys has direct competition in Finland. According to the founder, competitors include smaller companies, entrepreneurs or small start-ups, but also really big consultancy houses like PWC or Rumbel. In addition, companies that do CSR (corporate social responsibility) work that helps companies with corporate social responsibilities, because they are also moving towards creating and evaluating impact. However, what differentiates Vaikuttava Yritys is its social cause, most of its customers are NGOs, the organizations they really need help assessing their social impact but cannot afford it.

TABLE 3 Summary of case companies

Company	Date of establishment	Customer segments	Company's official location	Number of Employees	Social Cause
<b>Lumituuli Ltd.</b>	1998	B2B and B2C	Helsinki	1	Promotion of wind power
<b>The Helsinki Foundation</b> (foundation)	2015	B2C	Helsinki	The founder and 5 full time volunteers, 12 part-time	Conservation of land



<b>Green Key Finland</b> (educational institution)	2014	B2B	Helsinki	2	Promotion the environmental awareness of the tourism industry
<b>Qlu Ltd.</b>	2013	B2B	Oulu	8	Provide services and solutions for better hearing that help the hearing impaired to work in society equally with others
<b>Minduu</b> (registered as AtCare Ltd.)	2012	B2B and B2C	Helsinki	3-5	Helping people get the right kind of professional assistance; prevent and improve mental health problems
<b>Summaryx Ltd.</b>	2013	B2B	Helsinki	1 full time, 4 part-time	Provide information which benefits society and employ assessment professionals who are struggling to find job
<b>Vaikuttava Yritys Ltd.</b>	2016	B2B	Helsinki	1	The company ensures that small companies, NGOs, start-ups, social enterprises can also assess their social impact

### 3.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis is meant to disclose what gathered data reveal to the researcher. There are multiple stages in data analysis. In author's case the stages of data analysis included transcribing of recorded data, organisation and indexing of data for easy retrieval and identification, data coding, dividing it into the themes, exploring of relationships between categories and report writing. In author's case, some themes already were predescribed in the interview guide and other

themes emerged from the interviews. According to Stake (1995), it is natural that some themes and patterns can appear unexpectedly during the data analysis.

The transcription of the recorded data began after all the interviews were completed. The process was long and required a lot of concentration and sometimes repetition of part of recordings to ensure that all the data were transcribed in the correct way. The data was transcribed verbatim to avoid bias as some researchers only include those sections that seem relevant or interesting to them which may result in missing out on important information. After the transcription, the data was organized in easy for retrieval and identification sections which made for easier analysis. The data then were coded according to the words that were common among interviewees. Coding assist in seeing the patterns in raw data by organizing the text of transcripts. From the codes larger themes emerged. Themes are more abstract concepts, mirroring author's interpretation of patterns across the data (Seers, 2011).

The final stage of data analysis incorporated documenting the analysis and writing it down. The analysis progressed easier when the data was transferred to descriptive tools like tables and figures that summarized it. As the author already had three categories of factors that might affect the adoption of digital marketing strategies among social enterprises (resource-related, owner-manager and environmental factors), the interview data was divided among these themes which made the process of analysis smoother. These themes produced structure for empirical research findings presented in Chapter 4.

### **3.4 Reliability and Validity**

There are different threats that can have an effect in reliability and validity of the research work. Reliability in the research denotes replicability of the results of the study while validity signifies the accuracy of the means of measurement and whether they are truly measuring what they are planned to measure (Golafshani, 2003). In the qualitative research, reliability or, in other terms, replicability is not the correct paradigm to refer to (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Instead, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability have been identified as criteria to assess a qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1981).

Validity in qualitative research is often referred as credibility. Credibility is one of the most crucial factor in establishing trustfulness of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The author believes that interviews were well suited method of collecting the data. A well-planned interview approach can provide a rich set of data (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Interviews give researcher opportunity to explore the world of others, although real understanding may occasionally be obscure (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Sometimes interviewees might withhold important information for one reason or another or not provide as full answers as interviewer had hoped for. The author believes that the interviewees had no reasons to withhold any data, as they were open during the discussions and did not insist on anonymity.

The interview setting was relaxing with occasional laughs and overall easy going environment.

Qualitative research is not aiming at generalization of the findings that can be always reproduced but rather to form a working hypotheses that may be transferred from one context to another contingent on degree of match between the contexts (Guba, 1981). This study did not aim at generalizing that behaviour of social enterprises in Finland but instead aimed at forming understanding of different digital marketing strategies among the case companies in Finland. Further studies and larger context is needed if study results are to be transferable or generalized.

Even though the interviewer and the interviewee are speaking the same language, their words can have entirely dissimilar cultural meanings so communication becomes more difficult when people have different worldviews (Qu & Dumay, 2011). In author's case, the interview was conducted in English because this thesis was conducted in English. However, as all the interviewees had Finnish as a native language with English being their second or third language, this fact could have effect on the communication of information. Moreover, some of the interviewees even mentioned that they had not used English for a long time which could affected the clarity of the responses. Nevertheless, overall, all the interviewees were quite proficient in English and even if it might have had some negative effect on communication, the impact was minor.

Dependability signifies the reliability aspect and "if the work were repeated, in the same context, with the same methods and with the same participants, similar results would be obtained" (Shenton 2004, p. 71). The author believes that the results of the research paper, if repeated, would be almost identical. One cannot exclude the slightest difference that might occur in the interpretation of the results. In the analysis stage, it is almost impossible to be completely impartial. The words we select to record what we see and hear in the field can never truly be objective (Miles & Huberman & Saldana, 2013.) There is always a factor of interpretation of data by researcher, therefore a certain bias is always present. However, the author tried to be as objective as possible using data for interpretations and supporting any claims made in the analysis or discussion sections. Nevertheless, it would have been beneficial to have more researchers to cross check the work.

Finally, confirmability denotes objectivity of the researcher and that the study's findings derive from experiences and ideas of the informants, not the characteristics of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). The author has used triangulation and shared the findings with the case companies. The findings derived strictly from the data, as Chapter 4 shows, the analysis and interpretations were generated and supported by the informants' quotations. In addition, the steps of data collection, data analysis were thoroughly discussed in this paper to provide transparency of this research.

## 4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of this research study. The companies' names are used to represent interviewees' opinions. The chapter begins with description of different DMC tools used in the case companies, the extent of use and the motives of the case companies when it comes to choosing the most important DMC tool. Then, the reasons for using online marketing among the case companies are presented as well as some insights on case's companies content marketing strategies and measurements of online marketing activities. In the subchapter 4.2, the factors affecting the adaptation of digital marketing activities among the case companies are discussed.

### 4.1 Digital Marketing Communication Tools

In this sub-chapter digital marketing communication tools that are used or will be possibly used by the case companies in the future are presented. These channels are described in detail in chapter 2.2 in the theory part. This sub-chapter aims to understand not only the usage of the channels but also the motives the case companies have for using those channels. Table 4 summarizes the usage of DMC tools among the case companies under study.

TABLE 4 Digital marketing communication tools in the case companies

Digital Marketing Tools	Minduu	Helsinki Foundation	Green Key Finland	Qlu	Lumituuli	Summaryx	Vaikuttava
Website	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
SEO	1				1		
SEM(Ad words)	1	1		1	1	2	2
Facebook marketing	1		1		1		1
Facebook posts	1	1	1	1	1		1
Twitter	0,5	1	1	0,5	2	2	1
Instagram		1	1				
LinkedIn	0,5	0,5	0,5	1	0,5	1	
YouTube							1
Digital Newsletter	1		1	1	1		1
Direct Email	1		1	1		1	
Blogs	1		1	1		1	1

1-most important tool(s), 1-actively in use, 0,5 existence of account, but not used actively or at all, 2- possibly to use in the future

Initially, it may appear that most of the case organizations are implementing a variety of digital marketing communication tools in their daily operations. However, not all of these online channels are used actively or at all. Some social media channels for instance are created but barely used. Some of them are only used from time-to-time.

The case companies have different preferences when it comes to choosing DMC tools depending on their goals, resources and client base. As some of the case companies are operating in B2C or B2B sectors, their approach to online marketing and selecting the right channels differed contingent on which target group they wanted to focus on.

Starting with website, naturally, all the case companies have their websites, and most of them see it as a very important channel for the company. For most of them (4 companies), website is one of the main marketing platforms and a very important point in the customer journey. For instance, for Qlu website is crucial as it gives representation of their service, where people can see what they have done.

*Qlu: "Our web service, hearyouhear.com, which is also kind of marketing, because there we publish our results. For example, you can see hearing maps of the buildings, the criteria and you can also give feedback through this, so this is also kind of marketing platform."*

For Helsinki Foundation, website is where the actual sales are happening with interactive mapping software that they created themselves to allow people select their block of land. For other case companies like Minduu, Vaikuttava Yrityks, Summaryx, website acts not only as platform where companies are presented but also as a platform to share stories, share blog (or news), write educational and informative material for their target group. In fact, during this research, 3 out of 7 companies updated and improved their website appearance and interactivity for the better which emphasizes that they do consider their website as an important marketing tool. Only Green Key Finland mentioned that website is not as important for them.

*Green Key Finland: "Not that many people go to our webpages and we get a lot more visibility in social media."*

What the author found worthy of note is that all the case companies, except Green Key Finland, build their website themselves. The reason for that is being high cost of hiring somebody else to do it for them (estimated cost is up to 200.000 euros) or having knowledge in house (some members have IT background).

When it comes to using search engine marketing (online paid adverts), most of the company are using Goggle AdWords or thinking of using it in the future. However, the extent of use varies from company to company, some of them use it more actively while others less actively, since they do not see it rendering a lot of positive results for the company. Helsinki Foundation is using Google AdWords actively due to the fact that the company was able to get a grant from Google for AdWords in size of 10,000 euros per month.

Helsinki Foundation: *"We do a lot of Google AdWords advertising. Our click through rate is over 5%, people are spending on average 1,5 minutes on our page when they click through which is quite amazing."*

For other companies that use Google AdWords, the use is marginal and SEM is not a very important tool in their day-to-day online marketing activities. Some of the case companies like Summaryx and Vaikuttava Yritys are looking into using this tool in the future.

Minduu: *"We do not spend a lot of money to Google AdWords or anything like that. We have some just to keep our customers happy, that they see our adverts somewhere, but we don't do it a lot. Just from looking at our statistics, people who come through our site and make a booking or send a message, it's only 5 % that come through paid which is basically Google AdWords, so it is very small."*

Summaryx: *"We do not use AdWords, I don't actually know much about Google AdWords, maybe I should look into it."*

Vaikuttava Yritys: *"I do not do Google AdWords but I definitely should. I have a plan in mind."*

Interestingly SEO was mentioned only by 2 of the case companies during the interviews as being important. The reasons for that might be that SEO might not come to mind as online marketing channel due to backgrounds of interviewees.

Facebook is used by almost every case companies except for Summaryx as an online marketing tool. Almost every case company is using Facebook for the marketing purposes, not only posting there but also promoting posts and boosting posts. However, many case companies voiced concerns regarding Facebook, as it was mentioned in the literature review, Facebook is constantly changing its algorithm and what people see in their news feed.

Helsinki Foundation: *"I like personally using Facebook, I use it for lots of things but it is hard to use because they keep changing everything all the time and we don't know if we get visibility or not. With Facebook we had problems, when we first started."*

Minduu: *"We boost the posts in Facebook, we have to do that because of the changes Facebook made to its algorithm, so before it was easier, because now you basically have to boost everything if you want to get reach."*

Apart from algorithm, some of micro social enterprise have different groups of customers which is why targeting them on Facebook may become difficult.

Minduu: *"Facebook has been trickier for us because we have two sides, we have people who are looking for the therapists and then we have the therapists and they*

*are different customer groups, and how do you target with one Facebook page that both of them."*

To solve this problem, Qlu and Summaryx are using different platforms to target different group segments. Among B2B case companies, LinkedIn is starting to be a more important channel to concentrate upon because of the target audience that is concentrated there.

*Qlu: "We are also building LinkedIn marketing. We are just found that in Finland many of our customers are not in LinkedIn, they are more in Facebook. But we know e.g. that in the US or in England LinkedIn is much more popular also with this kind of professionals so it depends on the branch."*

*Summaryx: "I don't think that our target group on Facebook, I think they are mainly in LinkedIn."*

The rest of micro social enterprises have not mentioned LinkedIn, though, almost all of them have a company profile on LinkedIn. As for other social media platforms, Instagram and Twitter, are used much less by the case companies. Only Green key Finland and Helsinki Foundation has mentioned importance of Instagram, with Instagram being even more important than Facebook, due to the target audience being there. For the rest of the companies, Instagram, as social media platform to market their businesses, does not seem suited. Twitter is used slightly more than Instagram by the case companies and, some of them, are thinking of using more Twitter in the future. The difficulties associated with using Twitter include the unpredictability of Twitter in terms of having less control there, the ability to write in "Twitter" language, and big time consumption.

*Minduu: "Twitter is not very effective, it would take too much time and the effect would be minor. We don't actually use it at all. When we launch our platform, we used it, people were tagging us but now it is basically dead."*

*Helsinki Foundation: "We have Twitter, but on Twitter we are more followed by embassies and things like that. And I don't use Twitter personally and I don't know how to write in "Twitter" language. We post stuff there when it is a big thing, like when we did something we think they would be interested in."*

*Lumituuli: "I have been looking into using Twitter but then again, it is much more difficult because there is less control there. There is quite active anti wind movement in Finland and they can twist your words and so it is much more difficult in Twitter than in Facebook, because in Facebook you can just ban the person."*

YouTube was mentioned by only one company to be used actively which is Vaikuttava Yritys. The channel is well suited for the company as it helps to visualize the service it provides.

Vaikuttava Yrityks: *“I have a YouTube channel, which I’m going to use more, it has a few videos right now, one playing list to demonstrate good examples on how different kind of organizations have been utilizing social impact evaluation methods.”*

In terms of email marketing and using newsletters, some companies use the combination of both tools, while other prefer only one. 5 out of 7 case companies are using newsletters even though not regularly. 4 out of 7 companies are using direct mail in their marketing activities to contact potential customers.

Most of the case companies use blogs in one form or another. The 2 companies which are not using blogs mentioned that the reason for that was the lack of writing skills and the fear that the blog would not be successful. For the case companies that use blogs, blogs play different roles and are used for diverse purposes. The majority of case companies that use blogs, use them to share news in their corresponding industries. Vaikuttava Yrityks and Minduu were among the ones who use blogs most actively, as part of their content marketing, storytelling more actively to educate their target audience, share their expertise and find new clients.

Vaikuttava Yrityks: *“The reason why I write the blog, generally I want to give advices on how to proceed, that’s the reason why I have developed those tools, they are free of charge, you can download them from the website, so that is of course one goal as well. There have also been clients who originally landed on my webpages and read one or two blog posts and contacted me inspired by that.”*

Minduu: *“For the people who are looking for a therapist we did a lot of blog posts about what happens in therapy, how it’s like, and we had a couple of bloggers who told about their own therapy, so this kind of stuff that was important at the beginning. We use a lot of stories and this kind of things. Storytelling, and that how we get people to relate to us and understand logic behind the service.”*

#### **4.1.1 Creating awareness, communicating social cause and building brand credibility**

For many of micro social enterprise, online marketing is not only about getting visibility to their organizations, but also about positioning themselves as an authoritative brand in the industry, building credibility for the enterprise. It is especially important for the younger social enterprises who want to possibly internationalize in the future and build a name for themselves.

Vaikuttava Yrityks: *“In longer term, I guess the point of social media marketing or digital marketing is sort of build up and develop my brand as one of the leading professionals in social impact evaluation.”*



Helsinki Foundation: *"We wanted to be global. I guess our target market is the global citizen who does not just care about the forest that is just next to their house but cares about the world as a whole".*

Qlu: *"We have to make our product known, get visibility, we have to spread the word about that, and then of course about our service and also about ourselves to get credibility or otherwise somebody in London may say who the hell are those."*

Many micro social enterprises emphasise the social aspect of the company, that the purpose behind their existence is not to make money, but to do something for the greater good. As the social cause for them is important, they try to communicate their social mission and not-for-profit aspect through the online channels as well.

Minduu: *"The biggest thing that we are focused is to how do we get the right kind of message out, that we are social enterprise, we do this thing because we want to make it easy for people to get help. And also about what is social enterprise, how does it work, how it differs from other type of companies, what are our values and this kind of stuff. So that is a big part of our marketing and always when we do something, we always keep this as a part of it."*

Vaikuattava Yritys: *"Because I'm social entrepreneur, so social purpose of my company is related to the fact that I want to help smaller organizations who do not have resources to hire me or anyone else to do things for them, that's the reason why I write the blog."*

Having The Social Enterprise Mark helps the case companies to demonstrate their social cause and that they are not after big profits. The case companies are using the Mark actively on their websites, marketing materials and advertisements as a sign of belonging to social enterprise.

Green Key Finland: *"Some people value it (the Mark), they notice immediately that we are not trying to make some people rich, but we are doing something good for the whole society."*

Summaryx: *"It has been noticed (the Mark) and I think in our field it might be some sort of a benefit or a perk as everybody knows that we are not a greedy company that just wants a lot of money for their work."*

Lumituuli *"It is very good that we have the Mark, the Mark is like a third person statement that we are really doing what we are doing and I think it is quite respected."*

The Mark helps those companies in building credibility and trustworthiness about the enterprise. Even though common objectives of online marketing were mentioned, such as making the company known, building credibility and brand,

becoming de-facto standard globally, no concrete steps of how these goals would be achieved though online marketing were mentioned.

#### 4.1.2 Control and evaluation of online marketing activities

In order to understand how the case companies follow the results of their online marketing activities, the information about how they evaluate their efforts in online marketing was collected. Most of the case companies follow to some extent the results of their online marketing activities. Google Analytics were mentioned by most of the companies as a tool to track down what is happening on their pages.

*Minduu: "Google Analytics is the main place, we search the conversations, we know how many messages or bookings are made, from which channel do people come, what is conversion percentage, so we know how much it costs, let's say if you put a google advertisement, how much does it cost to have one message sent."*

Those companies that use Google AdWords and social media platforms for advertisement, follow the analytics more thoroughly to track down the success of the advertisements.

*Lumituuli: "I think the lure of Facebook marketing is that you can easily follow what happens and where the money comes from, and we have been using Google Analytics, every time we are doing share issue or something I follow pretty closely where the people come from. And it is pretty difficult when you put an advert in a paper magazine you can never track that. I have been trying to deal with that by having a separate domain for a paper adverts and that help a little, I got a hunch on what might be happening. The trackability and that you can put a price tag on every click online, in online marketing, which is vey good."*

For the case companies that are not using much of Google AdWords and online advertisements, the process of checking Google Analytics has not been given a lot of importance and the following of statistics happens more unsystematically rather than methodically. The same applies to the social media's own analytics tools.

*Green Key Finland: "We do follow analytics in Facebook and Instagram. Not that we would check every posts, how well it was performing, but we have a table where we every month check how the number of followers has risen. Other way it is more like just going there every now and then and checking. We also use Google Analytics, but it is the same, it is not every organized how we are checking the followers."*

*Qlu: "We do it to some extent but not as efficiently as we could have, we are only 8 people so we do it not regularly but take a look at certain times about what is happening. For example, if we have done a campaign, then we take a look how*

*many of our emails got opened and how many public sessions are there and how many comments."*

The reasons for not following the analytics more thoroughly included the unfamiliarity of terminology in social media analytics tools, the shortage of staff to follow analytics regularly and the overall opinion that these things are not very important and everything is under control.

### 4.1.3 Content marketing

Content marketing is a part of online marketing activities for the case companies. It takes various forms such as blogs, storytelling posts in the social media platforms and newsletters to the customers. The content has been used among the case companies as a way to connect with the target audience, provide relevant information, stay relevant on different platforms, generate more traffic and interest towards the companies.

*Minduu: "We have a lot of content on our website so if you thinking about how to get KELA's reimbursement, how do you pick the right therapist and what is the therapy, we have a lot of information, videos and blog posts, official information. Everything is gathered in one place. That also helps us with SEO and everything. All the therapists have their own profiles; we have 500 profiles that include a lot of information so you can image that it helps greatly with SEO."*

However, several companies mentioned that even though content marketing is important, there are difficulties associated with publishing the right content. All of the case companies lacked content strategy because it is challenging for some of the case companies to come up with good content throughout the year.

*Helsinki Foundation: "Content marketing is challenging because we buy a block of land once a year usually, so what do you do in other 364 days without posting memes or something. Now we have Hazan communications, which is communications company, they have come on board as a volunteer and they are helping us more with getting some sort of communications line up so we can actually tell people about what we do because we don't know, we don't know how do you tell people, we just can't go on the streets telling people, have you heard about us. It is an interesting thing on how you tell."*

What to post, how often and how to best post the content seemed to be prevailing concern among case companies. Due to different customer segments in some of the case companies, it can be challenging for them to target different segments with one message which was the case for Minduu and Qlu.

In order to get fuller picture of how active the content marketing is among the case companies, the author compared the frequency of posts of the case companies' most popular social media platforms. The comparison was made on average number of posts per week in the last 6 months (January-June 2018). Other

factors as the number of followers and engagement was also taken into consideration. The results are presented in the table below.

TABLE 5 Case companies' activity in social media platforms

Case Company	Followers	Average N of posts per months	Average Number of reactions per posts (Reactions+shares+comments)
<b>Minduu</b> Facebook	1314	3	12.3
<b>Helsinki Foundation</b> Facebook/Instagram	589/206	4/4.3	13/8
<b>Green Key Finland</b> Facebook/Instagram	1032/449	22/36	13/24
<b>Qlu</b> Facebook/LinkedIn	13/36	1.3/0.5	2/0.8
<b>Lumituuli</b> Facebook	992	5.1	23.6
<b>Summaryx</b> LinkedIn	4	4	1
<b>Vaikuttava Yritys</b> Facebook/Twitter	61/529	5.5/25	2.69

The results show that even though the case companies mentioned that they use various social media platforms for their online marketing, the usage mostly is not abundant. Minduu, Helsinki Foundation and Lumituuli posts from 3 to 5 times per months with different level of engagement from the followers with Lumituuli having the most engaging posts amongst the trio, confirming Lumituuli's managing director words that they are really liked by the followers. While analysing the posts, it became clear that those companies posts when they have something important to posts about without really maintaining consistency with some months not having posts at all. The results were expected as none of these companies mentioned Facebook being the most important tool in their marketing activities. Green Key Finland is very active in Instagram, naturally, with it being one of the most important online marketing tools with average number of posts being 36 posts per month and a high engagement rate. Facebook is less active compared to Instagram but nevertheless number of posts is also high there with 22 posts per months. Most of the posts is reposting what other hotels posted and also some original content as well. Summaryx and Qlu is only in the beginning of its social media marketing, both social enterprises have very little activity on social media platforms, as understandably they mentioned they are building their LinkedIn marketing. However even though Qlu mentioned Facebook as a part of their online marketing activities, there is very little activity that occurs on their Facebook page. Vaikuttava Yritys has also not so much activity on

Facebook, however, Twitter is very active with around 25 posts per months, mostly retweeting others people posts. The engagement in Twitter was not measured as in Twitter, when the post is shared, it maintains its likes and comments of the original posts so it is hard to judge where the engagement come from. Overall, beside Green Key Finland and Vaikuttava Yritys, the case companies do not seem to be very active when it comes to posting on social media websites despite some of them mentioning the importance of the social media channels. This signifies the lack of consistent content marketing strategy among all the case companies, even the active ones who specifically mentioned that there is no considerate long-term planning involved in the content marketing.

## 4.2 Factors affecting the adoption of digital marketing

As it was described in chapter 2.5 there are factors such as resource-related, owner-manager, and environmental factors that affect the adaptation of digital communication technologies for marketing purposes in the companies. Below, the factors affecting degrees of adaptation of digital marketing among the case companies are presented.

### 4.2.1 Resource-related factors

It was evident from all of the cases that resource-related factors played a major role in micro social enterprises' adaptation of digital marketing. As companies under research were micro social enterprises, they had limited financial and human resources to put into marketing. Social micro enterprises under research have to allocate most of the profits into social good, so the money that is left to spare had to be used wisely. In fact, financial resource constraint was mentioned by all of the social enterprises as the reason for not doing more online marketing and one of the challenges associated with online marketing.

Lumituuli: *"We are so small, and we do not have the huge budget, no designated budget for marketing, but we really trying to get on with the shoestring budget."*

Helsinki Foundation: *"We are bootstrapped."*

Green Key Finland *"As we are NGO based we try to keep the price for the clients as low as possible so we don't have that much money, so this is why we don't put more resources into marketing."*

When asked if they thought that investing more money into digital marketing would bring more positive results for the company, the majority of responses were affirmative. Most micro social enterprises believe that with more money put into online marketing, they would be able to get more visibility, capability to

reach their target audience would improve and overall, it would make them more well-known. However, 2 of the companies think that one should be careful not to overdo it.

*Minduu: "For us it is ongoing process and I don't think it is about putting more money into it, it is more about overall approach that you have on it. There are of course some things you can do if you have more money, like having more display adverts and this kind of stuff. For us the balance between push and pull marketing, we don't use a lot of Facebook ads or display ads as they can be a bit too in your face, like are you depressed, this kind of stuff, like you see some other companies do, I think it is a bit even unethical to have this kind of stuff."*

*Summaryx: "I think a low and cautious approach than trying to mass market in any way."*

Though some companies do not have dedicated budget to online marketing, they still spend money on marketing yearly. The sum spent on online marketing varies from one social enterprise to another ranging from 500 to 10,000 euros yearly. One company, Summaryx, does not spend money at all on marketing activities.

*Qlu: "We have not really designated a certain amount; we try to do as much as we can. Of course the main thing is to get somebody to buy our service otherwise it will stop very soon."*

In terms of human resources, most of the case companies had on average 2 full time workers with 2-5 part-time workers. Therefore, in the case companies that had 1-2 full-time employees there was not a dedicated person to do the marketing activities but rather it was performed by founders with other members contributing to it.

*Green Key Finland: "I'm doing most of the posting, also my colleague is contributing."*

*Lumituuli: "I do everything myself."*

*Helsinki Foundation: "We don't have somebody who is dedicated to doing this (digital marketing), it would have been lovely if we did, but most of them wanted to get paid, so it is done with a team of volunteers."*

In social enterprises with more employees (Qlu, Minduu), there were people who performed marketing activities. Depending of the strength of employees, they are assigned with being responsible for the marketing tasks.

*Qlu: "One of our guys has a lot of history in international marketing and sales, so he has good skills on those tools (Google AdWords, Facebook). We also have*

*another person who is doing that but he has not had this long history, but she also does lot of that work."*

*Minduu: "Several people are responsible for digital marketing, psychiatrist creates content, one person helps in communications, she does a blog post for us sometimes, but we don't have marketing professionals or sales professionals."*

#### **4.22 Owner-manager factors**

As it was described in chapter 2.5, owner-manger factor can have an effect on the adaptation of new technologies and in the case of this paper, on digital marketing communication tools. After reviewing the background of interviewees, it became apparent that depending in their own knowledge and interest in digital marketing, the adoption of new digital marketing varied between the cases.

Most social entrepreneurs and employees do not have background in marketing. For many of social enterprises, online marketing has been a learning curve as only few of them have some marketing background. The case companies had to learn themselves many things in regards to marketing and online marketing along the way. The interviewees backgrounds are ranging from semi-conductor industries, banking, library information systems, IT, business administration and communications/ marketing.

*Summaryx: "The fact is that we do not know a lot. I guess I did some business administration courses in the past, I'm not terribly oriented towards marketing and have not talked about marketing for many years it is something kind of new."*

*Vaikuttava Yrityys: "It is away of learning (marketing) and it is also fun. When you are an entrepreneur, that is the whole point, you have the freedom to experiment."*

*Helsinki Foundation: "We received the grant from Google and nobody knew how to use Google AdWords, so it's been a learning process."*

Consequently, many of the marketing activities undertaken in the case companies occur at the discretion of the entrepreneurs. 5 out of 7 case companies were founded or co-founded by the interviewees making them owners of the social enterprises and having more authority over day-to-day operations. Therefore, the extent of marketing activities on the social enterprises varied according to what entrepreneurs' found important to achieve, what they had more competences and passion in.

*Lumituuli: "So I do everything myself, SEO, optimization, of course I'm lacking some things but I'm really so hands on, I really want to understand what is happening. It was some kind of brand who once tried to pitch me their services, and then at that point I realized that it is very good to do it yourself because you*

*are the one who is responsible for your company's brand, that is something you should not outsource, most core functions."*

That factor can sometimes be restricting as entrepreneurs may not be as open to new, better opportunities just because they have not considered them, do not have competences in them or are used to doing things one way. Minduu mentioned that they were happy with where they were now and were not going to change anything in the future, while Green Key Finland revealed that they would be even more active in the future in regards to online marketing. In conversation with Summaryx, it became apparent that the company has not almost utilized any sort of online marketing, they were unsure of how to approach online marketing and even though they seem to be more interested in it.

Summaryx: *"I think we should get started to do some more online marketing."*

A lot of online and offline marketing depended on entrepreneurs own initiative, and creativity. Lumituuli for one, used creatively their shareholders to spread the word about the company in online and offline spaces.

Lumituuli: *"One of the things is that we use shareholders to market the company. So one time, we spent 3 days printing leaflets and putting them into envelopes and sending them to everyone, to our shareholders. Everyone got 3 leaflets, one should have been given to someone who likes wind power, the other to someone who does not and third one to someone else, and it was a great success."*

Helsinki Foundation's grant from Google is a bright example of entrepreneur's own activity and interest can result in. Even when Helsinki Foundation had difficulties with online marketing in Facebook or in Google AdWords, they made an effort to resolve their issues, spending several days to get to the bottom of things and resolve the issues.

Helsinki Foundation: *"Google changed its policies 1,5 years ago, that is if your click through rate is less than 5%, which is actually quite high, they stopped it, and they said you have to go and adjust it. And this affected every non profit in the world. We spent two days ringing every office in Google and nobody could help with this. Then we finally found a pdf that someone has put online somewhere through some really weird search and it had a phone number on it and we rang it and they were able to help us. The guy was really good, he helped us, explain to us what we had to do, he went through our account and helped us."*

In other case, entrepreneurs utilized their strengths to do online marketing.

Vauktuttava Yritys: *"I use social media to follow others and to take part in discussions, so it is sort of natural part of my day, and not something extra really. And I like writing too. I post not on a daily basis, but let's say weekly. I use those channels in many ways."*



Due to limited know-how of social entrepreneurs when it comes to marketing and digital marketing in particular, most of micro social enterprises (except for Qlu and Summaryx) have utilized third party providers to some extent to help them with online and offline marketing activities, seeking expertise in those areas where the in-house knowledge was missing. Some of the third party providers offer free help to organizations because of its social purpose and the love for the company.

*Lumituuli: "Because we are so liked we got a lot of free advice and so one consultant actually advised us to write a blog about running wind power company but I'm not really good at it."*

*Helsinki Foundation: "There are companies who help us when we need them, law firm and Hazan communications, graphic design."*

In other times and for other things, the outside services had to be bought.

*Lumituuli: "I'm lacking that I do not have very good eye for graphic work so that is something I buy from outside"*

*Vaikuttava Yritys: "Of course I buy services from others because I'm not expert in website designing and AdWords thing."*

Some of the case companies used outside help at some point, but then learned to do things themselves as the time went by and they acquired needed competences.

*Green Key Finland: "The only thing we bought is, there is another person who did our webpages. In the past, if there was a need for brochures or something, they would buy it from someone else but now we are thinking that now I have enough skills to make them myself, so we are not buying anything anymore."*

*Minduu: "Sometimes we used third party providers, but we have not felt the need to do it. We have people, advisers who know about this stuff and we have learned quite a lot ourselves. Like I said, sometimes we use it for blog posts to write some articles."*

When it comes to the strategy for online marketing, in all of the cases there was a lack of strategy for online (as well as offline) marketing activities among the case companies. Instead of a written strategy, the companies rely more on what is going on at the moment instead of trying to plan ahead. Some companies have more general strategy of what they want to achieve, thus, they have some marketing objectives, even though they are more short-termed.

*Minduu: "Our strategy is more about our content or about the message, we have a certain message we want to get out and then we do a strategy about that, so it is more depending on the situation, and then we have the general strategy that we*

*want to tell certain things about the company always when we speak to someone, so it is more like that."*

*Green Key Finland: "FEE has a certain strategy, but it's somewhat broad and up there. We have a yearly strategy about what things we have to emphasise, but we don't have a plan that would say that this month we do this, and that month we do that. It is more like we are planning when we are doing."*

*Lumituuli: "No, no written strategy, it is more like what I have in head. It changes a lot."*

The reasons for the absence of the concrete written digital marketing strategy are related to the fact that the case companies are small, resource constrained and have limited know-how of online channels to set some concrete goals.

*Helsinki Foundation: "In the beginning we had a written strategy and this was because we had a person who also does a Twitter account for UNESCO, and she was also one of our volunteers. She is based in Canada, she was doing it in the beginning, and she wrote for us a communication plan and so forth, it was very good. But then, she was very busy with her own job so she has not had time to do it. So she was manly doing Twitter, so not we are not working on one right now."*

In addition, due to human recourse constraints, social entrepreneurs spend more efforts on other activities beside marketing such running day to day operations of the companies. Only Vaikuttava Yritys mentioned using a tool to plan online marketing activities, however, it covered up only following month and not a year.

*Vaikuttava Yritys: "No strategy, not like a single page but I use thing Canban canvas, it is one tool for agile business, how to plan your work weeks, work months. It has certain logic, and I use it. For example, when there is a new web course which will start within a month, then I plan I will use Twitter like this, and these are the posts that I will promote, and Facebook like these and also the newsletter. So in those single activities, in ad hoc basis I do, but I don't have the strategy that would cover a year."*

Therefore, if there is some kind of strategy among the case companies, it is more short-termed and is connected to company's current objectives and goals. Though having a written online strategy is important as was mentioned in the literature review, due to the small size and resource-constraints, the case companies prefer to be more flexible in their online marketing activities and concentrate on the issues that are important to them at the moment. In addition, depending on entrepreneurs' knowledge, interest, customer segment and competences, some online tools are given more preference than others.

### 4.2.3 Environmental factors

As the case companies are operating in different market segments, different factors affected the adoption of online and offline marketing strategies, one of them is the environment they operate in. For some of the case companies, direct marketing was not very beneficial because of their organizational structure or the ways the customers find them.

*Luumituuli: "We do not really need to market year to year. It's more like every time we do some kind of share issue or loan issue, then we put a little bit more money. We spent actually more on offline marketing, because it is so expensive".*

*Vaikuttava Yritys: "I'm in a lucky position, I do not do direct marketing so much, but I've been, participated, like procurement processes, so I'm asked to give an offer to do this or that. So I think that is the biggest selling channel for me. Sometimes an interested buyer has mentioned that I was recommended by one of my partners (another entrepreneur) or one of my clients. Time to time organisations that have participated in my trainings or have heard me giving a speech on these subjects asks me for an offer. But there have also been clients who originally landed on my webpages and read one or two blog posts and contacted me inspired by that."*

*Summaryx: "So far, we are mostly relying on our reputations because in Finland everyone who is somehow involved in health technology assessment knows everyone so we have a reputation. I think we have been mainly waiting for people to give us work. But I think we should be involved more in online marketing."*

Most of the case companies rely heavily on Word of Mouth marketing to drive clients to them. In fact, Word of Mouth has been mentioned by many of the case companies as an important element in the company's acquiring more customers and getting noticed.

*Summaryx: "I think it is just word of mouth generally given us the projects, I think it is just personal contacts, old and more recent that helped us to get the projects we have done recently."*

*Minduu: "Basically 90 % of people come to our platform because they hear about it from their colleagues. When you have certain mass of people in our platform, it grows organically so we don't have to do a lot of marketing in that sense, so we don't have to contact them ourselves."*

Due to the nature of products and market segments (B2B, B2C), some companies in the beginning had to rely considerably on offline marketing channels, cooperation with different associations, offline PR (press and radio) to bring visibility to themselves. For instance, Qlu provides a service rather than a product, the company uses multi channels in the marketing activities, that is both

offline and online marketing, with offline marketing being used more in the new markets, such as face-to face meetings and exhibiting their service to the potential customers. In fact, almost all of the companies stressed importance of integration of online and offline marketing activities, which is effective especially in the beginning when the companies were not that known yet.

*Qlu: "I think in the beginning the most efficient way was to just go there in the field, travel and talk with people, and also discuss with people, cooperate with the associations, national and local groups, just to get hard of hearing to understand that they can get the service if things are right. Now when our name is more well-known and that we are part of social network, we see that more people come to our webpages and Facebook to see what we are doing. So now I think it is moving towards this digital field gradually."*

*Minduu: "When we launched, we got quite a lot of press coverage that one thing we did very well, we got into Helsinki Sanomat big article, we were on a couple of radio shows, Iltalehti wrote about us, so this kind of stuff, that is the biggest thing, we got a lot of traffic right away, so we have been fortunate in that sense. If that not have happened, it would have taken more time to get traffic there. So if you get the coverage in the biggest newspaper and you have a direct link to our website, then it makes all the difference in the start."*

After becoming more well-known, most of the case companies have not completely abandoned offline marketing, still attending related events and fairs to get additional visibility even though for majority of the case companies, most of the marketing occurs online at the case company's present stage.

When it comes to competition and it being a factor in adopting online channels, the author has not seen it having any major effect on the case company's online marketing activities. Most of the case companies are very unique in what they do, Qlu, for example, has even acquired a patent. For those companies that had competition, most of them do not seem very concerned about it. Summaryx and Vaikuttava Yritys were among the companies that seem more cognizant of what competitors are doing so they had some plan in place to keep up with the competition. Summaryx, was thinking of starting to use Twitter because its competitor has the account there. Vaikuttava Yritys was looking into hiring help to understand its environment better.

*Vaikuttava Yritys: "I will definitely buy also expert services on understanding the environment, and how to set meaningful goals for different channels and also websites, so that's to make more systematic work and work that's actually provides good outcomes."*

For Minduu and Qlu, outside help, beside hiring/having third party providers, included also having partnership with different associations and communities as an important tool to drive sales and get more visibility. For example, Minduu has links to their website in the associates' listings.

Minduu: *“The associates that have their own listing might have the links to our site, saying that you can find a therapist there. We try to be there where people try to find a therapist. We have cities that use our services and they have their website with links to our website.”*

For Qlu, it is important to cooperate with associations of hard of hearing so that they could spread awareness among its target group and through that possibly receive more clients.

Qlu: *“One way of marketing is of course cooperating with these hard of hearing associations and communities, so they would ask for our service. We have been creating a lot of material together with hard of hearing associations as well and publish it on the Internet.”*

Even though the competition might not be the first concern for the most of the case companies, it does not necessarily mean that they are not aware of what others are doing in their corresponding field or, overall, in the context of activities of other social enterprises. Helsinki Foundation, for instance, conducted a market research when they just started to find out if there was a similar company on the market. Minduu also has done a research about what was there on the market and what the people who are trying to find a therapist are searching for. In addition, in the field of social entrepreneurship, companies were quite aware of the scene, having the Social Enterprise Mark. In fact, founder of Minduu have done his own Master’s thesis on social entrepreneurship and founder of Vaikuttava Yritys is the one who created the Mark. Others obtained the knowledge on other social enterprises via marketing courses the Mark offers.

Helsinki Foundation: *“As most of the social enterprises are really big organization and people who are on the courses work there. Whereas we are founders. I listened vey carefully because I have so much more at stake, because this is my passion.”*

Lumituuli: *“Some of the social enterprise are really large like Diakonissalaitos, they are large users.”*

As it has been already mentioned in chapter 4.1, the use of different social media platforms and DMC tools among the case companies also depend on the target audience behaviour, so customers also put pressure on the social enterprises to be more active online.

Qlu: *“Probably LinkedIn would the second important channel for us, just knowing what kind of customer base we are looking and also knowing that lots of hard hearing people are elderly people because hearing problems come with an age so they are not so keen on Twitter or other things. Younger generations don’t spend that much time on Facebook anymore but these communities and also elderly people are doing it quite a lot.”*

Green Key Finland: *“The hotels are most active in Instagram, so in that way, Instagram would be the most important channel for us.”*

To summarize this chapter, and taking into consideration all the factors mentioned that have an effect on the adoption of digital marketing among the case companies, the author created Figure 6, highlighting the factors that have the most importance in case companies’ decision making regarding the adoption of digital marketing.

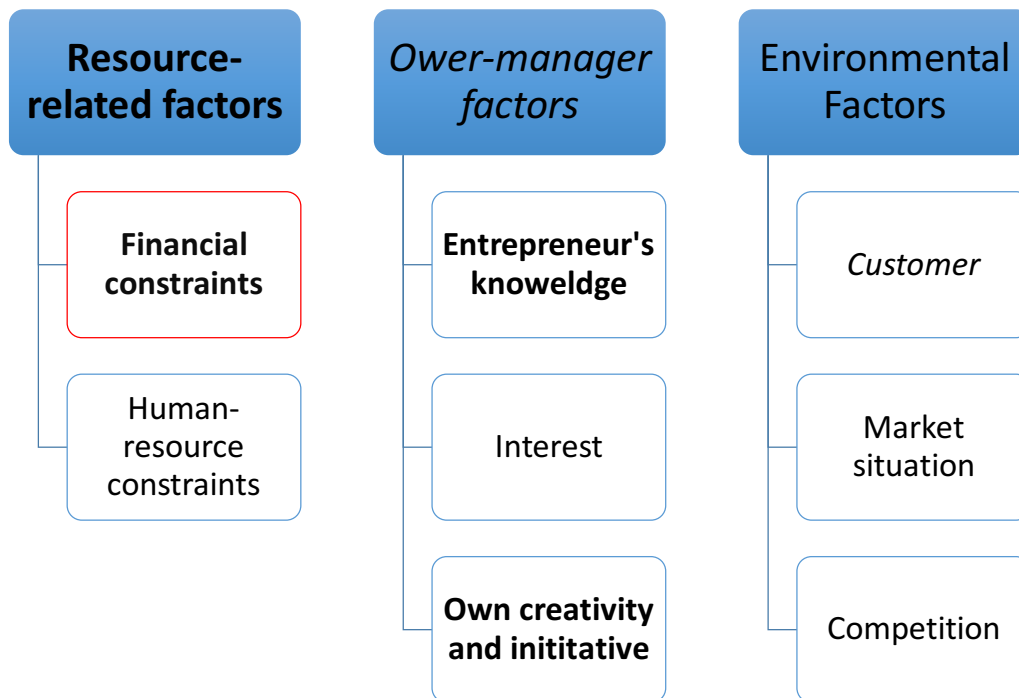


FIGURE 6 *The factors affecting adaptation of digital marketing among the case companies*

As it can be observed from the Figure 6, resource-related factors are the most prevailing factor. Owner-manager factors are the second in importance and environmental factor being the less prevailing factor in entrepreneurs’ decision in adopting digital marketing in their corresponding social enterprises.

## 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this part, the discussion of the results of the research paper are presented and the conclusion is made. The answers to research questions are given with theoretical and managerial contributions of the research work. This chapter ends with limitations of the study and propositions for future research.

### 5.1 Theoretical Contributions

With the findings of this study, the author was able to shed light on the current state of online marketing activities among some of micro social enterprises in Finland and the factors that influence the decisions of social entrepreneurs to utilise digital marketing. The first research question aimed at understanding how micro social enterprises employ digital marketing activities as part of their marketing activities. The results show that there are different tools and degree of utilization of digital marketing activities among the case companies. Depending on case companies' product/service, target customer and goals, the degree of utilization of different tools varied. For example, for companies that were B2B focused, LinkedIn made more sense, while for others Instagram or Facebook were given more preferences. The online channels were used for different purposes, such as informative, educational, storytelling and brand building purposes. While certain stigmas like perceptions of intrusive and manipulative nature of marketing proposed by Andreasen & Kotler (2003) that were described in the theoretical part existed among some of the case companies, unlike stated in that study, this research work shows that the majority of the case companies view online marketing positively. This also goes in contrast with the studies by Bull (2007) who found that for social enterprise consider marketing to be too business oriented. Moreover, all of the interviewed companies believed that spending more money on online marketing was very beneficial for their success and can bring more positive results for them in the future.

The case companies did not utilise the digital communication strategies in their day to day operations, mostly because of their resource constraints coming with being a micro social enterprise. The reasons for not having a digital marketing strategy are covered in more details in the answer to the second research question.

In line with the literature (Brooks, 2009; Boschee, 2006; Srivetbodee et al., 2017; Rasmussen, 2012) that highlights the significance of social cause for social enterprises, the case companies stressed importance of social aspect for their social enterprises. DMC tools helped them communicate their social aspects to the audience, to brand and position themselves as a social enterprise and not for-profit organization. Indeed, for social enterprises it is important to convey who they are and what their mission is to the audience in a clear and concise manner in order to create stronger relationships with their customers and other

audiences. Modern DMC tools allow the case companies to do just that with different kind of content marketing channels and platforms, even though the case companies lacked a content strategy.

The second research question's purpose was to identify the factors influencing the implementation (or not implementation) of digital marketing strategies in micro social enterprises. This research suggests that the prevailing concern regarding the degree of implementation of online marketing activities is resource-related constraints, especially financial constraints which corresponds to the theory (Bull, 2006; World Bank/IFC, 2010; Hackler & Saxton, 2007). The majority of the case companies would do more if they had better access to capital and human resources to implement more online marketing activities. At the present stage of the case companies, the budget for online marketing activities was very limited. In the theoretical framework chapter, studies by Smallbone et al. (2001) and Bull (2007) assert that managerial competence had an effect on utilization of marketing activities, which was confirmed by the present study. Most of the case companies were run by founders and their knowledge and competence on online marketing influenced the extent of implementation of online marketing. Gaps in owner manager knowledge concerning online marketing was obvious in most cases. Nevertheless, these gaps were often addressed with gradual learning and willingness to expand marketing knowledge. Owner-managers and founders were willing to do more in online space if only the resources allowed. However, even though owner manager was an influential factor for the interviewed social enterprises, it was not a prevailing factor for the case companies in utilizing the digital marketing, unlike some theory suggests (Karjaluo & Huhtamäki, 2010; Rao, Metts and Mora Monge 2003; Fillis, Johansson & Wagner 2004). The difference can be attributed that those researchers were examining small enterprises, while the author's companies are micro-enterprises in the field of social entrepreneurship.

In addition to that, other aspect such as creativity and initiative also had an effect on case companies' adaptation of online marketing, which confirms statements made by Sen (1984), Yujuico (2008) and Dees (2001) who stressed importance of social entrepreneurs' own creativity and findings of Verhees and Meulenbergh, (2004) who found correlation between innovativeness of company and owner-manager's innovativeness. Some of the interviewed social entrepreneurs, with limited resources in hand, used their own initiative, learning and creativity to effectively market their organization both in online and offline spaces which brought them a lot of positive outcomes. In the theory (Tioago & Verissimo, 2014; Matei & Sandu, 2013; Bull, 2006; Thong & Yap, 1995), competition was mentioned as one of the factors that can effect the adaptation of business like practises, including online marketing among non-profits and social enterprises. However, among the respondents, competition and market situation did not produce big concerns and had little impact on adaptation on digital marketing among the respondents. Those social enterprises did not feel the need to be as competitive because of the nature and uniqueness of their products or services. The case companies were aware of competition which contradicts the findings made by Bull (2006), where the studied social enterprises were not aware of competition. There can be multiple reasons for the difference, such as different



market environment, industries, or the fact that the case companies under this study were micro social enterprises, and as a lot is at stake for them, they had to perform a market research before opening a company.

As the respondents were social enterprises, unlike for-profit organizations, money was not the primary focus for them, and a more important factor was doing good for the society. Most of interviewees knew about the market situation among social entrepreneurship field in Finland as they had the Mark. The environmental factor that had more effect on the respondents was customer pressure, as today digital customers are always online and expect to see the company online, communicate with it on the platforms they prefer, which is why social enterprises select one platform over the other.

The findings enrich the literature in the field of social entrepreneurship and micro enterprises, helping researchers better understand the motivations and the factors behind social entrepreneurs' decisions which influence the use of digital marketing in their companies. The research is quite unique, because to author's best knowledge, there has not been similar research done.

## **5.2 Managerial Implications**

The research shows how the case companies were using digital marketing to compete in the volatile times where customers/donors have so many organizations to choose from. Digitalization can open new opportunities for companies but it is up for the companies to choose to follow those opportunities. This research will help other social enterprises to better recognize the factors that affect adaptation of digital marketing technologies, so the aspects that deter companies from utilizing digital marketing to the full potential can be acknowledged and concentrated upon in order to develop important skills. Even when the competences of managers in digital marketing field are missing and resources might be scarce, it should not deter managers and owners from using digital marketing in their companies as there is always a way to do things differently. Own creativity and initiative plays an important role, and one can do a lot when there is a will, persistence and a bit of imagination.

Though the case companies do not use digital marketing strategies, the digital marketing strategy should be exploited and be a part of the company's overall strategy, because when it is integrated in company's operation, it can bring better results as opposed as being detached from the strategy. The online marketing strategy also helps in formulating goals and objectives, as from the results of the study, the objectives of marketing of the case companies were somewhat unclear and not clearly defined. Accordingly, in most of the cases, measurement of online marketing activities and consumer behaviour were not performed on a consistent basis, which can also be related to the absence of clear objectives and digital marketing goals.

Offline channels still play an important role in many companies' marketing activities. PR, usage of radio and newspapers, face-to-face meeting are still an important tool to drive sales and generate brand awareness. In fact, offline and

online channels for marketing should be incorporated, as together, they can generate awareness for the companies and render more positive results. In line with the theory, offline channels found to be very beneficial, particularly, at the starting point of companies' operation, when there is very limited awareness about the companies among the public. After the awareness has been established, online channels come into play and are often become direct points of sales or communication with customers.

The results of the study show that despite of social media platforms being an important marketing tool for some organizations, companies' websites are still one of the most important online marketing tools, representing the face of the companies and often the first point of contact. Therefore, websites' interactivity and usability should not be overlooked and due diligence to its maintenance should be attributed to, making sure that potential customer can go through the customer journey easily and effortlessly. Overall, the case companies had a clear idea what the most important tool in online space for them was, with some of the companies wanting to expand to other social media platforms. It is important to remember, while it might be beneficial to have several social media channels, due to case companies' resource limitations, it might not be the best idea, as it is better to have fewer active and well-maintained channels, than a lot of non-active ones, as some of the case companies had.

Content marketing has emerged as an important theme out of the case companies' answers. As theory suggested, content marketing an effective tool for establishing communication and connection with the target audience. Content strategy was not utilized among the case companies. If implemented, it might help the case companies in better utilization of content marketing across the channels as it provides structure and, in the long term, may save resources as such tools of content strategy as automated content calendar with scheduled posts would require less time to manage.

Brand building and establishing a name for themselves were important themes that arisen from the study. For the case companies it was crucial to build the right image about their enterprise, communicate clearly who they are and what they do. However, without having a unified marketing strategy across multiple channels with clearly defined goals and objectives, the author believes it becomes harder to build a brand. Managers and owners of social enterprises should have a more systematic approach to the marketing objectives if they want to be more efficient in building a name for themselves.

It is worth noting that Word of Mouth marketing played a big role for the case companies organic marketing. Word of Mouth marketing, though an offline marketing strategy, can be easily transferred online and become word of mouse marketing. Recommendation of friends, peers is a powerful tool that new, digital customer is relying upon and, tend to trust more than any advertisements that appear in search engines. Therefore, companies should not underestimate its value and try to connect and establish meaningful relationships with their target groups.

### 5.3 Limitations and Future Research

In almost every research work there are certain limitations that cannot be escaped which is also the case of this paper. Firstly, there is geographical limitation. The author focused on micro social enterprise in Finland only due to the author's location. It would have been interesting to see how micro social enterprise in different countries are utilising digital marketing and, possibly, make a comparison between them. Secondly, the author's case companies were representatives of different industries and different customer segments. Future research might concentrate in depth on only one industry or one customer segment, and draw conclusions based only on one chosen field or one customer segment.

Another limitation of the study is connected with the paucity in existing literature concerning marketing and digital marketing of social enterprises to draw comparison from, which is why the author used the existent literature on non-profits. However, non-profits and social enterprises, though in some aspects are similar, still differ in many characteristics and, direct comparison between them is not ideal. Therefore, the knowledge uncovered in literature on non-profits cannot just be reassigned uncritically to social enterprises (Doherty et al., 2014). Nevertheless, in the context of this research, it was utilized to some extent. In the future, when there is more research on (micro) social enterprises, non-profits' digital marketing activities could be compared with social enterprises' digital marketing activities, as the author believes more differences will emerge as in the case of this paper.

The number of cases can also be considered as limitation of this study. Due to limited number of micro social enterprises in Finland that bear the Mark, the sample of companies that fit the criteria was limited. However, for the scope and type of this Master's thesis, it was enough. In the future, greater number of social enterprises can be studied and, in order to widen the scope, social enterprises that do not have the Mark can be also included in the research. Quantitative research maybe be conducted in the future provide generalization.

This paper concentrated on micro social enterprise, future research may focus on digital marketing activities of large social enterprises and possibly draw comparison between the larger and smaller social enterprises in their utilization of digital marketing and digital marketing strategies. The author believes that the conclusions and the factors affecting utilization of digital marketing among larger and smaller social enterprises might differ which makes an interesting premise for a future research.

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## APPENDIX -IINTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### Background questions

- Who are you? (Title, responsibilities, experience)
- Describe your company shortly? (social cause, age, number of employees)
- Who are your customers (Target group)?
- Who are your competitors?

### Marketing Communications

- What kind of marketing activities do you engage in?
- What is the role and the objectives of digital marketing in your company?
- Does your company have a written strategy for digital marketing? If you do, how is it linked to the overall company strategy?
- Who is responsible of the digital marketing in your company?
- What are the reasons for implementing/ or not implementing digital marketing strategy in your company?
- How big is the digital marketing budget in your company?
- Do you use external parties to help you with marketing communications?
- Do you see digital marketing as being important for your company?
- What is the digital marketing process like in your company? (Where does it start, what are the steps and where does it end?)
- Do you measure the results of your digital marketing activities? How?
- What are the challenges related to digital marketing in your company?
- What are the biggest successes in terms of digital marketing in your company?
- Do you believe that investing more resources in digital marketing will bring positive results for your company?

### Channels

- What are the channels that your company uses for digital marketing?
- Why and how were these channels selected?
- What are the most important channels? Why?
- How do you use the different channels?
- Does your company use more traditional channels (e.g. printed brochures) or more digital channels?
- Website (role, use)
- Social media platforms (role, use)
- Blogs (role, use)
- E-mail (role, use)
- Other? (role, use)



### Next steps in the company digital future

- Will there be a change in the digital marketing strategy of your company in the future?
- What is the role of digital marketing in your company in the future?
- What will be the most important tool in your digital marketing?