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DIGITAL MARKETING PLAN FOR A NEWS AGENCY

Case: Free News of the World, NSD Oy

LAHTI UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED
SCIENCES

Degree program in International
Business

Thesis

Autumn 2013

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Lahti University of Applied Sciences
Degree Programme in International Business

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Digital marketing plan for a news agency
Case: Free News of the World, NSD Oy

Bachelor's Thesis in International Business, 41 pages

Autumn 2013

ABSTRACT

In the business world, an effective marketing plan is an important guideline for any company, regardless of how small or big the business scale is, to stay focused to their goals. Moreover, "the written marketing plan gives a common direction to all staff in the company" (McKinlay & O'Connor, 2007). Therefore, formulating a marketing plan prior to utilizing any marketing actions is substantial and necessary. However, producing a marketing plan requires knowledge of marketing.

For those reasons, this thesis, with the title "Digital marketing plan for a news agency, FNOTW, NSD Oy", covers general know-how of digital marketing planning, and presents a well-thought, functional online marketing plan for the case company, Free News of the World, NSD Oy.

Qualitative research method with deductive approach is used in this thesis. The research data are collected from different sources. The empirical part, which is the actual marketing plan, uses information from observations and discussions, while the theoretical part provides the readers with simple, fundamental knowledge and understanding of digital marketing planning, which are gathered from books, e-resources, journals, articles, reports, literature. The empirical part is built based on the theoretical part.

Key words:

online citizen journalism, digital marketing, social media marketing, email marketing, user attraction, user retention, traffic generation

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Among all fields of business, the author has a particular interest in marketing and plans to have her future career in marketing. She believes that marketing plays a vital role in any business, or any industry, in which a well-thought out marketing strategy and an effective marketing plan can make or break the success of any goods or services. Therefore, the preparation of a good marketing plan is very important work prior to launching any product to the market.

According to many managers and expert observers around the world, a strong customer focus, well-conceived and executed marketing strategies will be even more crucial for the success of most organizations as the global marketplace becomes more crowded and competitive. (Homburg, Workman, & Krohmer, 1999)

With her interest and belief in marketing, the author decided to do her internship in International Marketing and Media at NSD Oy. During the internship, together with her group, the author created and developed a totally new marketing plan for the news agency FNOTW - Free News of the World (www.fnotw.org). This marketing plan was prepared before the official launching of the site, and, in fact, was carried out by the author and her group. Besides, the author added some suggestions for long-term marketing plan of FNOTW.

1.2 Objective, Research Questions and Limitations

The objective of this thesis is to study different techniques of online marketing, and to present functional online marketing plan for FNOTW, where the studied techniques are effectively applied. The author aims to provide readers with both theoretical and practical knowledge about online marketing planning.

The main research question is "What is the most effective marketing plan for FNOTW?"

Sub-questions, which are built to support the main research questions, are listed as followings.

- What is digital marketing?
- What is digital marketing planning process?
- What are effective marketing techniques?
- What goal does FNOTW want to achieve with the marketing plan?
- Where is the company now in the industry?
- Who is the target audience?
- How can FNOTW build traffic after being newly launched?
- How can marketers attract and retain customers/users to FNOTW?

The subject of digital marketing is very broad. Consequently, all fields of the subject cannot be covered in the theoretical part of this thesis. However, in chapter 2, the most relevant theoretical information to the case about the subject would be included, so that the readers, consisting of people who do not specialize in marketing, could understand the subject more easily in latter part, where theories are implemented into practice.

1.3 Theoretical framework

Environmental scanning involves “evaluating, monitoring, and dissemination of information from the external and internal environments to key people within the corporation (Wheelen & Hunger, 2004). The environment analysis is discussed in the third and the fourth chapters.

Chapter 3, Industry Analysis, presents the macro environment analysis. The analysis is performed by Porter’s Five Competitive Forces (Porter, 1980), which is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

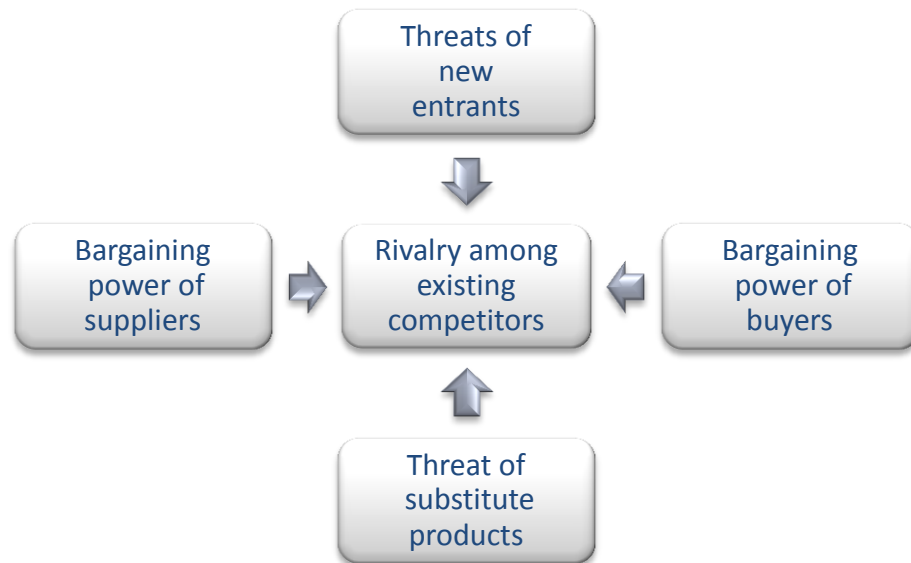


FIGURE 1. Porter's Five Competitive Forces (Porter, 1980)

As illustrated in Figure 1, the five forces are threats of new entrants, bargaining power of buyers, bargaining power of suppliers, threat of substitute products and rivalry among existing competitors. As a whole, these forces measure the long-term attractiveness of the industry (Mullins, Walker, & Boyd, 2008). In other words, examining the interaction of the five forces, company can forecast their return on investment or their profit possibility within the analyzed industry (Anthony, 2008).

While Porter's Five Competitive Forces is an industry-specific analysis tool, SWOT analysis is a company specific tool. This tool is used in Chapter 4 to study the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the case company. Strengths and weaknesses (SW) refer to the firm's internal areas that have comparative advantages and disadvantages, respectively, in comparison with its competitors (Anthony, 2008). Opportunities and threats (OT) relate to the external elements provided to the company from the external environment.

SWOT analysis is useful to understand the company resources and capabilities, as well as the potential risks, which lead to the better knowledge of competitors and market position (Murray-Webster, 2010).

One example of SWOT analysis is presented in FIGURE 2 below.

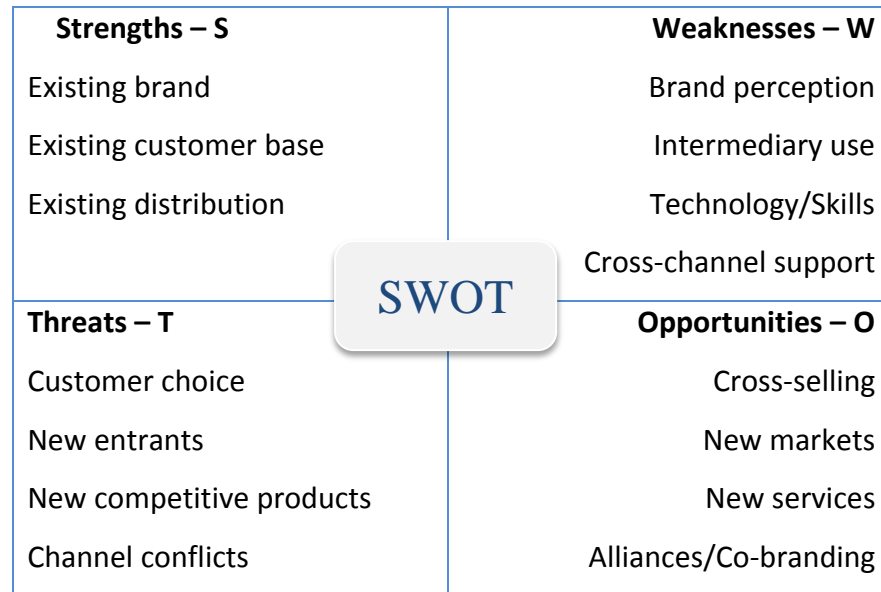


FIGURE 2. SWOT analysis (modified from Chaffey, 2011)

In many cases, this simple analyzing tool can be utilized as a strategy tool by matching organization's strengths and weaknesses against the opportunities and threats to formulate strategies.

1.4 Research Method and Data Collection

The research methodology of this thesis is presented in the figure below.

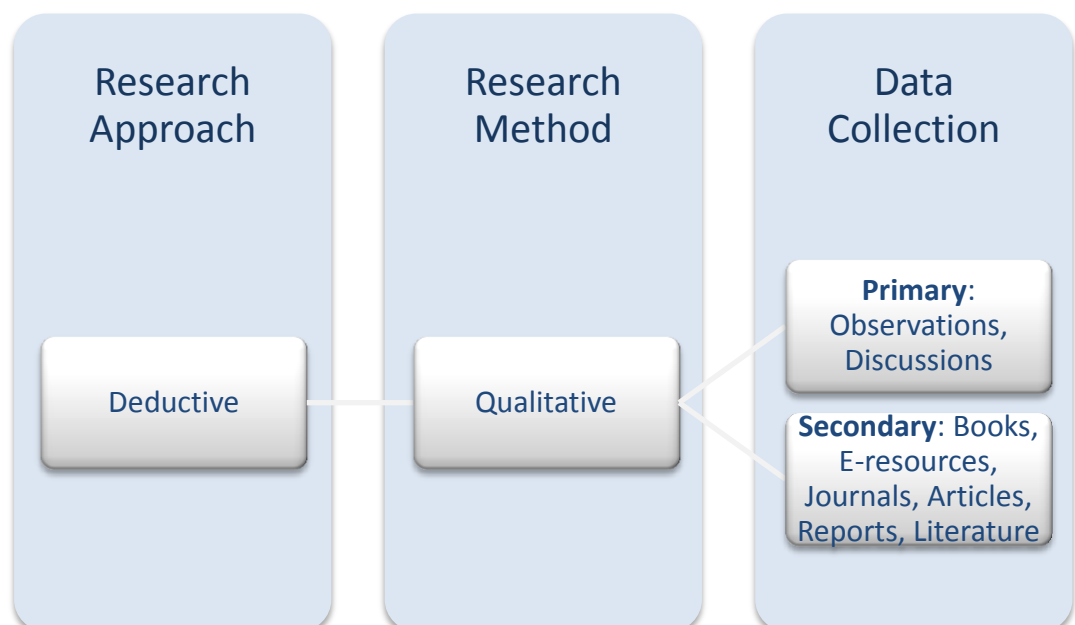


FIGURE 3. Research Methodology

Research Approach

Two approaches, which are often associated with research methods, are deductive and inductive. The two approaches are totally opposite by the process. Inductive approach refers to ‘a theory building process, starting with observations of specific instances, and seeking to establish generalization about the phenomenon under investigation’ (Hyde, 2000). In a simple put, inductive approach requires observations about the research, which will contribute to a new theory.

Conversely, deductive approach ‘begins with and applies a well-known theory’ (Wilson, 2010). In this type of research, hypothesis is built on the theory. Both of them will influence the rest of the process (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005).

In order to choose the appropriate approach for this thesis, the author encountered the question: ‘How will the theory feature in my study?’. As the goal of this thesis, and of the author’s study program is applying theories into practice, the research process will be based upon the theories. Therefore, the deductive approach is adopted in this author's work.

Research Method

Two fundamental research methods or strategies are qualitative and quantitative. The key point to distinguish them is the nature of the primary data of the research. While quantitative research bases on numeric data, qualitative research relies on descriptive or non-numeric data. Thus, quantitative research methods began in the natural sciences like biology, chemistry, and physics, and qualitative research began in the social sciences, for example sociology, anthropology, etc. Mixing both methods can help gather comprehensive evidence or give a more complete picture of what it studied (American Intercontinental University, 2012). The author will collect the descriptive data to answer the research questions of her work; hence, qualitative method is her major research method.

Data collection

As shown in FIGURE 3, the author gathers both primary and secondary data. The primary data, used in the empirical part, are collected from author’s observations

and discussions. Furthermore, in the theoretical part, books, e-resources, journals, articles, reports, literature are sources to gather the secondary data.

1.5 Structure of Thesis

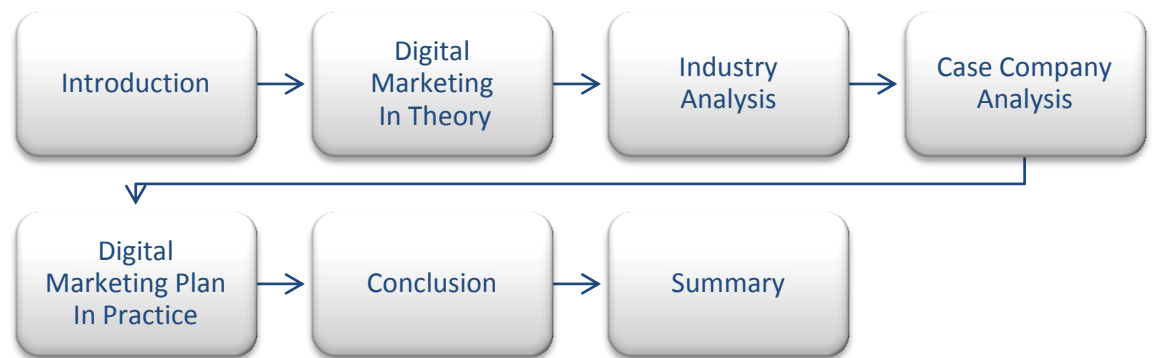


FIGURE 4. Thesis Structure

As illustrated in FIGURE 4, this thesis consists of seven chapters, which are Introduction, Digital Marketing In Theory, Industry Analysis, Case Company Analysis, Online Marketing Plan in Practice, and Conclusion.

The first chapter, Introduction, gives the readers background information of the author and the thesis topic, as well as an overview of thesis' theoretical framework and thesis structure.

The second chapter is the theoretical part in this thesis. This chapter covers the theories and findings about digital marketing, how to plan digital marketing, as well as different techniques to apply in the case of FNOTW.

The next chapters focus on Industry Analysis and Case Company Analysis. This third chapter presents the analysis of the competitive factors in the market such as the competitive rivalry, threat of substitute product and barriers of entry, while the case company situation is examined in the fourth chapter. Chapter 4 discusses the internal strengths and weaknesses, along with the external opportunities and threats of the case company.

The fifth chapter goes through the digital marketing plan for FNOTW. The chapter includes sub-chapters about objectives, target audience, segmentation, actions and tactics to attract and retain readers and users.

Chapter 6 concludes the business plan.

Last but not least, chapter 7 summarizes this thesis. It includes all the major findings of both theoretical and empirical parts in the author's work.

2 DIGITAL MARKETING IN THEORY

2.1 Digital marketing definition

According to Chaffey (2011), IDM (www.theidm.com) published a detailed definition of digital marketing, which involves:

“Applying these technologies which form online channels to market:

-Web, e-mail, databases, plus mobile /wireless and digital TV.

To achieve these objectives:

-Supporting marketing activities aimed at achieving profitable acquisition and retention of customers ... within a multi-channel buying process and customer lifecycle.

Through using these marketing tactics:

-Recognizing the strategic importance of digital technologies and developing a planned approach to reach and migrate customers to online services through e-communications and traditional communications. Retention is achieved through improving our customer knowledge (of their profiles, behavior, value and loyalty drivers), then delivering integrated, targeted communications and online services that match their individual needs.”

Digital marketing, electronic marketing, e-marketing and Internet marketing are the same terms which, simply put, refer to “marketing online whether via web sites, online ads, opt-in emails, interactive kiosks, interactive TV or mobiles” (Chaffey & Smith, 2008). The term ‘digital marketing’ is used more frequently by the e-marketing agencies and new media trade publications. (Chaffey, 2011)

2.2 Digital marketing planning framework

SOSTAC™ framework, which is developed by Paul Smith, is a very popular classic marketing planning framework for creating marketing plans. It is illustrated in the figure below.



FIGURE 5. SOSTACTM – a genetic framework for e-marketing planning
(modified from Smith, 2011 by the author)

Chaffey (2011) used this framework to summarize the different stages that should be involved in a marketing strategy from strategy to implementation. SOSTAC stands for six elements of the framework - Situation analysis, Objective, Strategy, Tactics, Actions, and Control.

- *Situation* – Where are we now?
Analyzing e-environment to learn about the external elements such as competitors, customer's insights, market trends, as well as the internal capabilities, resources, limits of the company.
- *Objectives* – where do we want to be?
Deciding the key objectives of the campaign, to acquire and retain customers, to satisfy customers' want and need, to add values to customers, to engage them or to gain quantified efficiency.
- *Strategy* – how do we get there?
Utilizing segmentation, targeting and positioning, together with sequence, integration and tools.

- *Tactics* – how exactly do we get there?

Planning the details of the strategy, including marketing mix, contact strategy details and timeline schedule.

- *Actions* – what is our plan?

Giving the details of the tactics – who does what and when

- *Control* – did we get there?

Monitoring the performance of the plan, for example using web analytics, customer feedback and surveys, etc. (Chaffey, 2011)

- a. Digital media channels

In order to make a digital marketing plan, the marketers must study different marketing channels in order to choose the most appropriate ones to reach the audiences.

Chaffey and Smith (2008) recommended six main types of digital media channels, which are (1) *search marketing*, (2) *online PR*, (3) *online partnership*, (4) *interactive ads*, (5) *opt-in e-mail* and (6) *social media marketing*, shown in FIGURE 6. Beside considering various online communications techniques shown, marketers often review the usage of offline communications, such as direct mail, word of mouth, sponsorship, personal selling, etc, for the best website and social network presences.

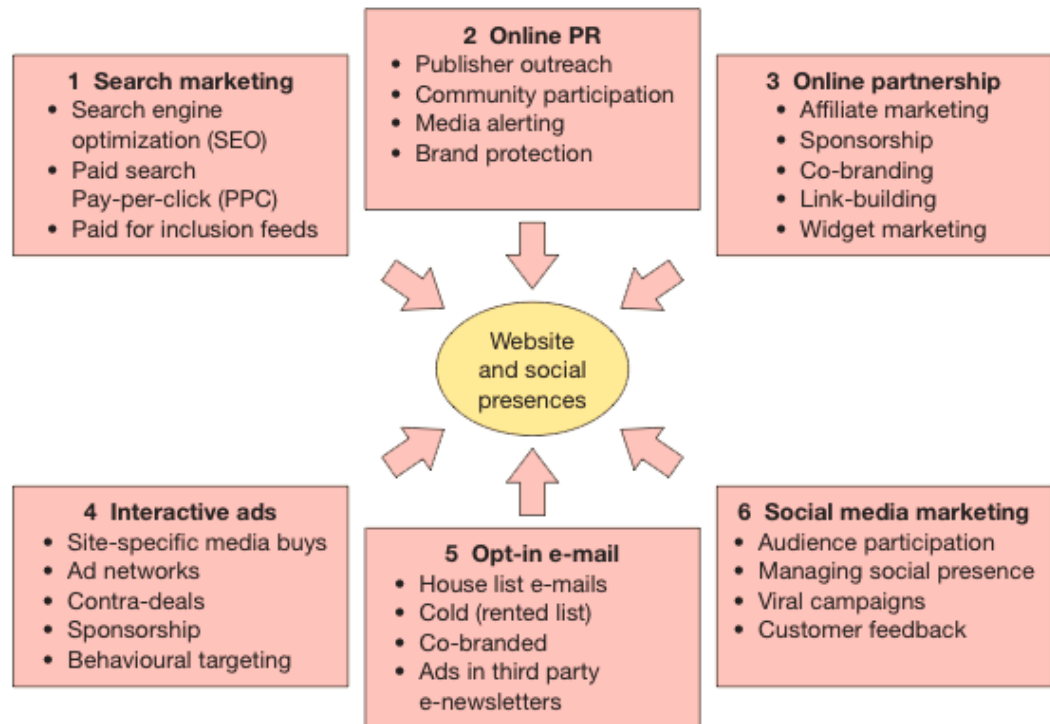


FIGURE 6. Online communications techniques for e-commerce (modified from Chaffey 2011)

a. Search engine marketing

Search engine marketing refers to actions to encourage click-through to a website from search sites, such as Google, Yahoo, MSN, etc. For example, when a user types a specific keyword or phrase in a search engine, for example Google, he will find your home site and click through to your site. At that point, you are successful at attracting a visitor to your site. If you have made some actions to gain that visit, you may have done search engine marketing. (Moran & Hunt, 2008)

In order to improve the website's performance and get noticed in the search engines, marketers have two key techniques, which are paid for placement using pay-per-click or placements in the organic 'natural' listing using search engine optimization (SEO) (Colborn, 2012).

b. Online PR

Public relations traditionally focus on managing the communication between the organization and the public, in order to create and maintain the public image of the organization (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Like the traditional PR, online PR maintain the same functions, but through the Internet (Newlands, 2011). Online PR uses the online platforms, such as social networks and blogs, to maximize the interactions with the public. Therefore, it is considered to be closely related to social media marketing.

c. Online partnership

To promote the site, marketers can agree on long-term arrangements with other parties. As listed in Figure 5, online partnership includes affiliate marketing, link-building, co-branding, sponsorship, and more. (Chaffey, 2011)

d. Interactive advertising

Banners and rich media ads in websites are tools of interactive marketing. These online tools are used to attract click-through to a target site or sell the brand story or awareness (Chaffey, 2011).

e. Opt-in e-mail marketing

In e-mail marketing, the opt-in list is “the list of email addresses of people who have agreed to subscribe to your mailing list”. Marketers can freely send every aspect of the marketing campaign, such as newsletter, promotions, and brochures, to the opt-in list. Opt-in e-mail marketing refers to renting the opt-in list or placing ads on the newsletter, which is sent to the opt-in list, usually of the affiliate party. (Dulac, 2012)

f. Social media marketing

In Tech Terms (www.techterms.com), social media marketing is defined as “marketing done through social media or social networking websites”. There is a variety of different social media ones. The eight most popular platforms are blogs, microblogs (Twitter), social network (Facebook, LinkedIn), media-sharing sites (Youtube, Flickr), social bookmarking and voting sites (Digg, Reddit), reviewing sites (Yelp), forums, and virtual world (Second Life) (Zarrella, 2010).

According to Chaffey (2011), social media marketing involves “encouraging customer communications on a company’s own site, or a social presence”. Social media marketing is one important technique in digital marketing as companies can use the social media form to distribute their messages to their target audience, without having to pay for the publishers or distributor like traditional marketing. For example, Adidas opened up a shoe store in SecondLife to increase brand awareness amongst users of the popular 3D Virtual World.

“Social media marketing: Monitoring and facilitating customer-customer interaction and participation throughout the web to encourage positive engagement with a company and its brands. Interactions may be occurred on a company site, social networks and other third-party sites” (Chaffey, 2011).

Viral marketing often effectively assists social media marketing. Michael Bryce defines that viral marketing is a marketing technique that aims to grow the popularity of a service or product that provides the target group with an incentive to encourage them to spread the electronic message among their network on the Internet (Bryce, 2005). In simple words, viral marketing is the effective form of word-of-mouth communications, which stimulates on the Internet, like a virus. Since viral marketing utilizes social media, it helps social media marketing to reach the target audience faster and better.

3 INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

The case company is NSD Oy, a Finnish software development company specialized in Microsoft technologies, such as Visual Studio, SharePoint, Windows Phone, Team Foundation Server. Hence, the industry of the company is technology.

On the other hand, NSD Oy also runs a separate project - Free News of the World (FNOTW), which requires the marketing plan. Free News of the World is a news agency specialized in news and analysis about global conflict zones (Free News of the World, 2013). FNOTW performs on the platform of their website www.fnotw.org. Therefore, the industry to be analyzed in this case is news industry.

In fact, as FNOTW only gather and broadcast news only on the Internet, we will scan the online news industry. Moreover, everyone can write news, post pictures and express their views at FNOTW, which makes FNOTW an online citizen journalism publisher. For this reason, the author will look into the online citizen journalism section of the news publishing industry more deeply, in order to best analyze the environment. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Porter's Five Forces is the analysis tool used to scan this macro environment.

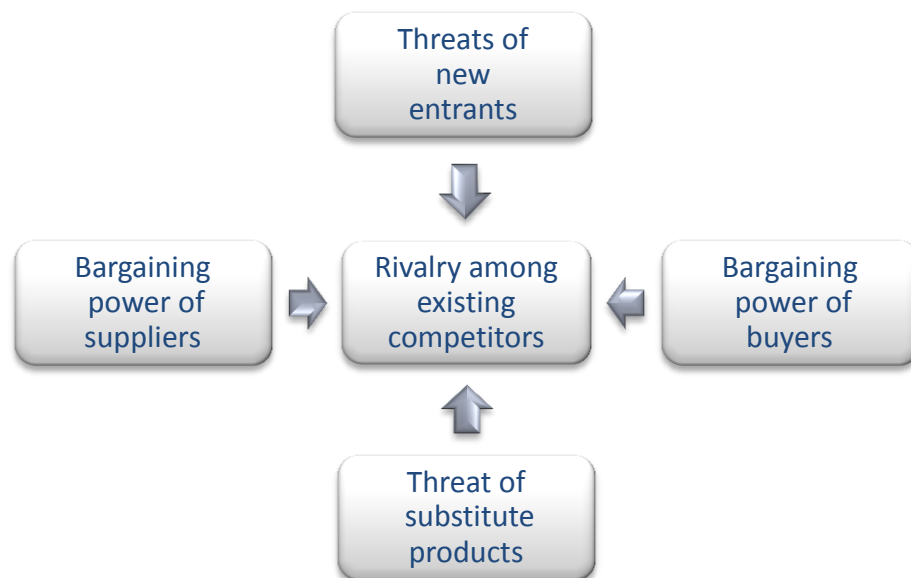


FIGURE 7. Porter's Five Competitive Forces (Porter, 1980)

3.1 Threat of New Entrants

Threat of new entrants is one force to determine the attractiveness of the industry. The greater the threat of news entrants, the less attractive the industry will be (Mullins, Walker, & Boyd, 2008).

In traditional news industry where news is printed only in a newspaper, the threat of entrants was moderately low, as the industry required strong capital and resources, for example to gather, transfer and edit, then print out the news.

From the mid-1980s till the mid-1990s, when the PC was introduced and started to be used more widely, the threat of entrants was still low, as the barriers of entry were high. At that time, leading news source digitalized the news. Their early online strategies were about blocking new competitors and new entrants. For instance, the online editions of news the New York Times, the Chicago Tribune, the Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times were published proprietary online systems, such as CompuServe, America Online, Prodigy, and Interchange. Users subscribed to AOL, if they wanted to read the New York Times. But, the Washington Post was published exclusively on Interchange, therefore, they couldn't get to read a story in the Washington Post at the same time. What they had to do was disconnecting the screeching modem from AOL, purchase an Interchange subscription, log onto Interchange, and then navigate to the Post. A return visit to the Times required the reverse of that drill (Shafer, 2009). As the news publishers struck the deals with the proprietary online systems, they raised the barriers of entry to any potential new players.

As the Internet has become universal, it does not only increase readerships for news publishers but also creates a huge threat of new entrants for them. In other words, online news publishing has very high threat of entrants, because of fairly low capital requirement, and easy access to distribution channels. Electronic publishing cut the cost for ink, paper, printing and delivery (Taras, Bennett, & Townsend, 2004). Consequently, the industry does not require the strong capital. Furthermore, in the sector of online citizen journalism, everyone can become a journalist, as online citizen journalism is 'more proportionately local' compared to online newspaper (Rosenberry & John, 2009). As a result, online citizen

journalism demands less resource to enter. Other than that, with the help of Internet, distribution news becomes easy with a click. For instance, since the coverage of the mainstream media in Turkey about Turkish protests in June 2013 was little, Turkish people spread the news on the social media network. The news was easily distributed in Twitter, Facebook, and blogs.

Overall, according to Mullins (2008), the entry is more difficult if the industry has strong capital requirement and gaining distribution is particularly difficult. This leads to the fact that the barriers to enter online citizen journalism are low, or the threat of entrants is moderately high.

3.2 Threat of Substitute Products

Substitutes are defined as “alternative product types that perform essentially the same function” (Mullins, Walker, & Boyd, 2008). They might appear to be different but not as substitutes meet the same customer's needs but in a different way (Allen, 2001). For example, television news is considered as substitute of news on newspaper in general; or, in the smaller extent, printed news is a substitute product for online news.

The threat of substitute products in news market space is particularly high. The news industry also has tough competitions from numerous large and small sources alike (Cryns, 2002). Consumers have many substitutes to select a newspaper to read, for example leading online newspaper such as CNN, BBC, the local print newspaper like Helsinki Times, digital business journals, or community forums and pages such as Facebook pages and blogs, not to mention other sources of news such as TV, radio, etc.

The extent of the threat of substitute products depends on the price and performances of the product and its substitute, cost to switch from the one product to another, as well as the customer's loyalty to the product. In online news industry, due to the development of technology and the strong competition, the price of almost all products is free. Other than that, the switching cost among the products is very low to zero. As the result, the threat of substitute products in online news industry is considerably high.

3.3 Bargaining Power of Suppliers

Suppliers in the online news industry are content providers, web hosts and web maintenance vendors. The bargaining power of them is not significant. Most newspaper and firms in new industry are “well established in the offline world with their own specialized content creators”. In online publishing business, buying of any content would be common, as much as in offline publications (Cryns, 2002).

The impact of the content providers is limited owing to the large number of them. Additionally, in online citizen journalism, anyone is the content provider as the industry focuses more on the local content, which is, in most of the cases, best provided by the local people.

Moreover, in the modern era of World Wide Web and other technology standards, service of web hosting and maintenance is considered as the ordinary commodity. Therefore, the web hosting and web maintenance vendors are simply the commodity businesses, which do not have much influence, or power in the news industry.

3.4 Bargaining Power of Buyers

The buyers “succeed in their bargaining efforts” under the conditions of high level of competition and great availability of substitute products (Mullins, Walker, & Boyd, 2008). This applies to the news industry in general and the online news industry in particular. As analyzed in the other determinants of the Porter Five Forces, strong competition, along with wide range of substitute products, exists in the industry. It is proved by the fact that the service price of all most all online newspaper is free and switching cost among different newspapers is basically zero.

Additionally, customer power and knowledge is perhaps “the single biggest threat posed by electronic trading” (Chaffey, 2011). The Internet helps buyers evaluate products and compare prices, for example using the price comparison engines. The price transparency and customer knowledge can force down the price of the

product as well as encourage a wider choice of product, which increases the power of online buyers.

3.5 Rivalry among Existing Competitors

“Rivalry occurs among the firms that produce products that are close substitutes for each other” (Mullins, Walker, & Boyd, 2008). In news industry, the level of rivalry among the current competitors is high. As it is studied in the second force, threat of substitute products, the industry has huge number of substitute products. Nowadays, the news source is not limited to the publisher’s own editorial content. There is the greater reliance outside sources, such as wire services, partial press release material, news agency feeds from affiliated abroad newspaper, blogging and even readers. This leads to the homogeneity of news (OECD, 2010). Under the condition of close substitute product, not to say homogeneity, the competitive rivalry is very great.

Furthermore, with the Internet, the threat from existing competitors increases since price comparison is more readily possible. And the Internet facilitates the rival e-business with easy innovation and new product development. These reasons make the rivalry more intense.

3.6 Overall Industry Analysis

The results of analyzing Porter’s Five Forces are summarized in TABLE 1.

TABLE 1. Industry Analysis

Porter’s Five Forces	News industry	Online citizen journalism
Threats of new entrants	Low	High
Threat of substitute products	High	High
Bargaining power of suppliers	Low	Low
Bargaining power of buyers	High	High
Rivalry among existing competitors	High	High

As we can see from the indicators, the industry's attractiveness is very low. Consequently, return of investment, if one organization enters the market, will not be a positive number. However, looking into the section of online news industry which reports citizen's news about the conflict, the market is quite new and open, contains some potential. Therefore, in short term, the case company decided to enter the industry with low expectation of receiving benefit, but carry on the objective of the site, www.fnotw.org, which is to bring voices of different parties to the table in order that people could understand the situation from different points of views.

4 CASE COMPANY ANALYSIS

The case company is NSD Oy, National Software Development. NSD has been a Finnish software development company, which specializes in Microsoft technologies since 1995.

4.1 Strengths

Specializing in modern technologies, NSD Oy has an advantage of technological skills as well as facilities. Working solely on the Internet, FNOTW project requires basic infrastructure such as computers, Internet network. Other than that, NSD Oy does have the resources to do the task of building and developing FNOTW website. This can save the budget of web developing and maintaining from outsourcing website service companies. Besides, NSD Oy also has the knowledge and skills with one important technique of digital marketing, which is organic listing, i.e search engine optimization (SEO).

Additionally, NSD Oy runs the FNOTW project with the human resource of fresh-minded interns. They are not only familiar with modern technologies but also have the updating knowledge in the field. Plus, having interns as the work force lower the cost of operating for the project.

4.2 Weaknesses

The biggest weakness of the project is the limited budget. The company has to run the project in low budget; therefore, FNOTW does not have much financial resource. Consequently, it will affect the choices of possible tactics used in the plan. In fact, it results in omitting some effective e-marketing techniques in the plan.

Working in a technological industry, NSD Oy does not have much experience in the news industry. Furthermore, FNOTW, which is a news agency, does not have professional journalists and editors. However, FNOTW publishes online news journalism. This weakness does not bring great disadvantage to the image of FNOTW.

In the beginning phase, news is collected mainly by the company's human resources, which are the interns. They may not have an adequate contact network, in order to reach the potential target audience.

Last but not least, FNOTW is a totally new player in the industry. It neither has any existing brand perception nor existing customer and user base. This creates disadvantage in competing for user attraction, especially when the sites want to have professional journalist's voice.

4.3 Opportunities

The easier a new competitor can enter the market, the more intense the competition. On the other hand, FNOTW is a totally new player in the market. Therefore, the low barriers of entry can create opportunity for FNOTW. Using the low budget and limited human resources, FNOTW still has the possibility to jump into the market.

Moreover, from researching, FNOTW is currently the only player in the field of reporting conflict news from both conflict sides. Normally, big news publishers cover all range of news, such as politics, technologies, sports, fashions, etc. FNOTW only publishes news and analysis concerning conflicts in the world, and categorizes the news into different conflict zones, so that the readers can follow the news based on zones. Although the leading news publishers do report conflicts news, the news is not categorized in separate new zones. In additions, Free News of the Worlds reports news about various conflicts, not just one. And the voices in FNOTW are not from one party of the conflict but from both. These differentiate FNOTW from the smaller conflict news sites, for example, Crowdvoice (www.crowdvoice.org), and small blogs or forums. Overall, FNOTW is providing the service that almost no other players do. Furthermore, the differentiating edge of FNOTW separates it with other players, which leads to market opportunities for FNOTW.

4.4 Threats

As concluded in the previous chapter, the threat of new entrants in the industry is very great. FNOTW will easily have a competitor in the field. For example, when someone wants to deliver news to millions of people instantly, he can create a blog or a Facebook page, and post his news and information that he wants to share with the world. This may not contain the threat or competition to leading news publishers, since the level of operating is very different. However, with the smaller news service website as FNOTW, it creates a threat.

Besides, strong competition exists in the industry of FNOTW. Customers have a wide range of choices for the product, i.e. news. Likewise, the Internet provides the customers with price transparency. These drive the competition tougher and more challenging for the new player like Free News of the World.

4.5 Overall Case Company Analysis

The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for NSD and FNOTW are summarized in the table below.

TABLE 2. SWOT Analysis of the Case Company

<p>Strengths – S</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialized technological knowledge • Good technological facilities • Effective human resources 	<p>Weaknesses – W</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited financial resources • Limited resources in news industry • Limited contact network • No brand perception & reputation • No customer base
<p>Opportunities – O</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low barriers of entry • Pioneer in FNOTW's field 	<p>Threats – T</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High threat of new entrants • Strong competition

5 DIGITAL MARKETING PLAN IN PRACTICE

5.1 Free News of the World (FNOTW) Overview

As mentioned in the previous chapters, Free News of the World (FNOTW) is a news agency gathering and publishing news, exclusively about conflicts in the world. The news is published solely on the FNOTW official website at <http://www.fnotw.org>.

News is categorized into different zones on the site. A zone consists of two opposing sides of the conflict. Moreover, users can choose their angle either from one side of the zone or neutral. By building the zones, Free News of the World encourages both sides to share their news, express their opinions and approach an issue from different perspectives. However, as a news agency and publisher, FNOTW remains neutral in any conflict, which means it takes no stand from either side of the conflict zone. As a result, all marketing messages should be neutral, not biased to any side.

While the author is producing this thesis, there are totally eight zones on the site, which are China-Tibet, For surveillance-Against surveillance, Israel-Palestine, Kurds-Turkey, Support Morsi-Oppose Morsi, Syrian government-Syrian opposition, Turkish protestors-Turkish government, and other conflicts.

5.2 Objectives

The marketing plan is drafted before the official launching of Free News of the World site - www.fnotw.org. Therefore, the ultimate goal of the plan is to promote the existence of the site, to gain clicks to the site, as well as to attract and retaining users.

In short term, the main objective is to generate site traffic. The traffic can be built by attracting plenty of readers. Besides, acquiring users to the site is a minor objective. As long as the site has good traffic enough, user acquiring becomes the major goal. In long term, the objective of marketing plan is to attract and retain

users. This objective is set when the site has a stable amount of traffic and good base of news sources from many users in all the zones.

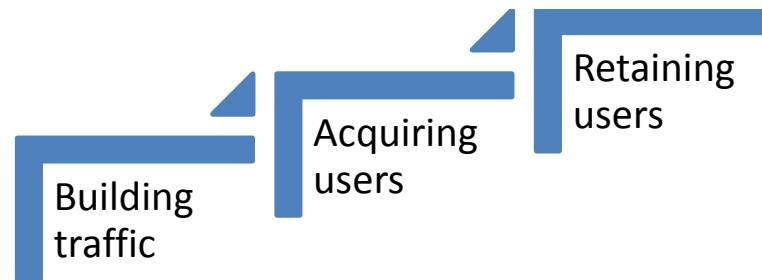


FIGURE 8. Objectives of the digital marketing plan

As illustrated in FIGURE 8, the objectives are placed as steps. As long as the marketing campaign reaches the first objective, the second objective will be set for the next period of time. However, the actions and tactics of one objective can be carried out at the same time with those of other objectives, so that the overall goal could be accomplished.

5.3 Strategies

Potential users

At www.fnotw.org, users can post articles to tell what is happening in their country, in their home city, to their family and themselves, or to analyze the daily news or events regarding the conflict, or to share their study of the conflicts, for example what started the conflict, or to propose a solution to end the conflict, etc. Therefore, users are not limited to people who work in news industry or who have adequate knowledge of journalism. Instead, any citizen can write news about the conflict zones and post their articles on the site. In other words, everyone, who has interest in conflict news, is targeted as potential users of FNOTW.

The users of the site consist of people within the conflict zones, i.e. the people who are involved in, directly affected by the conflicts and people living nearby the conflict zones; plus people outside the conflict zones who are interested in the conflict zones; as well as amateur and professional journalists.

Segmentation

Users of the site are segmented into different groups by behavioral criteria, i.e. based on their activities on the site. The activities on the site consist of writing, reading, sharing and discussing. Certainly, users, who are categorized in one segment, can do one or many other listed activities, or all, at the same time.

The segmentation is summarized in the table below.

TABLE 3. Segmentation

Activities	Specific Targeted Audience
Write (articles)	<p>Mostly people that have insights about the conflicts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Journalists based inside the conflict areas, banned/suppressed by the local government, need more exposure - Professional journalist/correspondents - Amateur journalist - Bloggers that specialize on these conflict areas - NGOs/organizations/activists - Authorities - People that live in the conflict areas
Read	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Normal people that are interested in news and just want to know more about the conflict – outsiders of the conflict - Insiders who want to gather more insights from other party
Share	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bloggers that specialize on these conflict areas - Normal readers interested in the news
Discuss (forum, comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People that are not active in writing articles but want to express their opinions - People that write articles

After all the segmented groups are studied, some groups are selected to be the target audience to reach first, based on the short term objective of the campaign and the reaching possibility.

Targeted audience to reach first

In short term, objectives of the campaign are mainly to generate traffic, and secondly to acquire users. Therefore, the selected segments or the targeted audience to reach first, are users who read and share, and partially who write.

They are listed as followed:

- Bloggers that specialize in these conflict areas
- Journalists based inside the conflict areas, banned/suppressed by the local government, need more exposure
- Human right watch/activists/Red cross/NGOs
- People in exile
- Insiders - people who live in the conflict areas

In order to fulfill the objective of acquiring users and accomplish the long term objective of retaining users, the marketers target to reach another audience, which includes professional correspondents and journalists, authorities, and government, along with the first target audience groups.

Digital marketing techniques

As studied in chapter 2, there are six main types of digital media channels, which are search marketing, online PR, online partnership, interactive ads, opt-in e-mail and social media marketing (Chaffey & Smith, 2008). As can be seen in TABLE 4, each channel includes various different e-marketing techniques such as SEO, affiliate marketing, sponsorship, ad-network, viral campaign, etc.

TABLE 4. Digital marketing channels and techniques (modified from Chaffey 2011)

Digital marketing channels	Digital marketing techniques
1. Search marketing	- Search engine optimization (SEO)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Paid search. Pay per click (PPC) - Pay for inclusion feeds
2. Online PR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public outreach - Community participation - Media alerting - Brand protection
3. Online partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Affiliate marketing - Sponsorship - Co-branding - Link-building - Widget marketing
4. Interactive ads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Site – specific media buys - Ad networks - Contra deals - Sponsorship - Behavioral targeting
5. Opt-in email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - House list emails - Cold (rented list) - Co-branded - Ads in third party e-newsletter
6. Social media marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Audience participation - Managing social presence - Viral campaign - Customer feedback

The online marketing techniques are chosen based on the objectives of the campaigns, the possibility to reach the targeted audience and the financial resource of the campaigns.

Since the targeted audience belongs to specific geographical areas, which are the countries of the conflict zones, paid search or pay per click (PPP) would be the most effective technique to reach the audience. Let's look into a simple example.

If FNOTW creates an advert to get more people to like their page on Facebook, which targets the audience only in Israel, the daily budget of 8 euros is estimated to be equal to 22-86 likes per day. In a month, NSD Oy will pay 240 euros for about 660 to 2580 likes. The number looks good, however, 240 euros is the basic monthly budget to run an advert targeted the audience in Israel, which is only one side of a conflict zone among the eight zones at the moment. Besides, that is only the price for advertising on Facebook. Overall, due to the limited budget, paid search would not be feasible for FNOTW. In fact, any marketing techniques that require money will not be possible in the campaigns, no matter how effective they are.

Although a paid search is not possible, the natural ‘organic’ listing is under the capability of NSD Oy. Search engine optimization (SEO) requires no money, but talent, which NSD Oy can provide. SEO is one among services NSD Oy give to their clients. Therefore, the company will use their own expertise to list www.fnotw.org on the top of the search engine. Accordingly, the author will not discuss further about this technique in the following parts of the marketing plan, with remark that SEO is used in the campaigns.

Below are selected marketing techniques in the campaigns.

- *E-mail marketing:*

The most possible and effective method to reach the targeted audience is email marketing. The direct contact to the targeted audience helps to promote the existence of the site, to build traffic as well as attract new users to the site. The list of the email addresses is adopted by the marketers, not rented list from other organization. Besides, after acquiring the contact via emails, other direct communication methods will be used to support e-mail marketing.

- *Social media marketing:*

The campaigns utilize both viral marketing and audience participation. With regards that the audience is two opposing sides of a conflict, the viral message should be neutral, although it will be difficult to find a neutral message that could spread as a virus easily on the social media network.

Two main platforms to carry out social media marketing are Facebook and Twitter. On Facebook page of the site, marketing team will develop interactive activities with page member such as questionnaires, polls, etc.

- *Online PR*

Closely relating to social media marketing, marketing team uses online platforms, such as social networks, forums, blogs and other relevant websites to introduce FNOTW and interact with potential audience and the public.

Social media marketing and online PR are mainly for the objective of building traffic for the site. Furthermore, these techniques helps to promote the existence of the site, when it is newly launched.

5.4 Tactics

As mentioned in Chapter 2, tactics are the planning details of the strategies, which include contact strategy details and timeline schedule. In the case of FNOTW, different tactics are applied to achieve the different goals set at each trunk of time.

Generating traffic

In the early days of the site, social media marketing and online PR play an important role in building site traffic. The main social media networks chosen are Facebook and Twitter. Articles published on the site will be shared on FNOTW's official Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/FreeNewsOfTheWorld> and Twitter. Other than social media sites, articles of FNOTW will be shared widely on other blogs, forums and websites, whose content is relating to conflicts.

However, as the site is newly launched without any content, filling up the site with good content is necessary and crucial. FNOTW staffs will be the first users of the site, who will post updating news in the seven conflict zones of the site. They may utilize their own personal network to get news from individuals or organizations in the conflict zones, or repost the latest news from the leading news sources, without plagiarizing them. Besides, being first users at

<http://www.FNOTW.org>, they can test the site, report site bugs and errors, as well as develop the site with new user-friendly features, which will engage more users to the site in the future. After FNOTW site is quantitatively and qualitatively filled with good articles, marketers will start sharing the articles in different online platforms, which will help to reach most of the users who read and share.

On the other hand, while searching for information to write articles, FNOTW staff will find out contacts of potential users listed as people who write. Again, once the site has a good number of articles, it is ready to be introduced to potential audience groups. In fact, the number of articles, which is considered as 'enough', is around 200 articles. Moreover, the list of platforms to share can be acquired in the process of finding news to post by the staffs.

The official launching day of the site was 1 June 2013. In the first two weeks after the launching day, the site was targeted to reach 200 articles and be ready to share articles in their Facebook page, Twitter, and other sites. Tactically, two hot zones, where more articles were posted, would be chosen to focus on, in order to maximize the efficiency.

Acquiring users

Email marketing is a major marketing technique to acquire new users to the site. As stated above, the email list is obtained by FNOTW staffs themselves throughout the process of getting news to post. The content of the email is drafted by the marketing team and approved by project leader, in order to create and keep the correct impression and image of the site with the audience.

Supplementary to emailing, other communication tools, such as Skype, Facebook messaging, and internal messaging in forums, are useful in the campaigns as well. They do not only help to gather news but, more importantly, also create and maintain relationships with the interviewees, who could be people in exile, refugees, formal soldiers, professors, journalists or government officials, and so on. Since some conflicts has religious causes and strongly relate to religious matters, discussing about conflict might be very sensitive to the insiders. Hence, contacting, and later building relationship and trust with them are important steps

to persuade them to share their personal stories, opinions and voices, which have never been exposed to the world before.

Overall, email marketing, along with other ways of communicating with targeted audience, serves as a tool to acquire users to the site, and simultaneously form the site image and tight relationship with the new users, which, as a result, aids retaining users.

Retaining users

A targeted audience in either group who reads or a group who writes won't come back to the site without a reason. Marketers need to create a reason for them to return. They must keep the site 'fresh'. FNOTW can be freshened by continuously updating content and adding new engaging features. Besides, email marketing is still the main tool to maintain ongoing contact with existing users.

FNOTW staff are required to keep the site always alive, if the users themselves can't make it. In addition to regularly fill the site with news, FNOTW staffs or marketing team must get involved with new users' activities in order to raise their interest in the site. Users' activities should receive certain appreciation or supporting reaction. For instance, first article of any users should receive comments or even discussions concerning their topic.

Furthermore, new features will be added to the site to engage users. The functions are mostly to improve interactions between the site and social media networks, and to augment the user-friendly environment within the site. The new features can simply be new site appearance or new interacting buttons below each article such as Agree/Disagree buttons, ranking stars for users. Moreover, building a user profile for journalists can be a good development, adding attraction to the site. In the far future, the site can develop school portals for educational purposes. Teachers may use articles as teaching materials and students may post new articles in response to the original articles as their assignments, which will be graded within the site.

5.5 Actions

As the project was launched with a low budget, all the marketing activities were to be carried out free, provided that there was enough human resource. FNOTW need staff to build site content on its early days and marketing staffs to create marketing plan and perform marketing activities. Considering the human and financial resources, the best resolution for FNOTW is hiring low-cost employees, who each can take responsibility for both. For this reason, best option of employees would be business students who have good know-how of marketing and ability and interest to write news about conflicts in the world.

Marketing knowledge is a more important criterion in selecting appropriate candidates, since FNOTW can provide several training sessions of basic journalism. Moreover, emailing with the targeted audience requires knowledge about their field, particularly about the conflict zones that they are interested in. Gathering news and writing articles will give the marketing team background and latest information of the conflict, which enable them to communicate well with the targeted audience.

Financially, NSD Oy provides the job as an internship opportunity in International Marketing for students and covers travel and lunch expenses for the students employees. As internship or practical training is a part of Business program in Universities of Applied Sciences, the potential candidates are students of such universities. Moreover, NSD Oy's office is located in Hyvinkää, which has good train connections with Helsinki regions, Lahti and Riihimäki. Hence, NSD Oy will look for candidates and advertise the positions in Universities of Applied Sciences in Hyvinkää, Helsinki regions, Lahti and Riihimäki.

Below is a list of fundamental tasks to do, which are mentioned in the upper part - Tactics.

- Write and post articles
- Share articles on social media networks, forum, blogs & other sites
- Find contact information of targeted audience
- Contact and maintain relationship with target audience
- Comment on articles

Write and post articles

As noted in the previous part, two conflict zones are chosen to focus on, which means more articles will be posted there. Among eight zones, conflict zone Syrian government - Syrian opposition and Turkish protestors-Turkish government are picked as they are, at the time being, going on intensely.

In the team of seven interns, six people are delegated to these two zones and one person concentrates on the rest, to keep them alive. Each of six people will individually select one of the two zones to be their specializing unit. The priority task is keeping the site alive and well with good articles of latest news, analysis, personal stories, etc. Therefore, the goal set for posting articles are at least two articles per day per capita in the first two weeks after launching. After that, the minimum quantity is one article per person each day. In fact, while gathering news, the team can ask the author for the permission to reproduce their articles from other sites onto FNOTW, which will fill up the site with diversifying content and may lead to further connection with the author.

Share articles

One person in the team takes responsibility to share news on FNOTW's Facebook page. Other than that, articles can be shared on other pages on Facebook, by the individual who posts it or is in charge of the corresponding zone. Besides, another person takes care of the forums, including tasks of discussing different forum topics, sharing articles, forwarding forums' members to FNOTW site.

Find contact information, contact and maintain relationship with targeted audience

Although two zones are chosen to be the initial concentration of news posting, no such selection is made concerning finding contact information, contacting and maintaining relationships with the targeted audience. Each team member opts for at least one zone, in which he or she will be fully in charge of contacting the potential audience in that zone. The primary communication channel is email. The team uses the email draft with some appropriate modifications considering the

particular audience's background. In addition, Facebook messaging, retweet or Skype calling are also good ways to reach the targeted audience.

Comment on articles

Each new article, especially the one posted by new users, is required to receive at least five comments below.

6 CONCLUSION

The marketing plan is formulated based on the SOSTACTM framework developed by Paul Smith. Firstly, the macro and micro environment are analyzed, in order to understand the situation of the company in the market. Secondly, appropriate objectives are set for the marketing plan in accordance with the given conditions of the company. In this case, the marketing plan has three objectives set in chronological order, which are building site traffic, user attraction and user retention. Finally, various strategies, tactics, actions are selected to reach the set objectives. They are summarized in Table 5 below.

TABLE 5. Marketing plan summary

Objectives	Building traffic	User attraction	User retention
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social media marketing - Online PR - SEO 	Email marketing	Email marketing
Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on two hot zones - Fill the site with articles - Share articles on Facebook, Twitter, forums and other sites - Find contact lists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact + create/maintain relationship with targeted audience via emails and other communication methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuously update the site with new content - Interact on the site with new users - Engage users with new site features
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write articles: 6 people - 2 zones 1 person - the rest - Share articles: 1 person - Facebook 1 person - forums and other sites 	1 person is in charge of 1 zone	1 article requires at least 5 comments

Due to the fact that the project runs on a low budget, NSD Oy will hire intern students who will do both marketing and content updating tasks. As can be clearly seen from Table 5, the tasks are delegated among seven members of the team. Each one will basically take charge of writing articles, finding contacts, creating and maintaining relationship with targeted audience, commenting on articles. Other than that, one will be responsible for Facebook and Twitter; and another will be in charge of sharing articles on forums and other sites. Besides, search engine optimization (SEO) is the one specialized field of NSD Oy, so SEO will be carried out by the company. In the short run, the author and her team believe that this plan will work and achieve the two initial objectives of traffic building and user engagement.

7 SUMMARY

With interest and belief in marketing, the author produced this thesis to study digital marketing in details and apply that knowledge into formulating a functional digital marketing plan for Free News of the World (FNOTW), NSD Oy.

This work is thought to give readers both theoretical and practical concrete information about online marketing planning by answering to the main research question: "What is the most effective marketing plan for FNOTW?" The question could be answered by solving the eight sub-questions concerning both theories and reality. All sub questions and their answers are summarized in the following table.

TABLE 6. Thesis summary

Questions	Short answers	Details
What is digital marketing?	“marketing online whether via web sites, online ads, opt-in emails, interactive kiosks, interactive TV or mobiles” (Chaffey, et al., 2008)	See part 2.1
What is digital marketing planning process?	Using SOSTAC framework, which consists of Situation analysis, Objective, Strategy, Tactics, Actions, and Control.	See part 2.2
What are effective marketing techniques?	Six main types of digital media channels, which are search marketing, online PR, online partnership, interactive ads, opt-in e-mail and social media marketing.	See part 2.3
What goal does FNOTW want to achieve with the marketing plan?	The goal is to promote the existence of the site, to gain clicks to the site, as well as to attract and retain users.	See part 5.2
Where is the company now in the industry?	Pioneer in FNOTW’s field of very competitive industry	See chapters 3 & 4

Who is the targeted audience?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bloggers that specialize on these conflict areas - Journalists based inside the conflict areas, banned/suppressed by the local government, need more exposure - Human right watch/activists/Red cross/NGOs - People in exile - Insiders - people who live in the conflict areas 	See part 5.3
How can FNOTW build traffic after being newly launched?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use techniques of social media marketing, online PR, and SEO Update the site content continuously 	See parts 5.2, 5.3, 5.4
How can marketers attract and retain customers/users to FNOTW?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use technique of email marketing and other communication tools Interact with users on the site Update the site with new features 	See parts 5.2, 5.3, 5.4

Overall, the digital marketing plan of Free News of The World is the practical outcome of the well-structured theoretical findings in the thesis. The marketing plan has been partially implemented by Free News of the World staffs, including the author and received some positive effects, which are believed to lead to the short term objective achievement.

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