

Inka Noor

Social Media Marketing

CASE: DOREA Educational Institute

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ABSTRACT

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In this thesis, the author is studying social media marketing and investigating its possibilities through a case company called DOREA Educational Institute. The idea of the thesis came from the need to enhance follower engagement and to reach the older target group using social media as the main marketing platform.

The main research questions of this thesis include reaching the target group and increasing engagement. The aim of this research is to provide information about social media marketing and its possibilities, threats and trends. The thesis itself is written through the viewpoint of the case company 'DOREA Educational Institute', but, it can also offer valuable information to similar businesses wanting to further improve their social media presence and apply knowledge about low-budget social media marketing. The methods chosen to answer these questions were an analysis of the case company's follower behavior, a survey done on previous customers and theoretical data collected from literature and internet sources.

The thorough inspection of the case company's previous social media activity revealed viable information of their customers' previous behavior on social media. Information gathered for this thesis told us how the target group is expected to behave, which gives the company the possibility to answer their needs, and make their marketing more competent. In order for the case company to get to these goals, a content strategy and a SWOT-analysis, were created.

Keywords: social media, marketing, follower engagement, older target audience

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1 INTRODUCTION

Social media is a forever evolving phenomenon in our digitalized world. Having a social media account nowadays is more of a foregone conclusion than something new. This applies not only to individuals, but also to businesses. Social media has completely changed the way businesses communicate with their audiences. This change has come with challenges, but also with benefits. Communication is no more restricted by time nor distance. The world as we know it now, is used to having easily available information. Everything is and needs to be found online and the information needs to be readably accessible. This as well as constantly evolving applications has created completely new challenges to businesses that need to be addressed effectively to meet customers' needs.

Working with social media calls for social sense of 'the situation' and the desire to stay up-to-date. It is crucial for businesses active on social media to know how to use its tools and precise content strategy is considered as a very important factor. To produce the right kind of content, you need to learn to listen your audience, because communication on social media works both ways. This is the main difference in social media now and what communication used to be. It changed from publishing one-way information to interactive media, where it is possible for audience to instantly react to the information they receive. (Kotiranta-Hautamäki 2015, cited 27.02.2017.)

When creating a marketing strategy for social media, one of the first things to know, is your target group. You need to know your desired audience in order to know how to reach them most effectively. Usage of social media differs a lot depending on the age, nationality and education. The easiest target group to reach are young adults. A special analysis of 27 national surveys of Americans across the past decades reveals that as many as 90% of people aged 18-29 use social media regularly, but when coming to older people with the age 65 and over the percentage drops as low as 35%. (Perrin 2015, cited 10.3.2017.) This challenges businesses with a target group consisting mainly of older people, including my case, DOREA Educational Institute. DOREA's clientele consists mainly of teachers, educators and other educational staff members, who are usually over 30 years old.

The goal of this study is to help the DOREA Educational Institute improve their presence in social media and give new ideas and perspectives in their marketing. DOREA Educational Institute is very

active in social media and it is their main marketing channel. Since their clientele are situated in many different countries across Europe, it is the easiest and most effective way to reach them quickly. Despite the numerous followers on their channels, the customer engagement and activity is very little. The most important and frequently used social media channel for them is Facebook, which is why this research is focused mainly on this area and other social media channels are analyzed more lightly.

Current status analysis of social media channels, such as calculating fans engagement and more detailed exploration of published content, might lead to finding new customers and increased customer activity. The base idea for this thesis came from the need to enhance follower engagement and to reach the older target group using social media as the marketing platform. In order to find answers to the research questions and in order for the case company to get to these goals, a content strategy and a SWOT-analysis will be created by using empirical data gathered from the survey, the analysis of their current state of social media marketing and with theoretical data collected from literature and internet sources.

2 DOREA EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE

DOREA Educational Institute is a non-profit organization with a general scope of offering adults and young people non-formal education. They cover three central areas of non-formal education including socio-cultural education, education for personal development and professional training. DOREA was established in 2012, and it has since expanded by providing ERASMUS+ funded trainings in eleven different locations throughout Europe, including Cyprus, Czech Republic, England, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Poland and Spain. Its main office is situated in Limassol, Cyprus.

Offering 26 training courses delivered by an accredited professional, DOREA is the largest training provider of Erasmus+ courses in Cyprus. In 2015 DOREA became a part of the European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (EFVET) network and offers trainings for vocational education and training staff members. In addition to providing training courses, DOREA has participated in several European Union granted projects such as "Teamwork beats unemployment" emphasizing the youth unemployment issue in Europe and "I Am an EU Citizen" focusing on the sense of citizenship in EU member countries and motivating young people to pay attention to main EU issues. DOREA has also hosted a few of these projects themselves.

DOREA is devoted to providing the training and education goals set out by the European Commission highlighted in the EU 2020 strategy. This strategy's main aim is developing the quality and competence of education and training by helping learners achieving basic skills and proficiencies essential for their employability, social state and emotional balance (The council of the European Union 2009, cited 04.04.2017). It also promotes social coherence, active citizenship and equality by focusing on people at an educational disadvantage, through the provision of high quality, supportive and inclusive education. EU 2020 focuses on making lifelong learning and mobility a reality through enforcing lifelong learning strategies, establishing qualification structures, and supporting the mobility of educational staff all across Europe. (The council of the European Union 2009, cited 04.04.2017.)

The management team of DOREA consists of two people. Jolanta Banelyte (MSc in Business Process Management, BA in Management and Business Administration) is the managing director and Viktorija Triuskaite (BA in Office Management) responsible of the implementation of online

marketing tools, managing relations with the public, as well as managing events. In addition to the management team DOREA employs more than 40 trainers, coaches and teachers from the fields of sociology, occupational, clinical and educational psychology who deliver the training courses. One of DOREA's targets is mentoring young people in their professional life by giving them a chance to grow personally and professionally and expand their network through internship and to this day they have hosted more than 25 university students for their internship within the Erasmus+ programme.

2.1 Clientele

To maximize the benefits of social media marketing, it is crucial for businesses to identify their target audience. Target audience refers to a specific group of people defined by certain attributes, where the businesses' marketing strategy is specifically targeted. It is defined by different variables, such as age, gender, demographic information, and location, depending on what you are marketing. It is never possible to sell everything to everyone, so it is important to learn how to understand your customer base and to know who and what they are looking for (Siniaalto 2014, 13).

DOREA's clients are mostly teachers, lecturers and other professionals from within the field of education, so their target group consists of roughly over 30-year-old European citizens, who are highly educated. American research shows this to be a positive factor, as people with higher education are more likely to use social media platforms (Perrin 2015, cited 17.03.2017). The figure 1 below shows, that the older the target audience is, the less likely they are to use social media sites, so as a target group, older adults are a challenging but also a more interesting audience. Social media marketing is DOREA's most important marketing channel as it is the easiest and the most efficient way for them to reach a diverse and European-wide customer base.

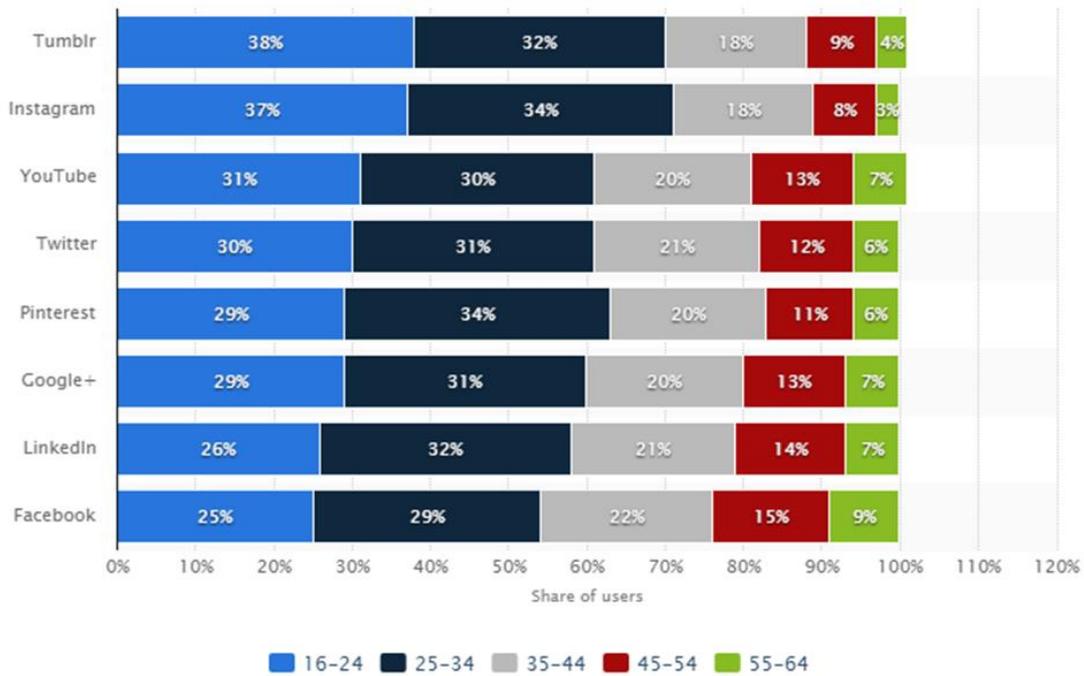


FIGURE 1. Age distribution of active social media users worldwide as of 3rd quarter 2014, by platform (Statista 2014, cited. 11.04.2017).

2.2 Background of the case

In Business to Business sales, 80% of purchasing decisions have taken place before dealing with any service providers. Siniaalto (2014, 20) estimates that the same number for Business to Client sales is larger, even closer to one hundred percent. The purchasing process starts with the need for a service or product and then heads in to looking for a potential provider. Thus, the importance of marketing cannot be diminished. It is important to ensure that you are involved in this purchasing process right from its start. This requires visibility, presence and customer orientation. The goal of this study is to help the DOREA Educational Institute in these factors by improving their presence in social media and give new ideas and perspectives in their marketing.

Biggest issue in their marketing is reaching older target audience, which is why the key concept of the thesis is to ensure that their marketing reaches the targeted group. While interning at DOREA Educational Institute in 2016 and managing their social media accounts, the author noticed another issue on their social media marketing. Despite the numerous followers on their channels, the customer engagement and activity was very little. This discovery lead to the original idea of this thesis. A coherent marketing strategy would be needed for an organization like DOREA where people managing social media channels change frequently. Current status analysis of social media

channels, such as calculating fans engagement and more detailed exploration of published content, could lead to increased customer activity and finding new customers.

2.3 Objectives and limitations

As a non-profit organization DOREA does not have a big budget for marketing. Due to this fact, this thesis will specifically focus on non-paid social media marketing and how to improve their social media presence to make it more fitting to their customers' needs. In the last chapter, the author will briefly describe the possibilities for commercial marketing of advertisements in social media; however, this thesis is focused and limited to the "freely available" aspects of social media marketing.

One of the main objectives of this thesis is to analyze the current state of DOREA's social media presence and to create marketing ideas based on a social media usage survey carried out on DOREA customers and on previous studies done on this topic. The most important and frequently used social media channel for them is Facebook, which is why this research is focused mainly on this area. The author wanted to delve deeper and get a thorough view on one specific social media channel. Focusing on one channel offers a greater possibility to explore its potential to the fullest. Other social media channels are analyzed more lightly and this thesis will not go in to them in any specific detail.

One important objective in this thesis is to analyze the mature users target group. As DOREA's clientele consist mostly of people over 30-years-old, this thesis focuses its marketing ideas based on reaching this group. Due to this objective, this study will not provide valid information to businesses targeting the younger people in social media. Nonetheless, this research provides useful information for smaller businesses on using social media as a marketing tool and provides insights on targeting the older audience.

3 SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a word on everyone's lips in today's society, yet only a few can really properly define its true meaning. Understanding this complex term requires more than a quick look in to its concept. The main problem with defining the term is that even the researchers are somewhat confused on what exactly should be included under the category "social media" and most importantly, how it differs from other similar platforms like User Generated Content or Web 2.0 (Kaplan & Haenlein 2009, cited 10.03.2017).

Both businesses and individuals must constantly try and stay up-to-date on the new social media channels and trends if they want to stay on top of this constantly evolving digital world. Knowing social media terms, such as snapchatting or tweeting, is considered as general knowledge, especially amongst young people. Being a part of social media circles takes up a lot of time and it plays a crucial part in people's daily activities in today's world.

3.1 Definition of social media

The concept of "social media" is difficult to determine. In general, social media refers to online services and internet applications which allow communication between people. The difference between social media and the mass media is the fact that users are not passive recipients, but can react to the information they receive, for example by liking, commenting or sharing content. (Hintikka 2007, cited 13.03.2017.) One of the core ideas of social networking is reacting to information shared online. Social media provides storage- and publication platforms for people's content. In contrast to previous means of communication, social media is not limited to time nor geographic location. This fact, together with its speed, affordability and interactivity, are the keys to its success. (Rongas & Honkonen 2016, cited 13.03.2017.)

The wide spectrum of social media platforms is extensive. The services usually have their own core idea, which distinguishes them from other similar applications. As an example, YouTube is a video sharing website and Instagram focuses on the publication of photos. (Hintikka 2007, cited 13.03.2017.) After joining a social media platform, a person needs to fill out information about themselves, for example, name and birthday. Usually users are also encouraged to add profile

pictures. The extent and presentation of user information varies from platform to platform. It is nearly impossible to keep track of the constantly growing selection of social media tools and applications. As new trend apps keep popping up, the most popular ones tend to keep their place as the most used social media platforms – Facebook, YouTube and Twitter (eBizMBA, 2017, cited 13.03.2017).

As the main point of social media is socializing through content sharing, most platforms offer an option to connect your profile with other people. Whether its friends (Facebook), followers (Instagram, Twitter) or connections (LinkedIn), all social media offer some sort of contact list. (Boyd & Ellison 2007, cited 10.03.2017.) The threshold on adding people as your connection depends a lot on the platform. On Facebook, you usually only add people whom you know personally, but on Twitter or Instagram you may follow people you don't know based on their content.

We live in a society where almost everyone today has a smartphone. The study done on people of western Europe reveals that over 70% use smartphones. It is also predicted that by 2020, this number will increase to almost 90%. (eMarketer 2016, cited 17.03.2017.) An analysis of 27 American national surveys reveals that as many as 90% of 18-20-year-olds use social media on a regular basis (Perrin 2015, cited 10.03.2017). As the usage of smartphones increases, social media becomes even more easily accessible as most of the large social media sites have a mobile version and some social media applications are even limited to mobile use (Boyd & Ellison 2007, cited 15.10.2017).

3.2 Marketing in social media

Social media marketing is a form of Internet marketing, utilizing a variety of different social media channels. It has a lot of different aspects and the content published ranges from text to videos and images, as well as paid advertisements. (Wordstream n.d, cited 16.03.2017.) The use of social media in marketing is growing in popularity continuously. In 2014, 93% of marketers saw social media as an important marketing channel, whereas in 2013, that same number was 83% (Kusnitz 2014, cited 16.03.2017). Social media is a marketing platform, which should be used to its fullest potential, as it is a channel whereby you will get your brand visible to a large audience and, above all, to new and prospective customers (DeMers 2014, cited 16.03.2017).

Marketing in social media has very high potential, but it also comes with its own risks. Reaching your target audience is easier now more than ever. This is because through the large social media channels, you can target your advertisements to the exact audience that you want to reach. One large minus point with social media is that the most popular media channels provide the possibility of sharing customer experiences on the company's page, this can lead to the possibility that even one bad or negative review will easily spread wide and have devastating affects to your reputation. (Kotiranta-Hautamäki 2015, cited 27.02.2017.) It is important for the company to invest in customer service now, more than ever before, as the sharing feedback on social media has become a major trend.

One good example of an embarrassment generated through social media, is a case where a video of Domino's Pizza employees defacing food before delivering it to the customers was leaked to video sharing service YouTube. The video was watched over one million times and the public reacted to it with thousands of tweets on Twitter. Five of the 12 results in Google search for "Dominos" had references to this case. Domino's reputation among consumers quickly shifted from positive to negative, measured by the research firm YouGov. (Zarella 2010, 5; Clifford 2009, cited 28.03.2017.)

It is as important to businesses as it is for individuals to stay up-to-date on social media and its meaning. You must keep in mind the interaction and relation between the content provider and the recipient. They are both playing an active role as the content does not only go one-way like it used to in traditional media. Many companies forget this and thus have continued their content production in a traditional style where following-up and listening to the audience is overlooked. It is important for companies active on social media to manage its operations carefully. The Marketing Coordinator needs know how communication works in various social media channels and for this reason, a well-defined content strategy is considered essential. (Kotiranta Hautamäki 2015, cited 27.02.2017.)

Social media marketing, like marketing in general, aims to evoke emotions. You want the content you post to raise positive emotions in your audience, and through this, influence the purchasing decision. (Kotiranta Hautamäki 2015, cited 27.02.2017.) For companies starting up their social media marketing, it is recommended to start with the three largest social media marketing channels - Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, which are considered to be the most effective and most extensive marketing channels (Polipnick 2016, 12). According to the survey done on marketers,

93% of them use Facebook and the second most used platform is LinkedIn (Stelzner 2015, cited 16.03.2017).

Being one of the largest social media channel at the moment, Facebook's marketing opportunities are virtually limitless. It offers a free platform for building your brand and increasing its popularity, but also offers effective paid marketing options. Facebook's paid target marketing is a viable and relatively affordable solution that is worth considering. One of Facebook's benefits is its internationality. Paid ads can target selected continents, countries, or even individual cities. This type of targeting is important for companies that have a wide and varied customer base. This section, however, is focused on Facebook's free marketing opportunities, or rather on how to increase the awareness of your brand and optimize your page to meet your target audience's needs.

Facebook, has opened up completely new kinds of opportunities for businesses, when viewed through customer interaction. It enables direct communication with a broad customer base, bringing brands closer to the customer and making businesses easier to approach. Facebook narrows the gap between the customer and the company. Facebook is a social media channel that offers the opportunity to share multiple types of content. For example, you can share text, links, photos, and videos. These opportunities sum up Facebook's versatility as a social media and marketing channel. (Portfield, Khare & Vahl 2013, 10 – 12.)

It is possible to add a large amount of information to a company's Facebook page – ranging from opening hours to driving directions. In addition to the company, also customers can create content on the company's site, for example product reviews and customer feedback. Companies have taken on the trend to publish these feedbacks from time to time, which gives customers a picture of a mindful company and creates a sense of community within the brand's followers. In addition, you can easily see which brands your friends are interested in, and Facebook algorithms recommend you the companies liked by your friends. This generally has a positive impact on buying decisions, as people rely most on the experiences of their close relatives (Portfield, Khare & Vahl 2013, 13.)

4 CURRENT STATE OF AN ORGANIZATION'S SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Organizations' vision of the future is what guides their marketing strategies. Using analytics in evaluating the current state of your social media marketing will help you to learn from your customers and you will have the possibility to enhance your services to match their needs. The analysis shows detailed information that is usually hidden behind numeric data. The figures and tables created from the statistics allows you to perceive the whole picture. This information helps targeting marketing resources towards the right things and makes it easier to develop a plan and identify organizations data assets. (Schmarzo 2013, 13 – 14, 34.) When this information is gathered, it is easy to start building a marketing strategy as you already know how your customers behave.

The biggest asset of a good marketing strategy is knowing what works for your customers and what does not. Analyzing the current state of social media marketing gives a lot of information about its effectiveness. It helps you to identify your strengths and discover new marketing techniques. When analyzing analytics, it is good to look beyond the numbers to see the attitudes and behaviors of the customers. (Bergström & Leppänen 2011, 30 – 31.) It is important to know how committed followers are behaving, how they react to content and what kind of content is most likely to attract interest in a target audience.

DOREA Educational Institute is very active in social media and it is their main marketing channel. Since their clientele are situated in many different countries across Europe, it is the easiest and most effective way to reach them quickly. DOREA has accounts on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube. The most important and the most used is Facebook, where most of the new courses and projects are currently being marketed. In Instagram, they mostly share photo moments from work rather than carry out any direct marketing. The least resources are used for Twitter, where they mostly share content posted on other social media channels as a secondary medium. LinkedIn is updated few times a week with topical news about the organization. In YouTube, they publish video ads and customer feedback, but the number of viewers is relatively small and not too many resources are used for marketing there. It is mainly used just as a content delivery platform and the actual marketing of the videos takes place through Facebook.

4.1 Engagement

It is often forgotten that the actual follower commitment is more important than the number of followers. This is an example of quantity cannot compete with quality. Bigger numbers look great, but the truth is revealed when you look in to the numbers more closely. Activity tells you how loyal your followers are. For this reason, companies should try to get followers who are really interested in their services or products. When wanting to increase commitment, marketing must be more customer-oriented. Followers who are not interested in the services are insignificant and do not specifically care or share information about your brand. Without loyal followers on social media channels, you are basically sharing content to deaf ears. (Sherman & Smith 2013, 9.)

One problem with advertising on Facebook is the fact that people are not on Facebook with the main purpose of buying. People have dissimilar roles, unique needs and different expectations on various social media platforms. Knowing what motivates your target audience when browsing through social media helps you to engage with them better. (Sherman & Smith 2013, 17.) You should never confuse social media as a direct marketing channel as it is based more on content marketing, by understanding this you can help people to share information (Kortesuo 2014, 18).

There are a variety of metrics to measure the commitment of your followers. One of the easiest ways to count engagement is by dividing the number of people talking about you (PTAT) and dividing it with the total amount of likes on a specific page or post (Meltwater 2017, cited 18.04.2017). Analyzing DOREA's Facebook page with LikeAlyzer (Meltwater 2017, cited 18.04.2017) reveals that they currently have only 3.07% engagement rate, when it should really be over 7% to ensure the success of their social media marketing. With a high degree of engagement - that is, your followers love, share and comment on your content - gets your site more visibility among your followers' friends as they also see them active on the site (Sherman & Smith 2013, 15).

4.2 Facebook

Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>) is one of the most used social media platforms globally and in March 2017 it had over one billion active users daily. It was founded in 2004 by an American student, Mark Zuckerberg. (Facebook 2017, cited 15.05.2017.) A Facebook profile consists of a

page which contains information about the profile holder, whether it is a company or an individual. A profile consists of a personalized cover image on top of the page and a profile image added by the user. These features are optional, but recommended, especially for businesses, as it makes the profile unique and enhances the brand. In addition to pictures, there is a section that has detailed information about the profile holder, where posts and interactions are displayed. On the front page, you can see your friend's interactions and react to them with emotions, by liking or by commenting. (Stokes 2013, 370 – 374.)

Facebook, is DOREA's main social media marketing channel. Facebook's popularity as a social media platform is well illustrated by the fact that, if it was a state, it would be the third most populous country after China and India (Olin 2011, 4 – 7). With its popularity, it has become important, if not even the most important part of social marketing. It is one of the easiest ways to be present in your community and to maintain contacts. On Facebook, it is possible to publish a variety of content and reach thousands with a few mouse clicks. (Olin 2011, 4 – 7.)

In May 2017, DOREA had approximately 4500 likes on Facebook. Their likes have grown steadily throughout the entire page history, but the social media performance table collected by the organization shows that the number of likes started to increase faster towards the end of 2015 when more attention was paid to social media (see figure 2). In 2015, DOREA received an average of 51 new likes per month, and in 2016 the average was 174.

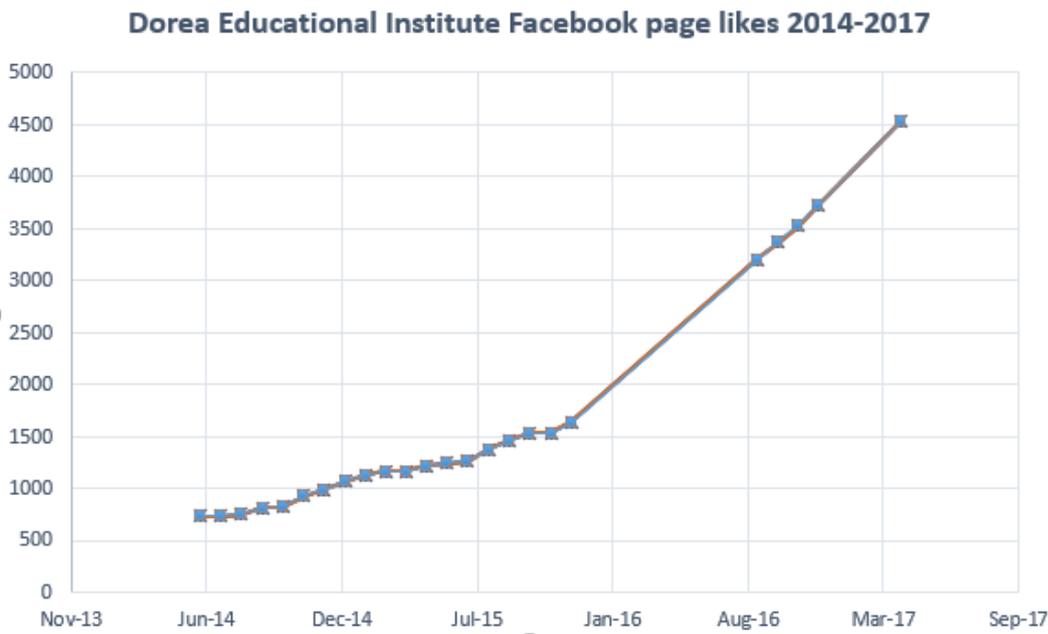


FIGURE 2. DOREA Social Media Performance in 2014–2017.

4.2.1 Content analysis

There are various analytics tools available that can help businesses monitor their social media channels performance. A good example of a freely available program is Meltwater's LikeAnalyzer, which provides free statistics on your Facebook site and provides suggestions for improvement. However, most of the analysis of DOREA's Facebook feed was done by hand because the author wanted to analyze just the latest posts to get the best picture of the current state of social media. Analytical tools usually analyze the whole feed, which means that a lot of outdated information gets included.

By analyzing DOREA's two hundred most recent Facebook posts, we can conclude that most of the content they share are photos (figure 3). The chart below shows that more than half of the content contains photos and while eight percent are videos. The rest of the posts contained only text. Sharing images on Facebook is very common. According to research published on eMarketer (2014, cited 15.04.2017), pictures are the most common type of content published in Facebook. 43% of pictures posted by DOREA were advertisements and the rest was other types of images like photos of events, employees or training sessions.

CONTENT POSTED ON DOREA FACEBOOK PAGE

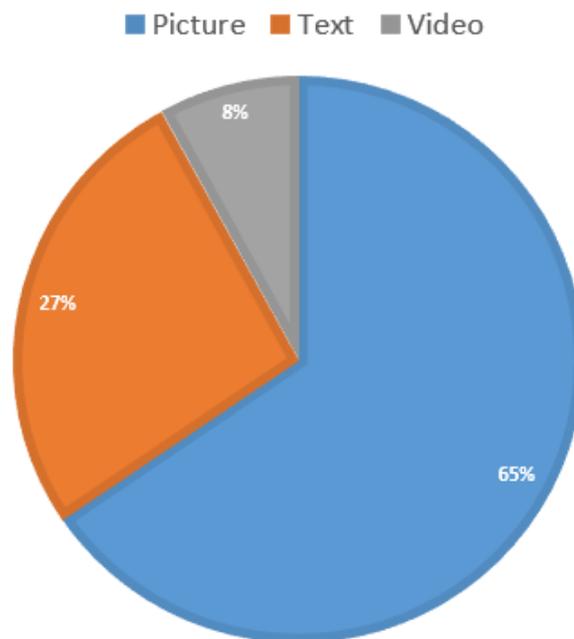


FIGURE 3. Content posted on DOREA Facebook page.

DOREA’s Facebook posts are divided into ten distinct categories (figure 4). This helped to explain in more detail the kind of content being published the most and what publications are the most popular among the audience. The biggest category was advertisements, which represented one quarter of all the posts. The most common form of advertisements was images that had information about upcoming training events. The caption contained a link to the DOREA's website. The second largest category was photos of employees. DOREA wants to bring customers closer to the organization and make it more knowledgeable by publishing images and information about their employees in social media by presenting them and sharing their experiences with the organization. These two categories were by far the largest categories by totaling over 40 percent of all their posts and interactions.

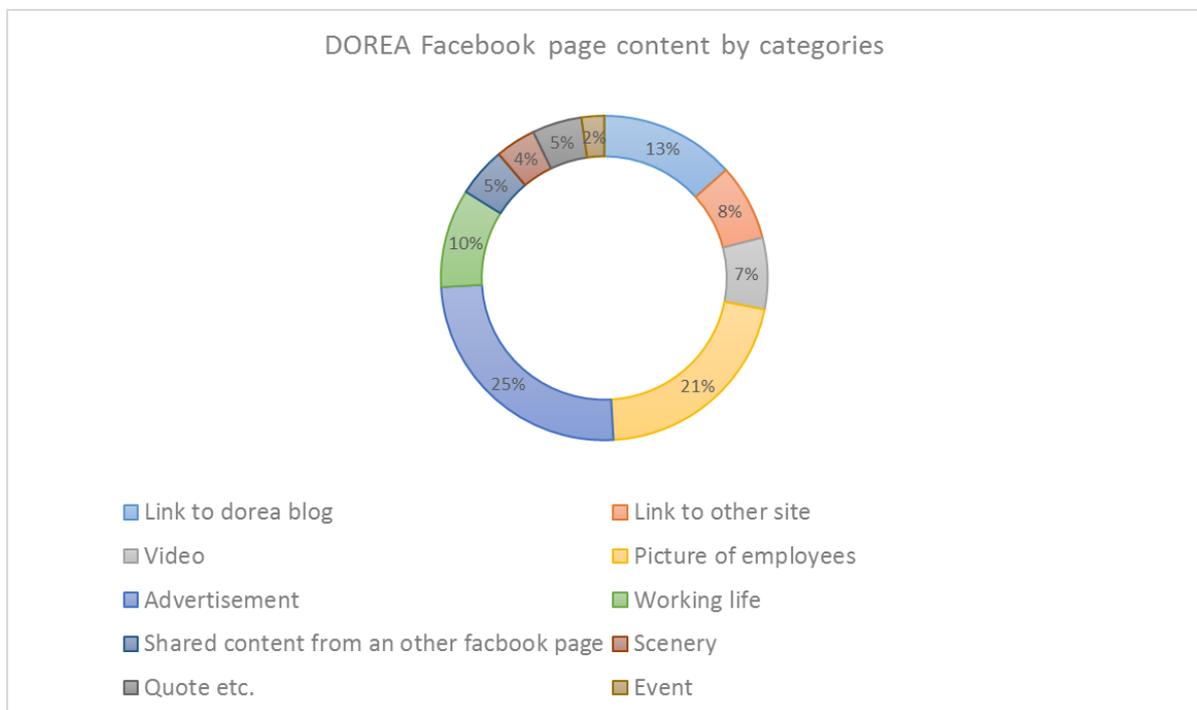


FIGURE 4. DOREA Facebook page content categories.

The next biggest categories were pictures of their working life and links to the DOREA blog. These categories have one common feature. They showcase DOREA's self-produced content. DOREA occasionally publishes pictures of projects and training sessions to showcase what their everyday working life looks like. In their blog, they present articles and interviews written by DOREA's interns. Their content production starts from the customer's point of view. Producing your own content instead of copying from elsewhere is useful as it brings the customer closer to the organization and presents it as trustworthy, humane and easily approachable (Siniaalto 2014, 48 – 49).

Videos, as well as links to other sites, were shared less than ten percent of the time. Videos were either uploaded to YouTube and shared on Facebook or uploaded straight to Facebook. Links to other sites were mostly articles and studies from the educational sector that DOREA staff thought would be of most interest the audience. Categories "Shared content", "Landscapes" and "Quotes" all concluded roughly 5% of all posts. DOREA shares content from other Facebook sites quite rarely, as only 11 of the two hundred posts originated from other pages. Landscapes and Quotes are shared almost as seldom. Landscapes are pictures from Cyprus or from other countries where training sessions are organized and their focus with these is to attract customers to participate on trainings in such interesting places. Quotes are usually related to education and with them they seek to attract people to look further at DOREA's Facebook page and possibly learn more about their activities. In addition, they are meant to give attention to customers, for example, by wishing them a great weekend.

4.2.2 Previous customer behavior

When looking into DOREA's previous social media posts, a clear difference can be noticed in the amount of follower interactions between differently styled posts. In the graph (figure 5), below, shows how pictures get more likes than texts and videos. Compared to text, visual content raised more reactions. Marketing expert, Rebecca Corliss has addressed the subject in her blog post "Photos on Facebook Generate 53% More Likes Than the Average Post [NEW DATA]" (2012, cited 12.10.2017) and it's clear that the phenomenon is familiar around all social media. According to her text, visual marketing is increasing, and images generate more responses compared to text. It is highly recommended to use photos to enhance marketing.

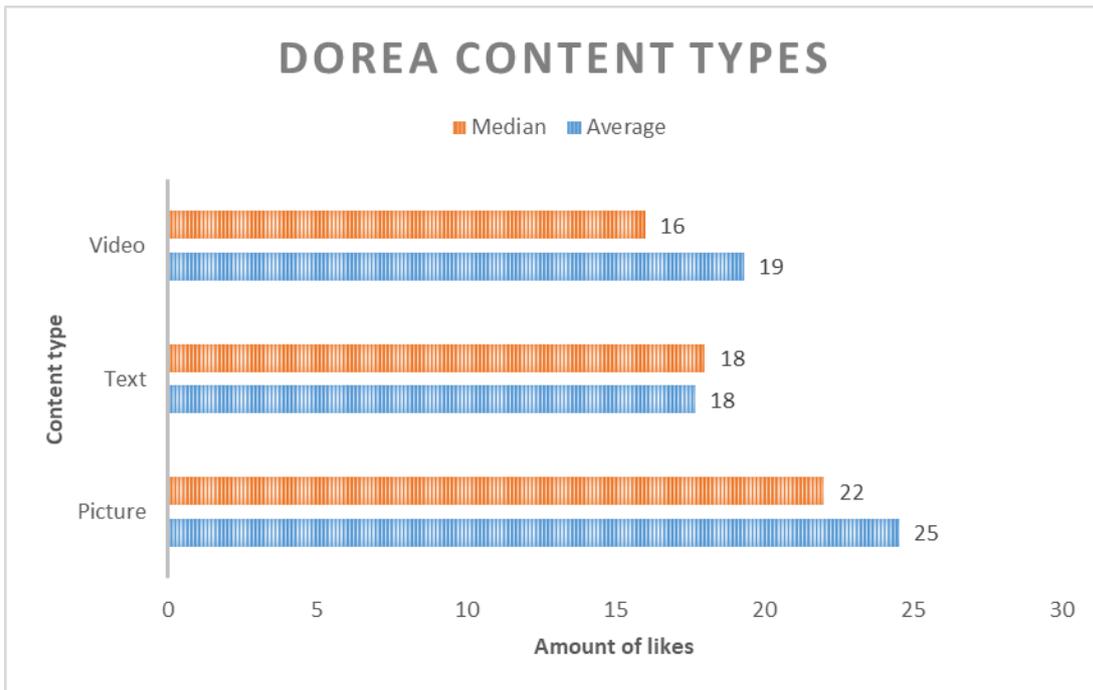


FIGURE 5. DOREA post likes by type.

The style of the publications is analyzed more accurately by dividing them into the categories introduced in detail in section 4.2.1. By calculating the average and the median likes of the 200 most recent publications, it is concluded what kind of publications are most preferred by the followers. Below, we can see a summary of comparisons (figure 6). The most liked were pictures of employees and working life. The pictures of the employees were presentations of employees or candid photos from the office. Pictures of working life represent the work DOREA does, for example, posting photos from the courses. Also, landscapes and calligraphically stylized quote photos got a lot of likes, which further confirms, that people prefer and notice visual content over textual. Events such as webinars or courses got the least likes, as there are usually under 20 people going to these events and such specific posts and content only really interest those people actually joining these events.

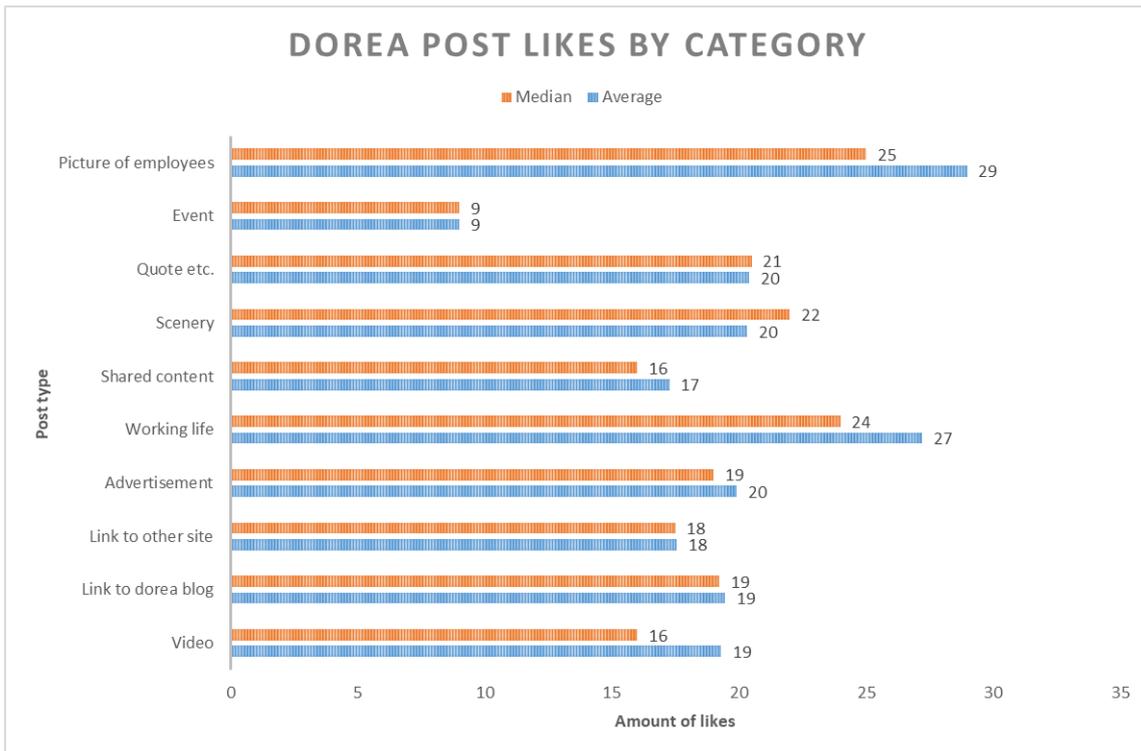


FIGURE 6. DOREA post likes by category.

4.3 Other Social Media Channels

In this thesis, the focus is on Facebook, but the author wanted to shed some light on other important social media channels, as they also offer potential marketing opportunities. DOREA's social media channels are all very different from each other, with both, purpose and content. Instagram focuses on visual material, while Twitter is very text-intensive. YouTube is purely a channel for sharing videos. In this chapter I am analyzing the content and engagement of these three channels. The aim is also to find out what is the most popular post in each channel and what are its metrics, as in, what hashtags were used to identify the post to the public and how the post looked.

4.3.1 Instagram

Instagram (<http://instagr.am>) is a photo sharing application launched in 2010 and it has an average of 400 million daily users. It's based mainly on mobile use, but you can browse through the pictures with a computer as well. On Instagram, you have a profile, where all your photos are visible. On the front page, you see all the new pictures your friends have posted. Your friends, which are called "followers", can like and comment your photos. The core idea of adding a photo to Instagram is to edit it with the filters Instagram offers and then to add location and an interesting caption with

hashtags to it. You can search other user's pictures based on location and hashtags. (Stokes 2013, 376; Instagram 2017, cited 16.05.2017.)

In May 2017, DOREA Instagram page had over 300 followers (FIGURE 7). The graph below shows how the number of followers have increased steadily. Pictures posted are mainly images of working life, with the aim of bringing the audience closer to the company and the company activities. Workers as well as the organization are presented as humane, relaxed, and approachable. The organization usually publishes new content every Tuesday and Thursday, although occasionally they might post "ad-lib" on other days as well.

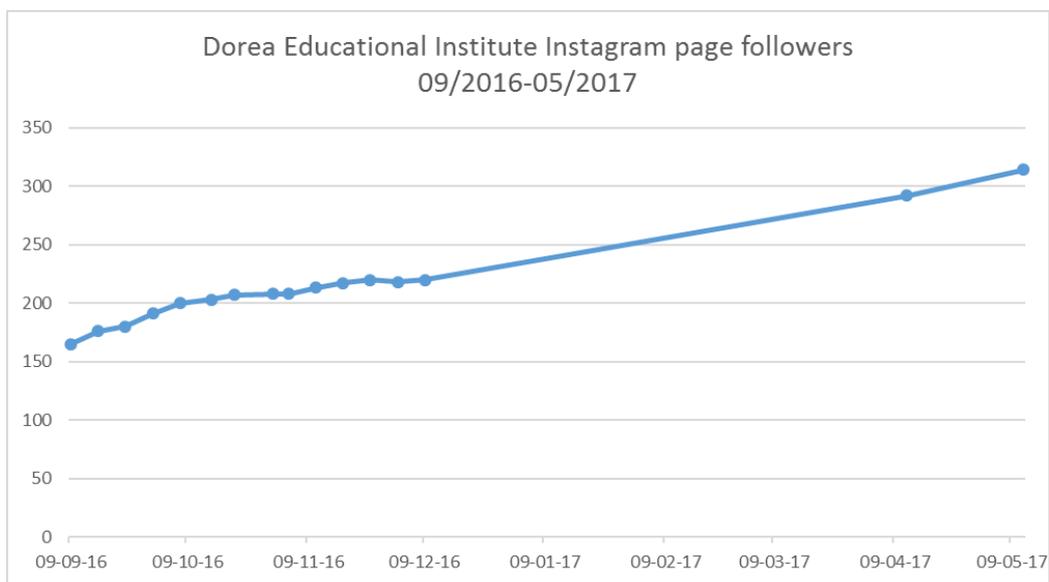


FIGURE 7. DOREA Social Media Performance in 2014–2017.

Most images used are of high quality, with the exception of a few lower quality pictures. Their posts collect a nice amount of likes with the average of 30.4 likes per image. Average commenting rate is one per image. Their most liked picture is a picture of their three new interns, and it has 65 likes and four comments. The caption has 18 hashtags, including popular ones, such as #Erasmus, #Poland, #Lithuania and #Finland. The author analyzed their Instagram content with a free analytics web tool Websta (<https://websta.me/>), that provides interesting analytics that can be used to optimize your Instagram presence. Websta analysis tells, that their most used hashtag is #Cyprus, which is not a surprising considering the location of the organization.

4.3.2 Twitter

Twitter (<http://www.twitter.com>) is a microblog, where people post short texts, with the maximum of 140 characters. These posts are called tweets. In these tweets, you can use hashtags to make your posts visible to wider audience. Besides text, you can share pictures and links in your tweets and you can also share other people's tweets on your profile. This is called re-tweeting. Twitter has proved itself especially useful in sharing breaking news and real-time information fast and wide. (Stokes 2013, 383 – 385.)

Twitter is DOREA's last used social media channel. The content there consists of photos posted from Instagram, and occasionally material published on Facebook, but nothing that would be directed specifically to Twitter. Nevertheless, they have accumulated more than 700 followers. The big number is partly due to the fact that DOREA itself follows more than 1,700 pages on twitter, some of which follow them back. This is also reflected in the graph below, which shows that the number of followers has grown unevenly and spikes appear at times when DOREA has started following numerous users who have followed them back (see figure 8).

The engagement rate is really small and the new posts get an average of 2.1 likes. A small engagement rate is probably due to the lack of unique content, as well as the pointless followers who are not interested in the channel itself, but follow the DOREA channel just because the trend today is to follow. The most successful post on their Twitter page, is the announcement of a webinar. This post includes a link to DOREA website. It has 8 likes and one retweet, but no hashtags, which is unusual, as typically posts with hashtags get more reactions, as specific hashtags are more easily noticed and posted.

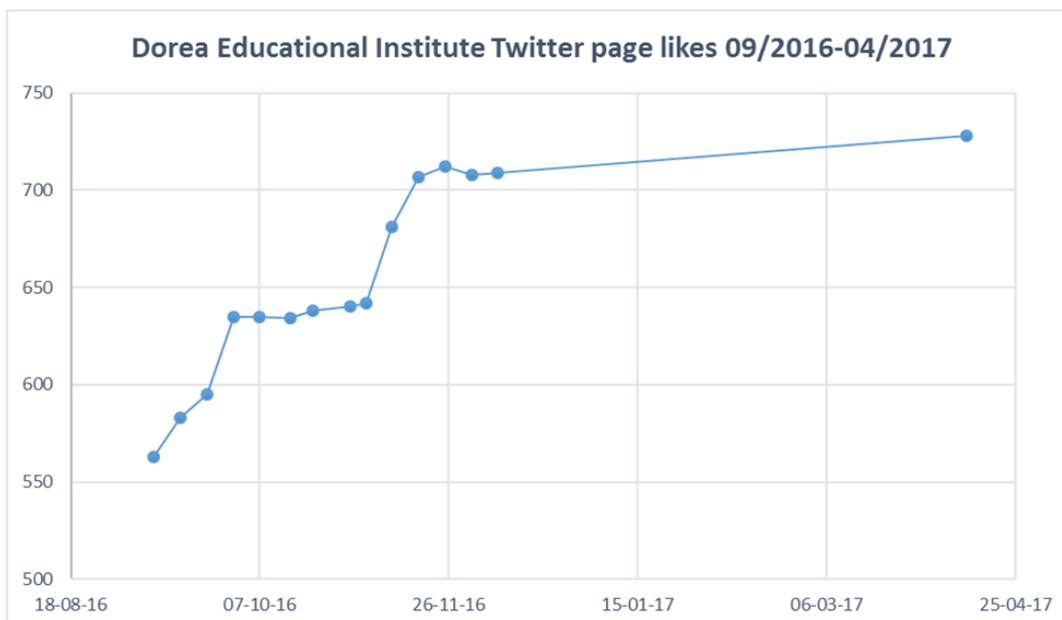


FIGURE 8. DOREA Social Media Performance in 2014–2017.

4.3.3 YouTube

YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com>) is a video sharing platform, now owned by Google. The idea is simple, but it still offers many features to registered users. While unregistered users can watch videos, only registered people are allowed to upload, comment and like the videos. There are also possibilities to run conferences and send live videos and even run paid advertisements on your channels. (Stokes 2013, 377 – 379.) Many people have managed to develop a successful career through video blogging using solely YouTube.

YouTube is mainly a video publishing platform for DOREA, where latest videos are added but then marketed elsewhere. The channels layout was given some attention, as it has a personalized header, but the organization have not attempted to raise the number of subscribers in any point, and this is visible, as there are only 22 followers on the channel. According to Socialblade analytics, they have an average of 100 views per month, which is relatively small as there are almost 40 videos uploaded to the channel. On average, one video has about 20 views. The largest number of views, more than 900, was received by the video "DOREA ERASMUS + Staff Mobility Funding Assistance". The video is an animation that explains how to apply for ERASMUS+ funds and how DOREA can be assist in this process. The video was made by DOREA trainees and the hired voice actors were from the local radio channel. The video was widely marketed on Facebook, even as a paid advertisement.

5 SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE SURVEY

Even though the world is very high tech nowadays, going right back to the source is still the best way to retrieve answers for behavioral questions. Instead of relying on research companies and marketing studies done before, you will get exact data on how your customers think as well as how they behave by conducting your own surveys. Most consider surveys as a way to get feedback after implementing marketing strategies, but in addition to that it, is also a coherent way to get important information beforehand, when developing marketing plans and creating these strategies. Also, surveys give customers an important opportunity to have their voices heard. (Wu 2017, cited 11.05.2017.)

A survey on customers' social media behavior was needed to fully complement the visions for DOREA's future marketing strategies. Even though surveys are one the most used data collection methods, many people have expressed concern in using questionnaires as it is very hard to produce a good, valid and suitable questions. When designing a survey, you need to keep your primary research questions in mind. Each question needs to be carefully planned, so that the respondents understand them to the fullest. By offering the audience an explanation of the purpose of the survey will help guide them into delivering the right kind of answers. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 360 – 361.)

DOREA's customer base is diverse. Their target group is actually less active online than the average and reaching them in social media is more challenging. The main purpose of the survey is to map the behavior of customers in social media, to target DOREA's marketing in the right way. The key idea is to find out which social media channels they use the most and what time they are usually online. It will also tell if the previous customers follow DOREA on social media and what they think about the content posted online by DOREA. The survey was sent to previous customers of the DOREA Educational Institute. To maximize the response rate, the survey was kept simple and short, but at the same time, one that will give answers to the most important questions faced by the organization.

5.1 Execution of the survey

The survey (appendix 1) was sent out to two hundred (200) former customers of DOREA, who previously participated in one or more of DOREA's extensive training courses. The customers are from all over the European Union. Respondents are mainly professionals including teachers, principals and social workers. The survey was created using an internet survey tool called Webropol (<http://webropol.fi/>) and embedded into DOREA's website. The link to the questions was sent to DOREA's registered respondents by e-mail. The answers are analyzed and summarized in the chapter 5.3. The analysis of the responses is used in the further development of a marketing strategy for future DOREA training courses and services. The survey questions were created together with the DOREA Educational Institute staff, to match their needs, interests and business requirements. Most of the questions in the survey are simple multiple-choice type questions, where the respondent can choose either one or more options. The last question includes a further comments section where customers can write freehand comments about DOREA's social media performance and any other related details.

The answers were manually analyzed using MS Excel. Statistics and graphs of response rates, age of respondents, and other responses were used to determine the most popular social media marketing channels and at what time of day they are most used. The survey and its analysis will also reveal other factors, such as the average age of the respondents and the customer satisfaction with the current state of their social media experiences. Analysis of the responses will determine the best time to post important information to social media by finding out the optimal time when the target group is usually online. In addition, it will highlight the differences and variations between the answers from different age groups.

5.2 Analyzing the results

A careful analysis of the answers is important considering the validity of the research. You must consider different facts, such as whether the respondents correctly understood the questions and whether the questions answer the ultimate purpose of the study. It is also advisable to repeat the research to confirm the accuracy of the previous survey (Thornhill, Lewis & Saunders 2009, 373). In the case of DOREA, both above-mentioned facts are mostly substantiated. The questions are very simple multiple-choice questions, all aimed at answering questions of target groups behavior

within social media. The questionnaire was published and sent to the recipients on March 28, 2017, after which respondents were given three weeks to complete it. 60.7% of the answers were collected during the first two days and the remaining responses came randomly over the next three weeks.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the survey, questions were checked and approved by Miss Banelyte, the managing director of DOREA and it was tested with ten people before publishing. Till May 15th, 51 respondents have answered the survey. It is a satisfactory number, as quarter of all recipients answered to questions, although more responses were hoped for. 25,5% Response rate is still enough to yield consistent findings and there is enough material to make conclusions of the usage of social media amongst DOREA's target group. The survey was opened 81 times altogether, so over half of the people who saw the survey also responded to it. Before the questions, we placed a brief introduction of the survey and what the aim is. The introduction included instructions on submitting the survey, because there was a possibility, that the respondents are not too familiar with technology. This might have influenced the response rate as well, if the recipients of the email do not know how to take or submit the survey.

5.2.1 Questions

In this section, the author will analyze each question and its responses one by one. Then in chapter 5.2.2 we will look at the frequencies and cross-tabulations of these responses. There was a total of six questions in the survey. In two questions, there was a possibility to answer with more than one answer and one question was a voluntary question with the possibility of writing a free-form answer. The rest of the questions were multiple-choice questions, where you can only choose one option.

The first question was about social media channels where respondents have an account (see figure 9). The goal was to find out which social media channels the respondents use. The options were Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, Facebook and None of the above. Respondents were asked to choose all options that apply. The question was mandatory, so it received a total of 51 responses. Most of the respondents had a profile on Facebook. All respondents except one, were on Facebook, unless they responded, "none of the above". LinkedIn and Instagram both had 43% rate, so a little under half of the respondents have an account there. Approximately 6% of the

respondents said they don't use any of the social media channels mentioned. This factor is good considering the fact that DOREA mainly uses social media in marketing.

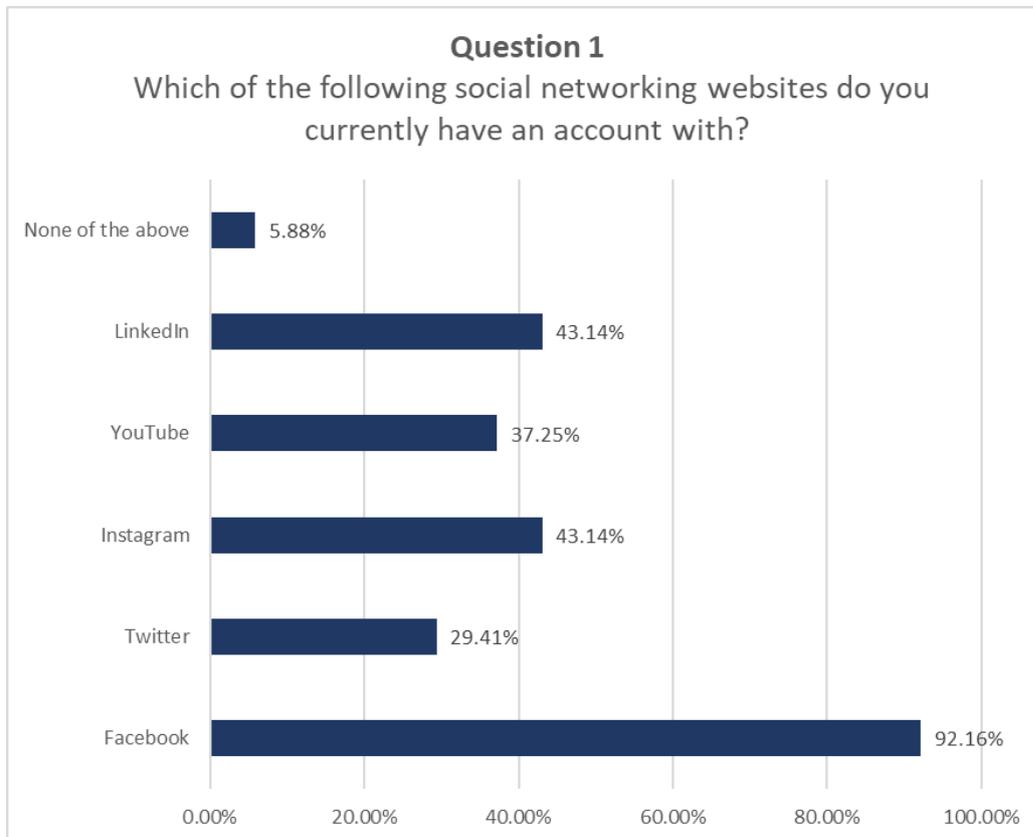


FIGURE 9. Responses in question one in the social media usage survey.

In the next question (figure 10), respondents were asked to specify, which social media mentioned they use the most in a typical week. As the target was to get a specific answer about the most used social media, this question offered the possibility to only choose one option. Facebook was the most popular choice, with 74,51% of the respondents using it the most (. Instagram was the second most popular response. LinkedIn and Twitter were not chosen as used social medias by any of the respondents, but a rough 4% said they use YouTube the most. This is not a surprising fact, since in an article written by Eric Blattberg (2015, cited 16.05.2017) it is stated, that YouTube is more popular among 35-54-year-olds than it is between the 18-24-year-olds.

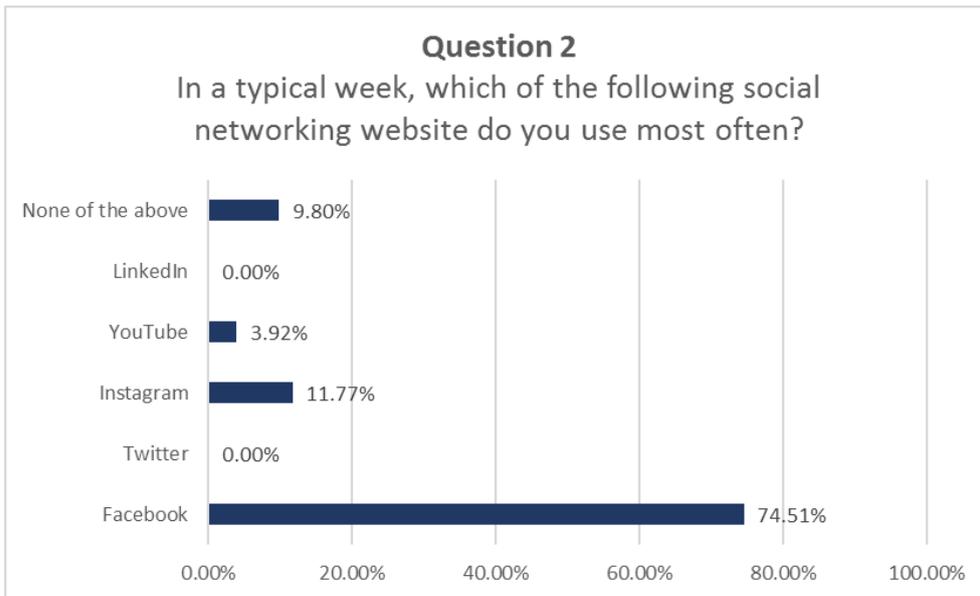


FIGURE 10. Responses in question two in the social media usage survey.

The aim of the third question was to define the best time to post on social media, by asking the respondents the usual time of the day, they check their social media channels. There were 5 options: morning, day, afternoon, evening and night and they could only choose one answer (figure 11). The most popular time to check social media was in the evening, between 19.00-22.00 o'clock, as almost 70% of the respondents answered so. The second most popular time to check social media channels was in the morning between 07.00-10.00 o'clock. Least popular time to check social media was in the afternoon, while a rough 8% checked it during the day and 5,9% at night.

All in all, the results of these question were very clear, as one option rose the top, as you can see in the figure below. The results are somewhat interesting, as in the article written by Christina Warren (2010, cited 16.05.2017) the most conversation on Facebook happens around 15.00 o'clock while in the morning the traffic is at its lowest. Despite this, she still makes a notion to the fact that posts published in the morning tend to perform better in comparison to the ones posted in the afternoon.

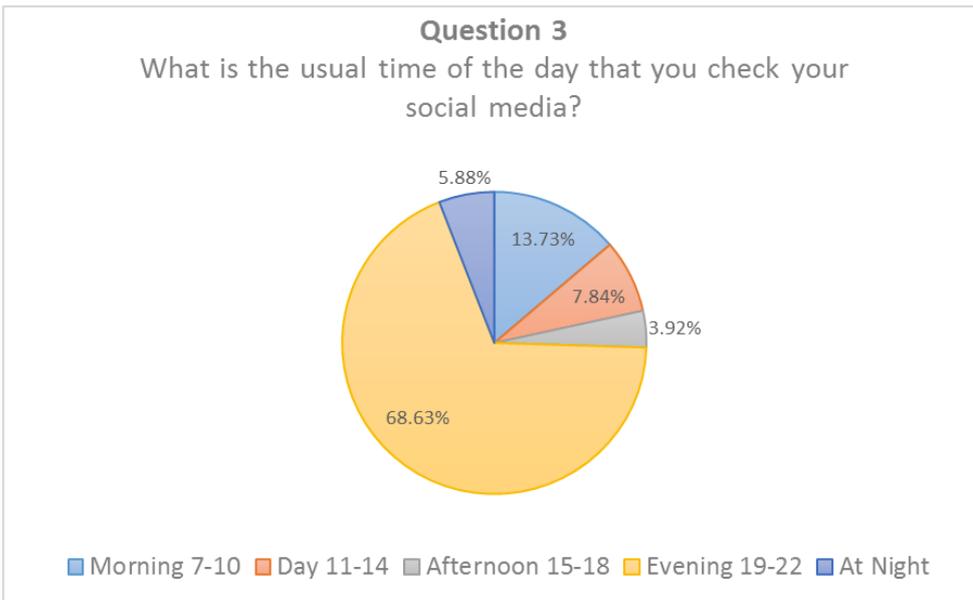


FIGURE 11. Responses in question three in the social media usage survey

The fourth question was about following DOREA on social media. Respondents were given the same options as in the first two questions, and in addition, an option of “I don’t follow DOREA on social media.” The respondents were asked to check all the options that apply. The goal was to shed a light on how many of the previous customers follow DOREA on social media. The results of this question can help DOREA in the future on marketing the social media channels during the courses to maximize the percentage of customers following their social media accounts.

Almost 60% of the respondents do not follow DOREA on social media, which was surprising, as they have quite a lot followers on social media. DOREA Educational Institute’s Facebook was the most common social media channel the respondents are following and Instagram was the second, although there was a large, over 30% gap, between these two channels. None of the respondents followed DOREA in all social media channels. Three respondents followed DOREA on multiple channels and one only on YouTube, which was surprising, as all the others who followed them somewhere, did so using Facebook (see figure 12).

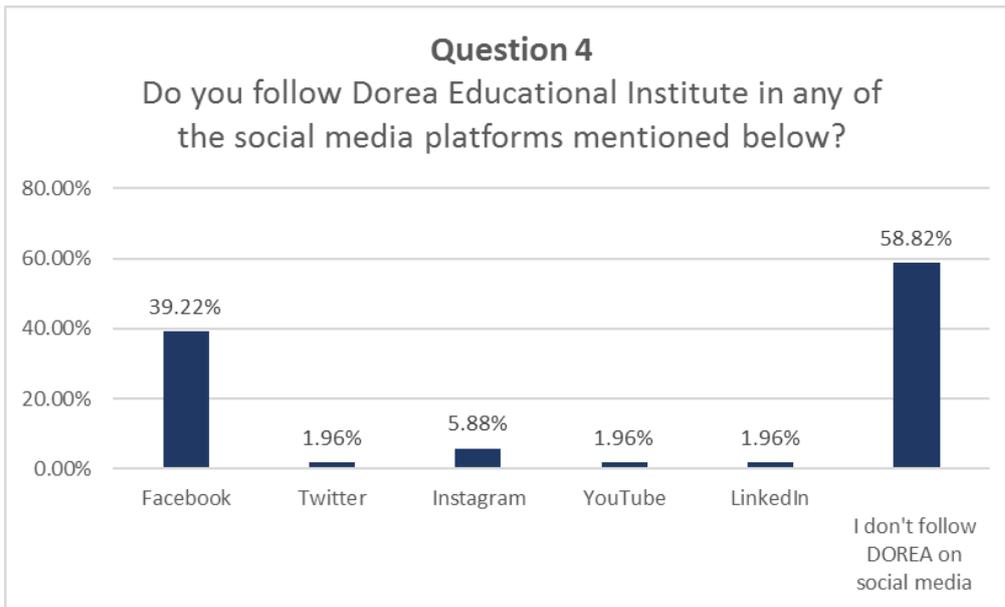


FIGURE 12. Responses on question four in the social media usage survey

Question five was very different from all the other questions, as it was an optional question, and it had a comment field for free-hand feedback. The question was optional, because it was about DOREA’s performance on social media, and if the respondents were happy with it. It was meant for people who follow DOREA. This seemed to be confusing to the respondents, as 32 people responded to this question, but in the previous question, when mapped how many of the respondents follow DOREA, only 26 people said so. So, some of the respondents, who don’t follow DOREA, responded to this question anyway. This probably affected the numbers who are satisfied with the social media presence, but luckily the bigger aim of this question was to get written answers on what content they would like to see.

Three people checked the “No, I would like to see...” option, but one of them wrote to the comment section that they don’t follow DOREA, so one didn’t realize that the question was optional. One of the replies was, that it would be great to see more of the work they are doing and the other one wanted to see more pictures of the cities they deliver trainings in. The problem with open questions is, that people tend to choose the answer which is the easier one, so in this case, the one that you don’t need to comment on. Still, we got few opinions that DOREA can use when planning their future social media content (see figure 13).

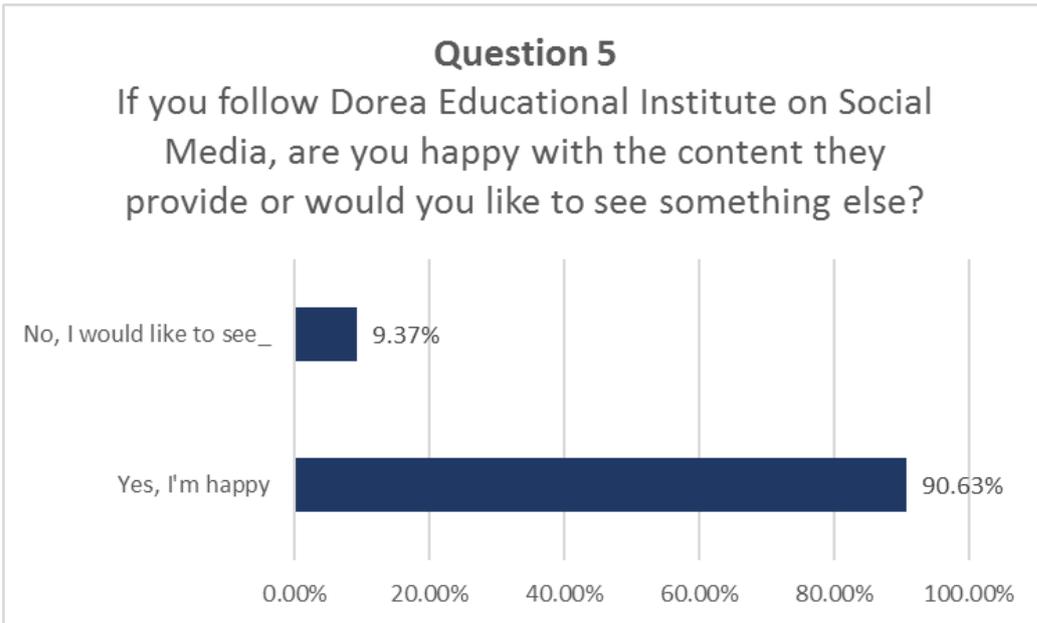


FIGURE 13. Responses on question five in the social media usage survey

The sixth question, which was this survey's last one, examined the age of the respondents. There were seven options from 18 to 75 and older, with a ten year inter gap frequency. This question helps when cross-examining the responses and seeing the differences in the responses according to the age of the respondents. The responses on this survey show which respondents belong to the DOREA target group. The biggest age group was 45 – 54 with the percentage of 39,2 and the second biggest was 35 – 44, while the rest of the options all reached under 16% of the responses (see figure 14).

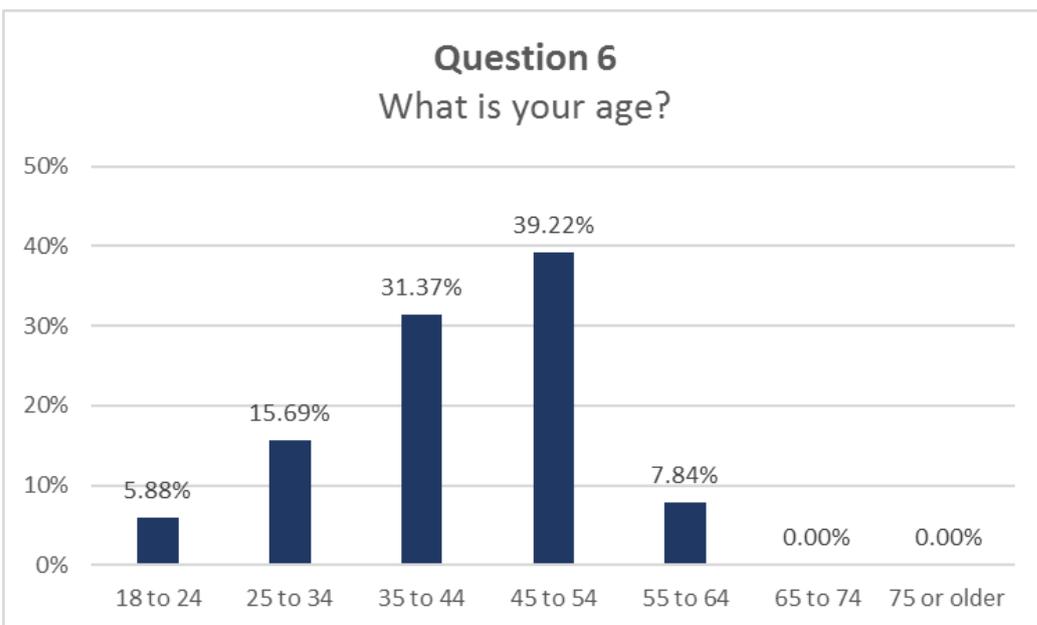


FIGURE 14. Responses on question six on the social media usage survey

5.2.2 Frequencies

In this section, the author is comparing the answers of different age groups to the questions, to see how the respondents' age affected the results. This comparison aims to provide information on how older people use social media, compared with younger people. The behavior of young people in social media has been studied a lot, so it is possible to compare the data obtained from this study with younger people's behavior from previous studies. In addition, we received three responses from the 18-24 age group and eight responses from the age group 25 – 34, which can provide some guidance and which can be compared with the answers of older respondents.

First, the author compared the age group's responses in the question "What is the usual time of the day that you check your social media?" The most popular time, between 19:00 and 22:00 'o'clock in the evening, is consistent across all age groups. Only in the oldest respondent group there is another popular option, by the day. This option was also relatively popular in the youngest age group, as 33% of the respondents of that age responded that they are checking their social media at that time. This phenomenon can be explained, for example, by the fact that the youngest age group may have students who can check social media even during the day. In the oldest age group, there may be people who have already left the working life, and may have some time during the day. In the middle age groups, only 6.25% reported checking social media during the day time (see figure 14).

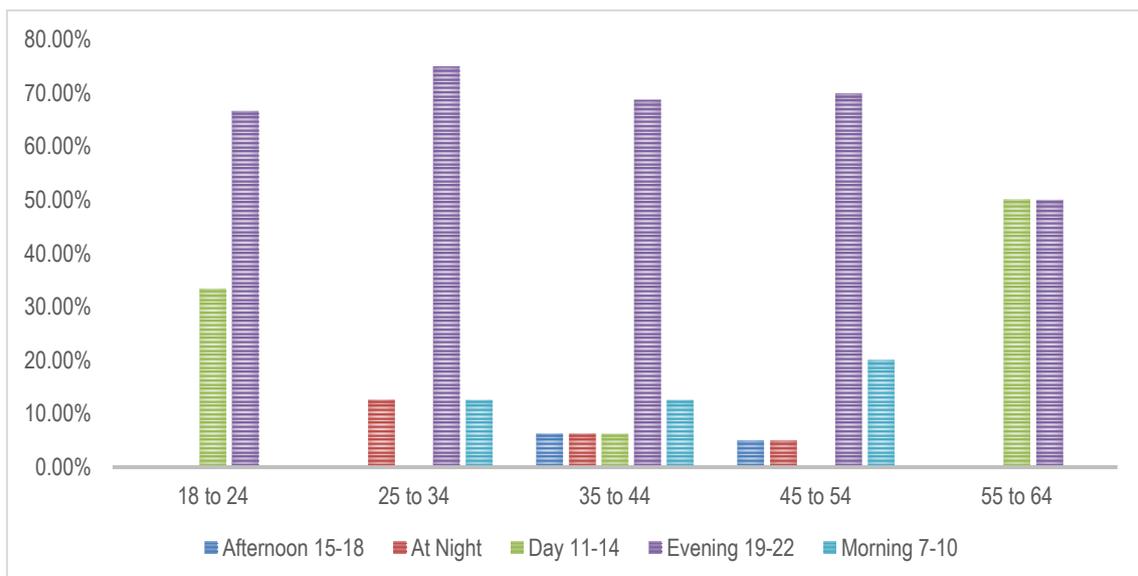


FIGURE 14. Comparing different age groups with the question "What is the usual time of the day that you check your social media?"

When comparing the age of respondents with social media channels where they have an account, it turns out that the older the respondents, the actual number of accounts and the diversity of channels diminishes (figure 15). The graph describes the percentage of social media accounts in total number of responses of each age-group. Facebook is the most common social media account for all age groups. 18 – 24 and 35 – 44-year-old respondents all had a Facebook account. Only the last two age groups had "none of the above" answers. In all age classes, all social media channels were featured, with the exception of age class 55 – 64, where none of the respondents had a Twitter account.

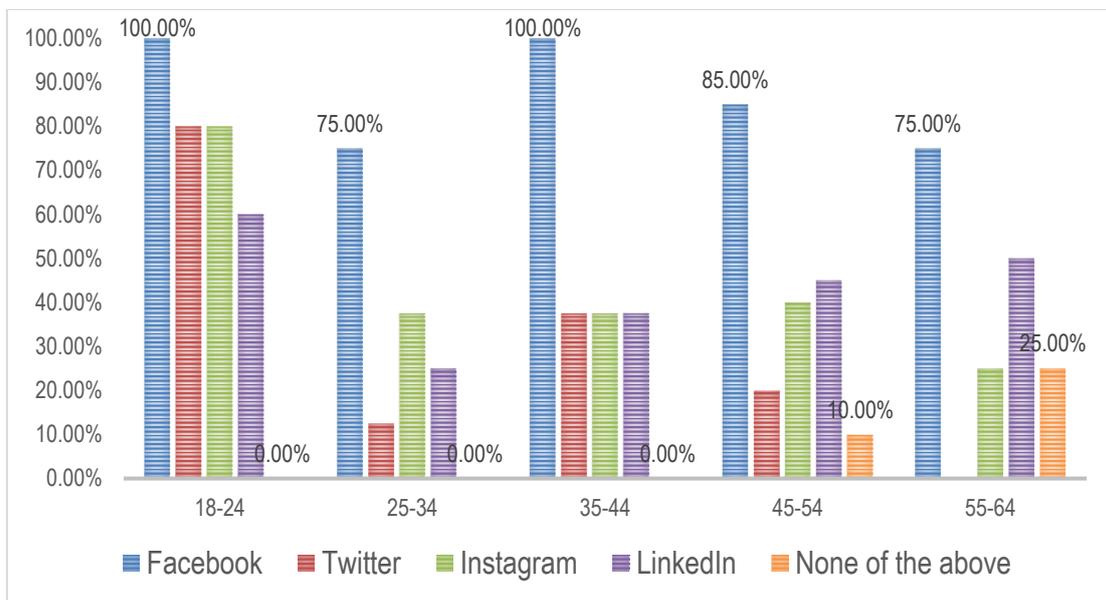


FIGURE 15. Comparing different age groups with the question “Which of the following social networking websites do you currently have an account with?”.

Lastly, the author analyzed DOREA's social media channels followed by different age groups (figure 16). The channel describes what percentage of the respondents in each age group follows a social media channel. From the chart, it is clear how the diversity of social media channels decreases as the age group is getting older. The youngest follow DOREA on all channels, while the oldest age group only follows DOREA's YouTube channel. People who did not follow DOREA at all, were distributed all in all age groups relatively evenly, except in the age group 18 – 24, where there were none. Facebook was again the channel, which appeared relatively evenly and in every age group. Another steadily occurring channel was Instagram, although it only appeared in the first three age groups.

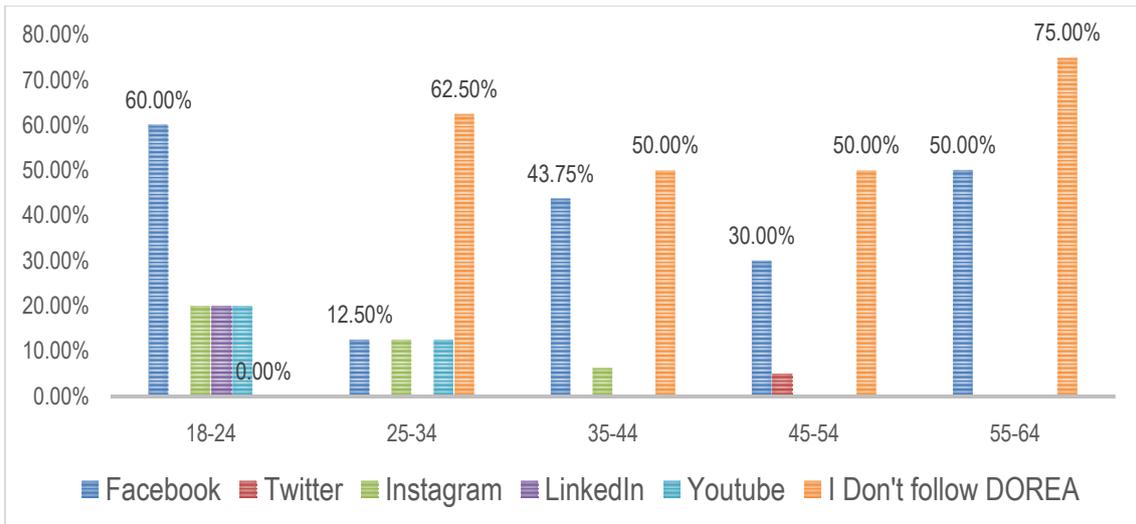


FIGURE 16. DOREA's social media channels followed by different age groups.

5.3 Conclusions

From the first and the second question, asking the respondents about their social media accounts and which social media they use the most, we can conclude that Facebook is the most effective way to reach both previous clients, as well as new prospective clients. It was the most often checked social media platform and over 92% of the respondents had an account on there. Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn were relatively popular platforms to have an account as well, but when looking at the responses from question 4, showing where the respondents follow DOREA on social media, we can tell that many of the respondents don't follow DOREA on these social medias, even though they have an account there.

From the information gathered from question three (figure 11), we can determine, that the best time to reach the target group online is between 19.00 – 22.00 o'clock in the evening, as 69% of the respondents reported checking their social media during these hours. The least likely time to reach the target group, according to this survey, would be between 14.00 and 18.00 in the afternoon. In an article about the importance of timing in social media, Sidney Banks (2016, cited 18.05.2017) claims, that the importance depends on the channel. In some social medias timing is everything and on some it's not relevant, as the channels might not present posts on chronological order. Most important channel for timing, according to this article, is LinkedIn and Twitter.

Results from question four, monitoring the social media channels where respondents follow DOREA, tell us, that the organization needs to put more effort in marketing the social media

channels to their current and previous clients. 59% of the respondents didn't follow DOREA in any social media. Of course, some of the respondents didn't have social media accounts, but the number was too small to affect this percentage too much. Their most followed channel was Facebook, which correlates to the results from question one and two, about Facebook being the most used channel. The second most popular channel, when looking at questions one and two, was Instagram. This was surprising, as according to previous studies, such as in Figure 1 in chapter 2.1, Twitter is usually more popular among the older people and Instagram is considered to be favored by teenagers and young adults. This concludes that Instagram is more popular in DOREA's target group, that it is, with older people in general.

Only 5,88% of all the respondents didn't have a social media account on the mentioned channels. This factor is good considering the fact that DOREA mainly uses social media for its marketing. This number proves, that most of the clients can be reached through the chosen social media channels, but it also reminds that not completely everyone uses it, so it is also important to remember these people when planning marketing in general.

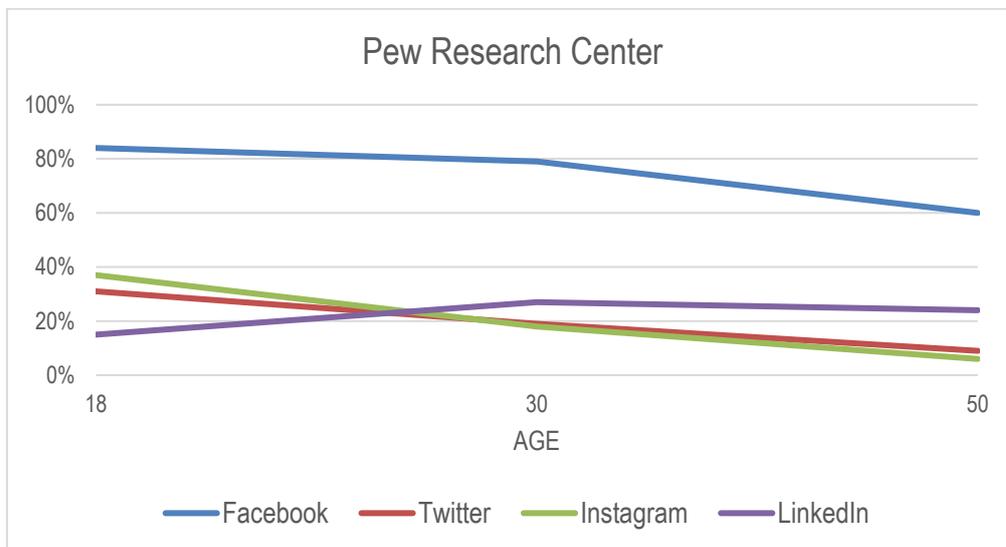


FIGURE 17. Social Media Update 2013 (Duggan & Smith 2013, cited 18.05.2017).

In order to get some insights on the reliability of the survey's results and the differences between the DOREA target group versus internet users in general, the author compared my results with a study conducted by Pew Research Center and analyzed by Aaron Smith and Maeve Duggan (2013, cited 18.05.2017) on American internet users and how many of them are present in social media. There are many similarities between these two studies. In both graphs (figure 17 and figure 18), we can see that Facebook has the highest usage percentage, while Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn

below it quite congruently. When looking at the starting position, as in the younger users, we can see that the popularity of the channels are in the same order in both results. Facebook is the most popular, Instagram is second, Twitter third and LinkedIn the last. In users around the 30-year age group, LinkedIn grows in popularity and becomes the second most popular social media channel after Facebook.

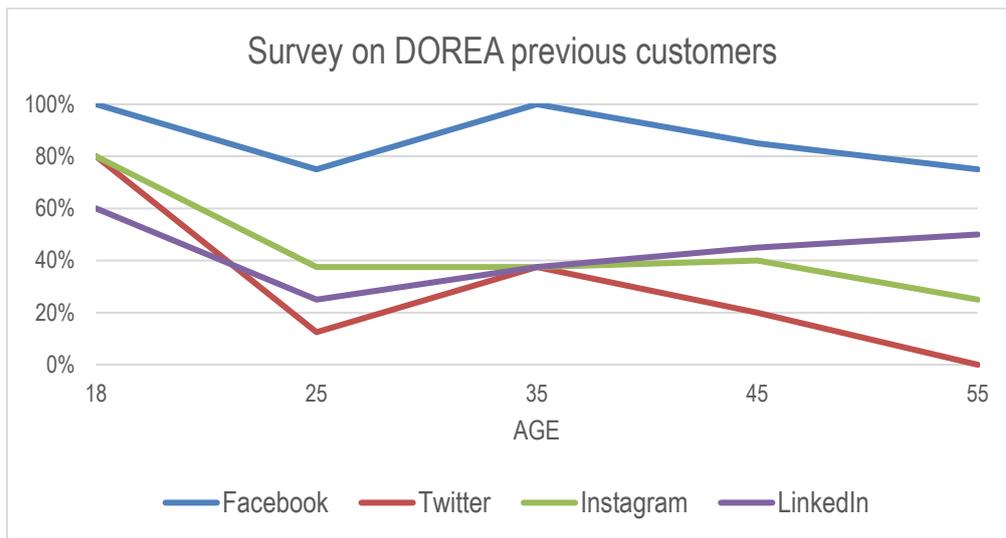


FIGURE 18. DOREA's social media channels followed by different age groups.

The main differences in these graphs are the fact the percentages are higher in the DOREA target group, and that Instagram is more popular in the oldest age group in the DOREA target group than it was in the other study. This concludes, that the DOREA target group is more active on social media than people in general for the age group and Instagram is more popular in the oldest age group of DOREA's target audience, than it is with older people in general. This information is important when creating ideas and choosing marketing platforms. Also, there is a small dip in the graph when looking at ages around 25, this can be due to the lack of people that age among the respondents.

6 MARKETING STRATEGY FOR THE ORGANIZATION

In this chapter, the author discusses some potential ideas for the social media marketing strategy of DOREA Educational Institute and how they can improve their presence within social media. The goal is to get new customers by increasing their international visibility and to reach the older customers and by that, maximizing the number of returning customers. The main research questions of this thesis include reaching the target group and increasing engagement. These questions, among other marketing issues are addressed and answered in this chapter. An important factor in advertising social media is ingenuity and diversity. The competitors' pages are only a few clicks away, so you have to stand out from the crowd and stay in the minds of potential customers. It is also important to remember that the same content should not be recycled from one social media to another, but that you should take advantage of each platform's potential for unique content production.

For your social media marketing to work, you need to be included in the customers buying process right from the beginning. This is what makes content strategy so important. People tend to use Google to find the service they need, but only when they don't already have a possible provider in mind, maybe someone they know or a friend recommended it, or some friend they saw on Facebook used it before. With a correct content strategy, you ensure your place on the first steps on this process. Perhaps you think your customers only use Google, but successful content strategy puts you ahead of this stage, and makes sure you are in your customers' mind before they even need to search for another provider. (Kortesuo 2014, 50 – 51)

The aims for this strategy is to increase the engagement of current followers, and reach out to new potential customers, located internationally. While reaching these goals, it is important to stand out from the competition and make the company's brand stronger and strengthen its image. In this plan, it is crucial to acknowledge the correct strategy for each channel, and use its potential to the fullest. It is also important to forebode and understand your own strengths and weaknesses in order to use your resources correctly. In the section 6.1 the author will be evaluating a SWOT-analysis of the company and discussing its outcomes and impressions on their social media marketing.

6.1 SWOT analysis

SWOT analysis is an examination of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Most importantly, SWOT-analysis organizes important information, but it also reveals your competitive advantages and helps you to determine your main disadvantages. It can be done on the company's whole marketing plan, or, like in this case, mainly on the social media marketing section. You can draw conclusions based on the analysis, on how strengths can be achieved and exploit how weaknesses can be transformed into strengths. From a carefully drafted SWOT-analysis, you can easily start building your action plan towards better marketing and figure out how the future opportunities can be utilized and how to avoid potential threats. (Ferrel & Hartline 2011, 44.)

FIGURE 19. SWOT analysis of case company's social media marketing

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good digital knowledge and skills• Young and ambitious leaders• Multicultural employees• Large scale of training courses• Multiply training locations	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low budget for marketing• Changing interns• The unfamiliarity of the services• International customer base• Older clientele
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Competitors weakness in social media marketing• Extending services geographically• Making ERASMUS+ more knowledgeable• Usage and popularity of social media is increasing	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many competitors• Not reaching customers on social media• Privacy issues• Negative customer feedback• Brand impersonality and low engagement

One of the most important DOREA's strength (see figure 19), is their good digital knowledge and skills and young and ambitious leaders. Social media is customarily used by young people, as can be seen in FIGURE 1 on page 11, it can be assumed that the younger generations are more familiar with the concept and usage of social media. DOREA's young structure of employees can be seen as a huge strength. DOREA hires interns from different European countries, so the workforce is very diverse and multicultural. This can be considered as a strength, as the customer base is also

from various European countries. This helps in the creation of working marketing strategies that embellish ideas that work on people from diverse cultures and backgrounds. The large scale of available services and the multiplicity of the training locations offer many opportunities in marketing the events, as it is possible to offer the customers needed diversity and discretion as options. Freedom of choosing different options and deciding on tailored services that suit you the best, is a huge strength in the market.

As DOREA is a non-profit organization, running mostly on EU-funding, the budget for marketing is very small. This can be considered as a weakness, but it can also be turned into a strength, through careful and clever use of social media. It is the most cost-effective marketing channel, as it requires very little to almost nothing to finance. Other weaknesses of concern include the continuous changing of interns, unfamiliarity of the ERASMUS+ staff mobility concept and the difficulties of reaching the older, international clients. Rapid changes in the workforce can lead to incoherent marketing, this is especially visible in social media, where both your older and current marketing material is continuously visible.

DOREA's social media marketing provides multiple opportunities. Firstly, many of the competitors analyzed previously by DOREA interns, have shown to have a weak social media marketing strategy and presence. They are not active on social media and they have only little digital knowledge. This gives a head start for DOREA in catching the people searching for a training service provider online. This relates to their other opportunity, making ERASMUS+ staff mobilities more knowledgeable. Strong knowledge of social media marketing makes it possible to share information more widely and the competence and plausibility provided by your social media channels give you the possibility of getting your voice heard. Even though DOREA's target group is hard to reach through social media, it is continuously growing in its popularity amongst people. This means, over time, it will get easier and easier to reach their target customer base, as the generations grow older and people engage with the targeted social media platform more. With the global reach of social media and the fact that it is not limited geographically, there is a real opportunity for DOREA to extend its products and services to even more locations.

Even though DOREA is ahead of its competitors in social media marketing, it doesn't fully cover the fact, that there are many competitors. As their services are EU-funded, they are not unique and there are numerous providers throughout Europe. They have to keep up their marketing and evaluate these competitors continuously. To distinguish the brand from your competitors you need

to be careful with brand impersonality and low engagement. In addition to these threats, DOREA faces the same perils as with all companies using social media as a marketing channel. These are privacy issues and negative feedback. These are hard problems to avoid, but it can be done by managing your customer satisfaction carefully and being aware of your online visibility.

6.2 Content strategy and the action plan

This chapter concludes a content strategy and the action plan for DOREA Educational Institute. It discusses possible ideas and viewpoints for their social media content. The strategy is based on the previous behavior of their followers (chapter 4.2), the survey done for the customers (chapter 5) and previous studies done on the topic. All the hands-on suggestions are collected into a table (see table 1) are presented in the end of this chapter.

The first thing to consider when making a content strategy for social media, is the product or service you are marketing. You need to find a way to present it interestingly, even if this might feel to be not the case. You need to realize that you are not actually selling “the service” but the outcome of it. People are interested in the benefits and the results of your services. (Kortesuo 2014, 14 – 15) Also, you need to be able to sell your product in a way, that regular people understand its true meaning. Use plain and simple language and “step into the shoes” of your customer. For example, you can market a computer having an outstanding Intel Core i7-7700K CPU, but the customer will more likely be attracted to buy a computer, that has the “fastest processor in the market” rather than the specific processor type.

The concept of DOREA services is not the easiest to understand as it provides EU funded training, projects and funding assistance. You need to be familiar with these concepts to understand them fully, so the first thing would be to explain to future customers, is how their services work and what are the benefits and outcomes of their services. What does “EU funded training course” and “Funding assistance” really mean? And what are the beneficial uses of them? For example, for a teacher unaware of the concept, these terms mean absolutely nothing. This viewpoint is very important when reaching new customers. You need to plan your content with the perspective that the prospective customer does not have any information about the service that you are providing.

When analyzing previous customer behavior on Facebook in section 4.2.2, it was concluded, that DOREA customers, hence, their target group, enjoy seeing pictures rather than texts. In particular, pictures of employees and working life. People want to know what happens “behind the scenes”. They enjoy pictures, where they can see how DOREA Educational Institute works. Other subject of posts that interested DOREA audience were quotes and sceneries. A good marketing tactic is to connect your services to these kinds of posts, for example, by posting a beautiful scenery of a training location with the caption “would you like to have training in this beautiful spot” or to share a quote about the importance of education and caption it with something related to DOREA work. You can also invent new ways to present your information visually. Infographics are an easy and aesthetic way of showing the results of your work and present harder information and complicated numbers in an interesting way.

Aesthetic presentations and visually attractive entities are proven to attract more reactions. Instagram, being a photo sharing application, is the best way for companies to show their knowledge and expertise in visual matters. (Pinantoan 2015, cited 05.10.2017.) Their new snapchat-mimicking feature “Instagram Stories” is a new way to show your daily life, without posting anything. These stories are pictures or videos, disappearing 24-hours after publishing. This is an opportunity for DOREA to show sneak-peaks to their office and start advertising on Instagram, as it is currently mainly used for non-advertising purposes. With Instagram Stories, you can add links to pictures or videos published, taking the viewer straight to the website of your choosing. You can advertise a new course or even a new YouTube video with this feature.

With the moderately fast pace of the changing workforce in DOREA, it would be a good thing, to plan a unified content plan for social media. This ensures, that the posts keep the same style over time and person to person. It can include hashtags, colors and other details which, when kept similar, build and strengthen your brand and its continuity. It could also include the best posting times for each channel, the schedule for posting and other crucial factors regarding the individual media channels. This way you also ensure that you pay enough attention to all your social media channels and avoid duplicating the same content over multiple channels.

Currently, DOREA shares the same posts across too many different social media channels. One of the problems that came to light from the survey (chapter 5), was that many of the respondents only follow DOREA on one social media channel. If the same content is visible in all the used social media channels, there is no real point for the customers to follow DOREA in all these channels

(Siniaalto 2014, 21). This kind of posting also affects engagement. The followers react to the post on one channel, but as the content is similar in all the channels, there is no point to react to it again.

To get people follow DOREA in all their social media channels, you need to market these channels to the customers differently. Mention the channels during the trainings, and ask them to follow your channels for updates and news. Attach social media icons to your printed materials as well as to your online content. You can also remind your followers of your other social media presence, for example, with teasers of your published content. You can make a post on Facebook about your new Instagram picture, with the caption “Want to see how we spent our weekend? Check our new Instagram post to find out”. You can add these kinds of click-baits even to your email newsletters, to reach out to those customers who don’t usually follow you on any social media platform. “Don’t forget to subscribe us on YouTube, to see educational videos and interviews of our trainers!”.

A good example of a working social media advertisement for DOREA, would be a picture which has either a beautiful landscape or employees of the company. The picture would attract attention, and make prospective customers interested in the text. The text uses simple language, that can be understood by people unfamiliar with the concept. Also, the link to more information is in the informative part of the text, rather than in the extra “click here” text. This is important when thinking about search engine optimization as googles search engine robots will not understand where the link is pointing, if it states “here” compared to when it’s located in the part “DOREA website” or “applying for funds”. Creating such links in posts is not yet an available feature on Facebook, but it’s a good tip to remember when using other platforms which allow such links to be created.

TABLE 1. Conclusion of suggestions.

Platform	Suggestion	Action
All	Simplify the concept	Make the concept clear and understandable for everyone
All	Invest in visuality	Use infographics and other visual presentations more
All	Market your channels	Cross-market your social media accounts on different channels and face-to-face to customers

All	Share feedback	Encourage followers to engage by sharing their feedback text and photos
All	Unified social media plan	Make a clear statement to give to employees of social media posting standards to keep the brand unified
All	Schedule your posts	Schedule some of your posts to evenings, when target group is online
All	Use call-for-actions	Make the audience engage with call-for-actions, for example, "like or share!"
Facebook	Add social media icons to cover photo	Market your other social medias in your Facebook cover photo, and in other advertisements posted there
Facebook	Consider doing more advertising campaigns	Try and monitor different advertisement campaigns to see the profit of them
Facebook, Instagram	Show what happens behind the scenes	Post pictures that show how DOREAs everyday working life looks like
Instagram	Use Stories for Advertising	Use the "add a link" – feature on Instagram Stories to drive traffic to your website or other social media channels
Twitter	Avoid double posting	Post original content, for example, customer feedback
YouTube	Invest in YouTube marketing	Start putting more attention to YouTube, consider paid marketing options

6.3 Increasing engagement

Since social media isn't a one-way channel, rather a two-way interactive and communication platform, it is important to try to activate audience active and make them ready to engage. You should never mistake social media as a direct marketing channel, as it is a platform for content marketing. That's why you should not make your posts absolutely comprehensive, but leave some room for comments, questions and conversation. Ask for reactions by finishing your content with a

question or command. A call for action, example “like this” or “share this” tend to make people react to the content more often. (Kortesuo 2014, 18, 36; Patel 2016, cited 18.9.2017.)

By keeping in mind, the differences social media has in comparison to other ways of marketing, you will ensure your success with your marketing. Content published on social media is almost always read from the screen and made for fast consumption. This is why you should avoid long and complicated textual content and focus on simplicity and attractiveness of the content. Worst case scenario, the follower and potential client might end up searching for a simpler exposition and solution. (Kortesuo 2014, 35.) By publishing simple and entertaining text you make it easier for your followers to react and comment your content thereby engaging them.

The easiest way to make people engage your content, is to make them feel they are a part of something. When they feel a part of a community, they react and share your content more often. When a person starts to follow you on social media it doesn't only connect with you, it connects with all the other people following you. By showing that you don't only care about sales, but you sincerely care about the opinions of your followers, you fill turn them from followers to engaging fans. (Sherman & Smith 2013, 14.) There are many ways to make your followers a part of your brand. You can share feedback, post their photos and credit them in your posts. An example would be to post a “weekly feedback”, for example in Twitter or Instagram, to show off your good feedback from customers and make them feel you care about what they have to say about your brand. This could encourage people to leave more positive feedback as they can see that you are actually listening to them.

6.4 Reaching the older audience

From the customer survey results, which are discussed in the chapter 5.2. it was concluded, that the best and most important channel considering the reaching of the older target group is Facebook. It was the most followed DOREA's social media channel and a platform the customers check the most often. The survey also concluded, that the best time to post, hence the time the target group is usually online, is in the evening. This fact is further confirmed by an infographic published by Citipost Mail (2017, cited 4.10.2017), which states that people aged 35–54 prefer to check their social media after 8pm. DOREA mostly updates their social media during the day on their working hours, but a good strategy could be to schedule their posts to the evening. Most social media

channels offer an option to schedule your posts to appear on the time of your choosing. This also helps managing the time used on social media marketing, as you don't have to be online for the posts to be published.

When analyzing the frequencies of the survey in chapter 5.2.2, the author noticed that the oldest respondent group only followed DOREA on YouTube, even though they earlier stated that they have accounts in other social medias as well. Currently, DOREA doesn't put too much attention to its YouTube channel. Considering the results of the survey, and other studies, which show that YouTube is favored by older people (see figure 1), they should put more effort in this particular channel. In fact, a study done by Statista (2015, cited 4.10.2017), shows that over half of the people aged 35–54 worldwide have an account on YouTube, and it is the third most popular social media channel after Facebook and Google+. A survey-based research by Google tells us, that 73% of people in this age group watch videos to learn something new. DOREA, being a company related to education, could perhaps plan short educational videos, teaching potential customers something new and make them familiar with their company.

As mentioned earlier, an email newsletter is a good way to market your social media channels. Even though email isn't considered to be true social media, it is a tool that can be used to raise the awareness of your channels further. It seems to work best with the older target group, at least according to a study done by ExactTarget (2008, cited 4.10.2017), which shows that people aged over 35 prefer to use email as a communicative tool.

6.5 Paid advertising opportunities

Paid advertising on social media has many different aspects. Most used social media marketing is sponsoring your posts. This means, that you pay for the provider to make your post visible to the target group of your choosing. Different platforms use different types of payment methods. Usually you pay either per view or per click. (Singh 2010, 17.) The price depends a lot on your target group, especially by the number of times you wish your advertisement to be visible.

You start designing your paid advertisement by deciding your goal. Is it to get reactions, likes or shares for a specific post, is it to get more followers or drive traffic to your website? Facebook, for example, offers different types of advertisements depending on your goals. You can have a proper

advertising banner, advertising your product or service and have it visible on Facebook for your target group. These advertisements are designed to get more traffic onto your website. Another option is to sponsor a specific Facebook post, which looks like a normal status update, but is visible to other people in addition to your followers. These types of advertisements normally give publicity to the specific post and increase the amount of your followers.

DOREA has used Facebook paid advertising a few times, “boosting” specific posts to get more attention to them. This proved to be quite profitable, as the boosted video got over 9000 views, and their usual videos get only somewhere around 300 – 400 views. The only way to determine which types of advertisements work for you, is to try them and monitor the success. Check how different advertising campaigns affect your follower count, your website traffic and your post likes. This way you’ll be able to conclude the best working advertisement type considering your goal.

You should also try different channels, as they all offer different options for advertising, even though the basic idea is usually the same. Some channels work better for other businesses and other goals. Taking DOREAs clientele into consideration, Facebook would be the best paid advertising platform for them. It was the most popular among the respondents in the survey and also their most used marketing channel. Another channel to consider, would be YouTube, as it is a popular channel amongst the target group. In YouTube, you can add advertisements to show in certain types of videos, so it could be profitable to advertise DOREA in videos that are related to ERASMUS or education, as people who are interested in the subject would see them.

7 RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Social media is a crucial marketing platform for every business planning to make a name for themselves to today's world. If you're not on social media and not found on Google, it's almost as you don't exist (Kortesuo 2014, 45). In this thesis, the author was studying social media marketing and investigating its possibilities through a case company. This chapter discusses the results of the research done for this thesis, as well as the conclusions found through the survey and through analyzing previous social media activity of the case company. The aim of the thesis was to provide ideas, strategies and new viewpoints for the social media marketing of the case company. The idea of the thesis rose from the need to enhance follower engagement and to reach the older target group using social media as the marketing platform. In order to find answers to the research questions and in order to provide the case company a thorough look into their current state of social media marketing, a survey and an analysis of their previous social media content was conducted.

The thorough inspection of the case company's previous social media activity revealed viable information of their customers' previous behavior on social media. What attracts them and what makes them react. This information is crucial when developing further marketing strategies and ideas for content creation. Through this analysis and the customer survey, it was possible to determine, what kind of content should be published and when it should be published. The research done for this thesis also revealed important information about the social media behavior of older target groups. The study shed some light in many issues and in the difficulties of reaching the older audience. The survey and previous research on the topic revealed the best media channels and posting times regarding this specific audience and these findings were put into action in the content strategy for the case company's social media marketing.

Information gathered for this thesis and its end product, a marketing strategy, told us how the target group is expected to behave, which, in turn, gives the company the possibility to answer their needs, and make their marketing more competent. To enhance engagement, the case company needs to build the brand towards customers, and bring them closer to their business. The company needs to market their complex services more simply and show the customers the outcomes and benefits of their services. To get the followers to react, they need to show them, that they are being listened to and they need to bring them closer by being appealing, accessible and easy to approach. The survey analysis suggested, that many of DOREA customers do not follow them on social media at

all. This means, they need to market their channels more and not only via social media, as they need to reach people who are not active there. To reach these people, it is vital to market their social media presence through other ways, and not forget traditional marketing.

In order for the case company to get to these goals, a content strategy and a SWOT-analysis, were created. They were carried out by using empirical data gathered from the survey, the analysis of their current state of social media marketing and with theoretical data collected from literature and internet sources. The objective of the plan was to increase follower engagement and overall visibility of the organization and the strategy created is aiming to reach these goals through a list of suggestions. Yet this thesis was written in the viewpoint of the case company, it also provides proficient and relevant insights for other small businesses using social media as a marketing tool and provides information on targeting the older audience and helps companies struggling with low follower engagement. It can offer useful information to businesses wanting to improve their presence in social media. The research focuses on low -budget social media marketing, and it will provide insights for businesses with low-budget marketing plans.

8 DISCUSSION

This final chapter focuses on analyzing the thesis and its writing process. It assesses the parts the author was pleased with and the parts that could have been done differently, and tries to answer why. The goal was to answer the main research questions and provide a detailed look at social media marketing and how small businesses with low budgets can make the best of it as a marketing channel. I decided to use two empirical methods instead of one to get a deeper insight on the target groups behavior – the possibility to look at the case company’s social media presence from the both sides: the creator and the reader. I also aimed to provide various sources for a theoretical framework and to rely on professional and adept knowledge in this information.

As practical suggestions, I would propose the case company to implement the suggestions listed in the table in chapter 6.2 and to write down and share social media marketing guidelines with all the employees to ensure the continuity and clarity of the brand and its online image. Also, they should monitor their social media marketing’s success, which would even more, in addition to this thesis, clarify the needs of their targeted audience. By monitoring the website traffic, follower count and the amount of follower reactions during different social media marketing campaigns will lead to better understanding of the target group and their behavior, which leads to better marketing strategies. Also, the case company should consider conducting another survey related to social media marketing after implicating new strategies, to see the effects of these implications, and to see if they have managed to affect the opinions of their customers, and if more of them have started to follow them on their social media channels.

I was very pleased with the outcome of this thesis, especially the analysis of the case company’s Facebook page as it revealed a lot of information about the behavior of the followers and what works for them when planning the marketing content. I believe this information to be helpful for businesses similar to the case company, and the suggestions for better social media presence can be used to enhance social media presence in any kind of business, or even a personal case. When writing the conclusions of the survey, I felt that it could have been wider with more specific questions. If I didn’t analyze the case company’s social medias current situation, a larger and more broader survey would have had to be conducted. Another problem was that the survey would be sent to a relatively small number of people, so the plan was to maximize the number of respondents with a quick and simple survey, to get sufficient data for a valid study.

A wider survey or a larger response group could have brought more reliable information on the topic and could have brought more ideas and perspectives to marketing. Even though the number of respondents was smaller than I expected, I was happy with the results, as when comparing them with previous studies on the topic, I saw many similarities between them. In addition, some facts that could not be found have through previous studies, as the case company respondents differed from other studies in this matter, for example, Instagram seemed to be more popular on the case company's target group as it was used amongst most of the people of that age.

Overall the whole thesis research and writing process ran smoothly. The most difficult part of the thesis was writing the content strategy and suggestions, as I had so many ideas and results that were difficult to parse into a readable entity. I wanted the last chapter to go smoothly from one suggestion to another without forgetting to tie the chapter and its results to the research questions earlier in the thesis. Another challenging part was the scope of the subject, and I realized afterwards, that I could have limited this thesis to cover only one social media platform, Facebook, as the other channels only played a small part of the whole entity. Ideas and strategies, however, can be aimed at all social media channels, and none of the strategies are good for just one particular channel. Hence, ideas are comprehensive within all social media channels, including Facebook. During this writing process, I learned a lot about social media marketing, I also confirmed that I want to work further in this field in the future. I was sincerely and positively interested in the subject of my thesis and I never felt unmotivated writing it.

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Social Media Usage

Hello everyone! I would ask you to take few minutes of your time to read this, as I need your help with something! My name is Inka Noor and I'm an Information Technology student from Oulu, Finland. This spring, I will be doing my bachelor's thesis based on DOREA's case. The subject of my thesis will be Social media marketing, and I will be creating strategies and ideas for DOREA for reaching their target group through social media. In order to create a working strategy, I need feedback on previous customers like you, about their social media usage. Dorea Educational Institute, and of course, me personally, would greatly appreciate, if you answered the few questions provided below. There are only 5 questions and answering them won't take longer than two minutes. Your feedback is completely anonymous, and your answers will only be used as a reference in the marketing strategy I will be creating for my thesis. Thank you, your participation means a lot!

1. Which of the following social networking websites do you currently have an account with? (Check all that apply) *

- Twitter
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Youtube
- LinkedIn
- None of the above

2. In a typical week, which of the following social networking website do you use most often? *

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Youtube
- LinkedIn
- None of the above

3. What is the usual time of the day that you check your social media? *

- Morning 7-10
- Day 11-14
- Afternoon 15-18
- Evening 19-22
- At Night

4. Do you follow Dorea Educational Institute in any of the social media platforms mentioned below? (Check all that apply) *

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- LinkedIn

 Youtube

 I don't follow DOREA on social media

5. If you follow Dorea Educational Institute on Social Media, are you happy with the content they provide or would you like to see something else?

Yes I'm happy

No, I would like to see

6. What is your age? *

18 to 24

25 to 34

35 to 44

45 to 54

55 to 64

65 to 74

75 or older