

# **Social Media Marketing Strategy for a Finnish Professional Beauty Brand in Germany**

## **Case: Scandinavian Skin Candy**

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>In today's dynamic world the role of social media is growing rapidly and popular social networks gain new users daily. However, not only private users profit from the convenience of social media, it also serves as a powerful marketing tool for the enterprises, regardless of their size.</p> <p>Nowadays active online presence plays a crucial role for companies, which aim to create and implement the most up-to-date strategies for their business. As a rule many small-sized firms do not have a clear social media strategy when they start being active online. The purpose of this paper so to help the case company Scandinavian Skin Candy to develop a social media plan in order to improve the sales performance and build long-lasting relationships with customers. The paper will focus on the German market, which is the target market of the assignor.</p> <p>The research approach for this paper is deductive and both quantitative and qualitative methods were used by the author in order to answer the research question. As a source of secondary data the researcher used literature and articles dedicated to the topic Social Media Marketing. Primary data was collected by conducting two interviews and launching an online survey.</p> <p>Based on the analysis, the researcher created a Social Media Marketing plan for a case company. According to the author's findings, Scandinavian Skin Candy needs to focus on certain social media platforms, as well as to create content in German language and make regular updates of content. Moreover, it is significant for the case company to adapt to the needs and wants of the target customers and always maintain a dialogue with them in order to establish long-lasting customer relationships. As a final stage of research the case company is provided with a Social Media Marketing plan and recommendations about the implementation of a successful strategy.</p>		
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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Study Background

There is no doubt that since the invention of Internet back in twentieth century our lives and the way we think has changed completely. The World Wide Web nowadays has a significant effect on all the aspects of our being - from private life to business issues. Initially created as a source used for calculations and accounting purposes, Internet now represents a global network with various communication channels and a market with diversity of products and services. In fact, in today's rapidly changing world online marketing is not only a way to attract new customers and maintain with them long-lasting relationships, but also a necessary tool in order to survive in a tough competition in a business branch. According to Dan Zarrella (2010, 7-8), the award-winning marketing specialist at Hubspot Incorporated, social media is an Internet-based technology which facilitates conversation and connects minds.

These days social media is a crucial component of leading a business. It is strongly integrated in our daily life and there are plenty of examples which can prove the important role of social networks for international enterprises. In addition to that, rational and competent use of marketing through social media ensures solid and mutually beneficial relationships with a customer. (Tuten and Solomon 2014, 11.)

Regrettably, a great majority of small-sized organizations underestimate the significance of a clear social media strategy and begin their activities on social platforms such as Instagram or Facebook without obtaining the sufficient knowledge and having a structured plan. Consequently, they miss many opportunities for their business. (Wilson, 2010, 14-15.)

The aim of the paper is to understand the importance of Social Media Marketing for organizations from the viewpoint of Scandinavian Skin Candy, a producer of professional beauty and care products. Moreover, the author will create a social media strategy adjusted for the German market.

By using the social networking sites people communicate with each other and get in touch with businesses. They enable fast and effective interaction. Tuten (2008, 19-21) states that social media influences buying decisions that consequently affects the retail branch, as well as advertising and business climate.

Quite a lot of small companies understand the important role of social networks for their enterprise but, nevertheless, do not put enough effort in order to improve their performance. The crucial aspects, such as gathering customer feedback, new area development and simulation of sales cannot be undervalued or ignored. (Tuten and Solomon 2014, 21-22.) Thus, it is significant to conduct a research on this topic in order to figure out, how the case company can become successful on social media and reach the German customers. Scandinavia Skin Candy is aiming to gain and retain customers in Germany and the purpose of the thesis is to give recommendations on how to effectively use social media marketing in order to achieve this goal. Moreover, the topic choice is supported by a personal interest of the author and the relevance of an issue in today's online world. Based on this, the paper should serve as a valuable source of information for a case company as well as a helpful material for future researches.

In today's world online marketing and social media in particular have a tremendous impact on business development. People use social networks not only for communication purposes, but also when they need to search for some information. Considering that, entrepreneurs should understand how many growth opportunities and benefits for their firms does social media offer. Correspondingly, social media marketing and its strategic approach make up a

foundation for this thesis and the main goal of the researcher is to examine, how to build a clear social media plan and use it in order to enter a new market. The brand Scandinavian Skin Candy will be considered as a case company and German market as a target market.

## 1.2 Research Questions and Objectives

The key topic of the thesis is Social Media Marketing. The main objective of this paper is to offer insight into the use of social media as a marketing tool by a small-sized organization and apply it to a certain market. The problem will be considered from the point of view of a Finnish company Scandinavian Skin Candy striving to win customers in Germany. Correspondingly, the purpose of this research paper is to come up with a structured social media marketing plan and to give recommendations for the case company on how to successfully use social media and reach the German audience.

As reported by Stelzner (2015, 34), approximately 92% of entrepreneurs are interested in finding out which social media marketing tools are the most effective and how to create customer engagement and loyalty. Taking into account the following issues, the author has stated the main research question:

How can the case company Scandinavian Skin Candy improve its Social Media Marketing strategy in order to attract consumers in Germany?

In addition to that, the author compiled several sub-questions in order to answer the research question:



- What is Social Media Marketing?
- How to create a successful Social Media Marketing strategy?
- How can Social Media Marketing strategy be adapted to the German market?

The main purpose of the thesis is to gather knowledge and define how social media can be used as a marketing element by an organization. Moreover, the researcher's target is to examine how the case brand Scandinavian Skin Candy should improve its online presence and to create a Social Media Marketing plan adjusted for the German market. The study will define and clarify the aspects regarding the efficient use of social networks by means of targeting the right audience, using various tools, strategies and integration. Thus, the researcher will develop a social media plan and recommendations for Scandinavian Skin Candy aimed at improving its social media strategy.

The choice of the topic can be explained by the author's personal interest in social media as an element of an organization's strategy. The researcher suggests that in the modern world the development of social networking sites affects not only the way individuals communicate, but also has a significant impact on the way businesses market themselves. The author has completed her practical training as an intern in E-Commerce team and had an opportunity to get an insight into the topic Internet marketing. The researcher took part in Benchmarking process and had a chance to compare the web sites and social media accounts of different car manufacturers and analyze their performance. The author realized the importance of online and social media presence of brands for their competitiveness, customer satisfaction and overall performance. The researcher concluded that Internet and Social Media Marketing play a crucial role for enterprises nowadays and got motivation to study the subject in detail. Due the author's

personal interest in the topic beauty and skin care products it was decided to assist the company Scandinavian Skin Candy in development of Social Media Marketing plan. The target market was assigned by the case company considering the fact that the author lives in Germany and is familiar with the country's language and culture.

### 1.3 Case Company

Scandinavian Skin Candy is a Finnish professional beauty brand which belongs to Suomen Hoitolatukku Logistiikka Oy. The wholesaler Hoitolatukku Ltd was founded in 1985 in Finland and is a family-owned business offering various professional beauty and health care products, as well as furniture and appliances.

The brand Scandinavian Skin Candy was founded in 2010 and two years ago it became a Trademark. The organization is based in Vahto, Finland and is a small-sized Business-to-business company. Nowadays the company offers its professional care products to the beauty salons in many countries such as Finland, Norway, Baltic countries, Switzerland, New Zealand, Japan and other countries.

The main product of Scandinavian Skin Candy is a professional sugaring paste for hair-removal. In addition to that, the brand sells after-treatment care products such as body lotions, body scrubs as well as all the necessary equipment for sugaring.

Scandinavian Skin Candy is the owner of a patent for Xylitol-based epilation composition. The main component of the sugaring paste is known for its anti-bacterial and healing properties which makes it a perfect ingredient for hair-removal process. Skin treatment introduced by Scandinavian Skin Candy products is "An excellent way to remove unwanted hair and skin care for your skin at the same time. Hair can be removed almost completely pain-free."

(Hoitolatukku Official Website, 2017.) The epilation product allows to achieve more comfortable and less painful treatment and decreases hair growth. (Scandinavian Skin Candy, 2017.)

The case company is a rapidly growing in popularity Finnish brand which produces unique beauty products. Today Scandinavian Skin Candy is promoting its products by organizing international exhibitions. The firm takes part in big events dedicated to beauty and skincare, such as Cosmoprof and Professional Beauty exhibitions, where it promotes its products and allows the guests to try the sugaring procedure on place. (Scandinavian Skin Candy official website 2017).

At the moment, one of the most relevant issues for Scandinavian Skin Candy is increasing the awareness among new customers. The company is targeting several new markets and one of them is Germany. The point is to use Social Media to attract the German customers and raise the awareness, as well as brand recognition in a target country. The author will take those issues into consideration and address them in this thesis.

## 1.4 Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this paper is to help the case company to attract new customers in Germany by means of competent use of social media. In order to make this goal achievable, the author will define the key concepts related to social media including social networks and the zones of social media. Besides, the concept of Social Media Marketing will be explained along with the basic models 4 P's and 4C's. Furthermore, the researcher will discuss the advantages and disadvantages associated with the use of Social Media Marketing by small organizations.

In order to create an action plan aimed at achievement of stated goals, an in-depth explanation of the concept Social Media Marketing with its planning, objectives and strategies will be provided by the author.

Many businesses face difficulties when they are trying to recognize, whether the chosen social media strategy is bringing the required results. Thus, it is essential for the researcher to describe Social Media Marketing evaluation. (Schaffer 2013, 11.)

The author will implement theoretical and practical research and develop a Social Media Marketing plan which will be presented for the brand Scandinavian Skin Candy.

## 1.5 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into six parts.

The figure below represents the thesis structure in details:

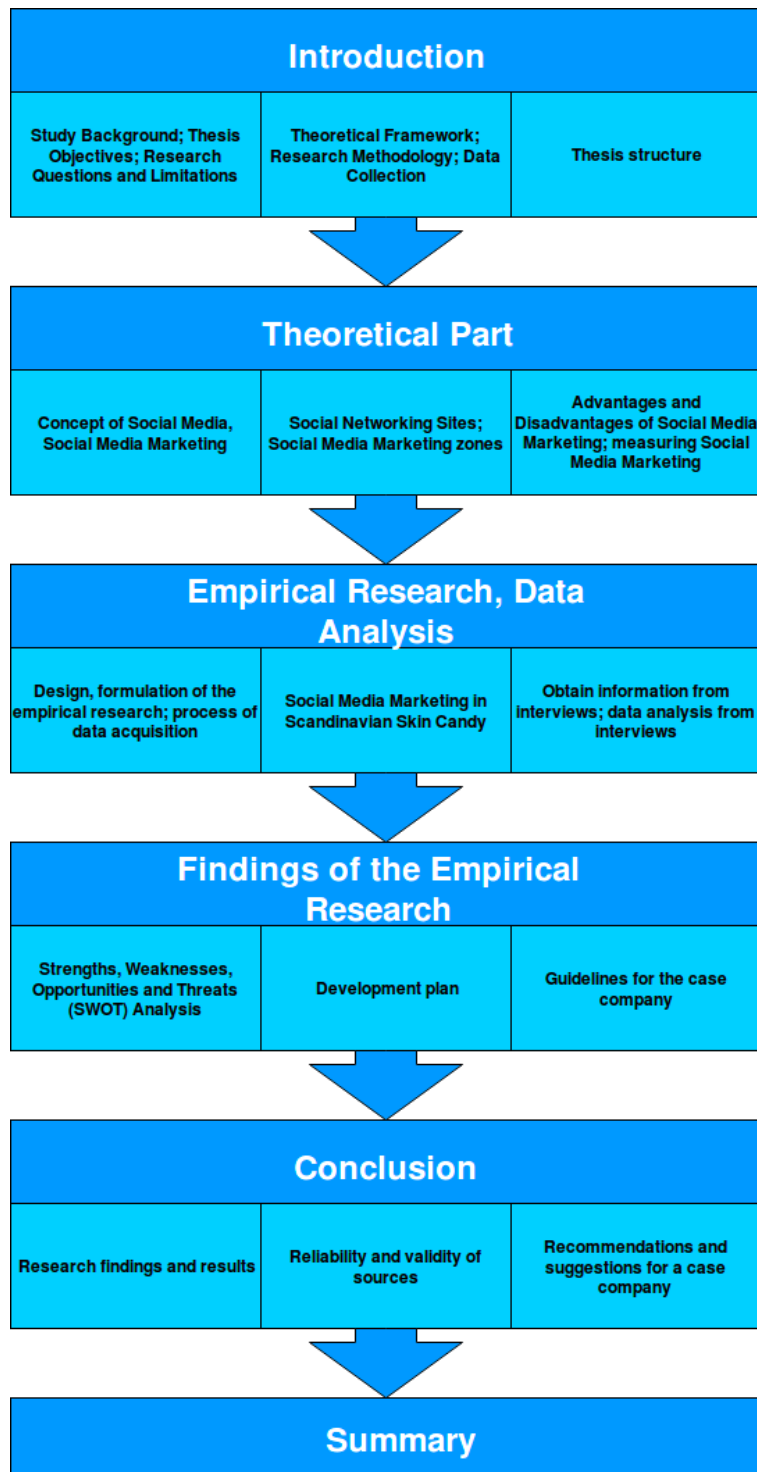


Figure 1 Thesis Structure

This research paper contains a theoretical and an empirical chapter. In the first part the author outlines general issues involving motivation, questions, objectives and structure of the research. (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 223.)

The second chapter of the study is concerned about theoretical aspects of the thesis. This part explains the key concepts related to the topic Social Media Marketing.

The next part of the thesis represents the empirical research as well as the data analysis. Furthermore, the researcher describes the research approach, the data acquisition and the data analysis processes. (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 224-225.) In addition to that, the chapter will contain the interview with the owner and founder of Scandinavian Skin Candy Mr. Harri Kujala, interview with a specialist in Social Media Marketing from Germany, and discussion of the results of the online survey attended by the German customers.

In the fourth chapter the author will display the collected data and provide the answers to research questions and subquestions.

In chapter five the researcher will connect the theoretical and practical research parts and develop a detailed Social Media Marketing plan for Scandinavian Skin Candy.

In the last part the researcher will give recommendations and guidelines associated with the plan implementation in the target country.

## **2 Literature Review**

This chapter will present the theoretical background of the research. In literature review Social Media Marketing will be defined and the author will discuss concepts of 4C's and 4P's. Furthermore, this part will explain different challenges and opportunities for the case brand associated with the adoption of a new Social Media Marketing

strategy. In the end of the chapter various goals and strategies and measuring of Social Media Marketing will be explained.

## 2.1 Social Media

To start with, the concept of Social Media needs to be defined. According to Safko and Brake (2009), "Social Media refers to activities, practices, and behaviors among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge and opinions using conversational media. Conversational media are Web-based applications that make it possible to create and easily transmit content in the form of words, pictures, videos and audios." (48-49.)

Explained more simple, Social Media is a modern way to keep in touch. Social networking sites are used daily by many people. On social media they share interests with each other, discuss various topics and exchange experiences. Through the flow of new information people gather new knowledge and learn about the new products and services on the internet. Taking it into consideration, Social Media strengthens the communication between the brand and the customer. (Tuten and Solomon, 2014, 51.)

## 2.2 Traditional Marketing versus Social Media Marketing

Social Media Marketing has a tremendous impact on the marketing process and the marketers' activities of today. Traditional marketing is way more expensive as Social Media Marketing and many modern enterprises use social media in order to reach their target customer groups and improve the financial performance. (Baker and Hart 2016, 56-57.)

Figure 2 depicts the differences between the traditional media platforms and those of social media.

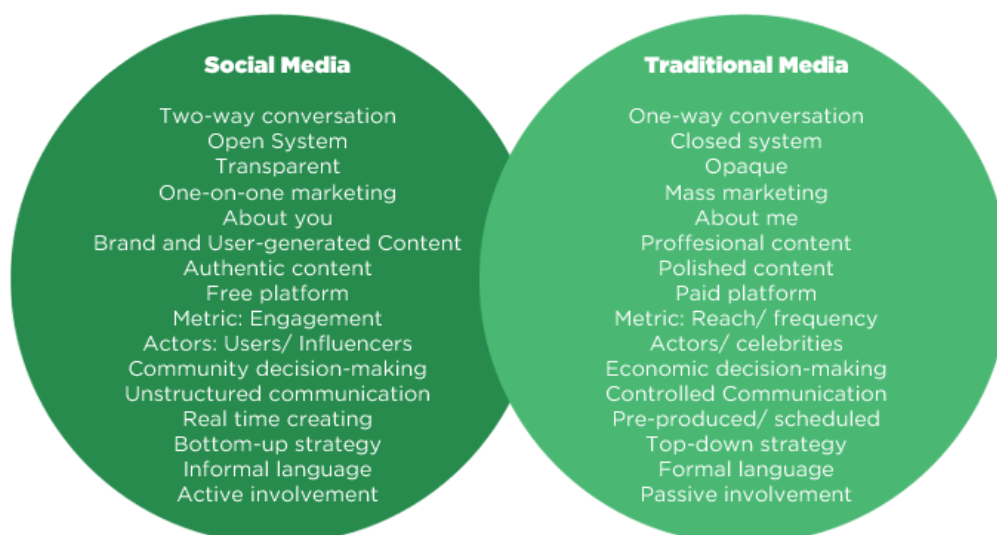


Figure 2 Difference between traditional media and social media (WePlay 2017)

In order to have a successful marketing strategy, entrepreneurs need to understand the two diverse ways of marketing which are Traditional marketing and Social Media Marketing. The figure above represents that Traditional marketing differs significantly to Social Media Marketing. According to Safko and Brake (2009), Traditional media involves printed media, television, direct mail and radio, which are conventional advertising forms. The main principle of traditional media is one-to-many paradigm, where the brand transfers its message to people through its communication channels. One-way communication does not contribute to engagement or promotion of word of mouth. In addition to that, traditional media does not include dialogue between the seller and the buyer, and aims at delivery of a message. Top-down strategy implies that people are seen as consumers of the message, there is



no feedback or integration involved. (34-35.) Furthermore, the marketing content is planned and implemented by professionals and the process is controlled and scheduled. The creation of content is time and money-consuming and the aim of it is to reach huge masses of people. (WePlay 2017.)

Social media, in contrast, implies a two-way communication, where individuals receive not only messages from brands, but also recommendations from other users, involving re-shares and suggested posts. This, in turn, supports community decision-making and contributes to decommercialization of a brand message. Social networking sites are aimed to create word of mouth marketing by means of encouraging the users to share the content, and making the brand message more trustworthy. Word of mouth, or spoken communication with a purpose of spreading information, is constantly generated by social media. (Wilson, 2010, 13.) In addition to that, social networks enable dialogue between the brands and the consumers with the help of comments and feedback. Active involvement of users and transparency are significant principles of marketing through social media, where the customers can share content, discuss it with other users and communicate with the brand. The dialogue which occurs on social media is informal and unstructured. To conclude, Social Media Marketing allows not only a free and interactive way to reach customers, but it also gives an opportunity to see how many people received the message, shared it, liked it, that traditional media does not provide. (WePlay 2017.)

Moreover, as reported by Kotler and Armstrong (2014), Traditional Marketing and Social Media Marketing have opposite funnels. In Traditional Marketing the aim is to find and convert the new prospects, as well as to keep the hard-earned clients. After the prospect is turned into customer the companies strive to provide a good customer experience and expect them to come again. On the other hand, in Social Media Marketing the customers are considered as assets and the technology allows to have an impact on the

consumer behavior both before and after the purchase. (91-92.) Tools, such as social networking sites allow reaching the customers in an easy and free way, in order to remind them to come back. Moreover, in Social Media Marketing word of mouth is implemented through likes, post sharing and tweets, which is an easy way to attract new customers. (WePlay 2017.) Figure 3 represents the funnels of Traditional Marketing and Social Media Marketing:



Figure 3 Funnel of Traditional marketing and Social Media Marketing (WePlay 2017)

In traditional marketing, marketers rely on the marketing mix in order to achieve their goals. The Marketing Mix principle describes the 4P's: Price, Product, Promotion and Place, where a business sells a product for a fair price through effective channels using promotion tools in a place which corresponds the demand. However, the dynamic digital world constantly introduces new challenges for the marketers and nowadays there exists the concept of the fifth P: Participation. Social media has a significant impact on the consumers' thoughts and actions. The new P provides marketers with new platforms for the improvement of their business performance. Participation is aimed at boosting stakeholder and customer relationships as well as customer satisfaction. The concept of 5 P's implies acceleration of consumer participation through managing relationships with them. (Tuten and Solomon 2014, 68-72.)

To conclude, Traditional Marketing implies one-way communication and is an organized process of a message delivery to a target customer. In contrast to that, Social Media Marketing allows a multi-way communication and creates value through engagement and seller-buyer integration.

## 2.3 The zones of social media

The term media can be defined in different ways but it is usually used to describe our daily life communication. People are using a wide range of media. Mass media refers to the channel of communication which reaches larger audience, for instance, broadcast, printed media, as well as digital and personal media like direct conversation, emailing or telephone. In contrast, social media goes beyond the borders of mass media and allows a person to connect with thousands or even millions of other individuals. (Tuten and Solomon 2014, 28-31).

Social media represents a complex system with a huge amount of channels and continuously changing social networks. As reported by Tuten and Solomon (2014, 29), social media can be divided into four different zones which are: social community, social commerce, social publishing and social entertainment. In addition to that, some social networks can fit several zones at the same time due the fact that they deliver different kinds of services. Figure number 4 represents the social media zones framework:



Figure 4 Zones of Social Media Marketing (WordPress 2017)

The zone called Social Community focuses on social media channels and emphasizes users' participation and relationships. It implies both two-way and multi way information exchange as well as conversation, cooperation and sharing of resources. The purpose of this zone reflects the process of socialization and establishment of relationships. For instance, social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook belong to Social Community zone. The zone Social Commerce refers to e-commerce where purchase, selling and management of products and services with the help of a global network can be implemented. The third social media zone or Social Publishing is composed of social media transmitting various content to the public. This zone is represented by, for example, photo and image sharing networks like Instagram, video service like YouTube or Vimeo, slide hosting platforms like Slide Share and other similar online resources. The last zone Social Entertainment is a platform providing the users with amusement containing music, games and art. (Tuten and Solomon 2014, 32-33.)

These days it is crucial for entrepreneurs to be acknowledged with the social media marketing zones and their channels. It is essential

to know, which channels mostly fit the organization, what the target customer group is, and how to make social media work for the business, in order to improve the performance and profitability.

## 2.4 Usage of Social Media in Germany

These days people spend a lot of time using social media or surfing the worldwide web. Social networking site is a kind of website which is used by individuals in order to exchange information and build mutually beneficial relationships. (Schaffer 2013, 11.)

According to the research implemented by eMarketer in 2015, approximately 62 % of Germans in the age category from 16 up to 55 years and older use social media several times a day. As far as younger audience is concerned, more than 80% of Germans from 16 to 35 years old are active on social networking sites every day.

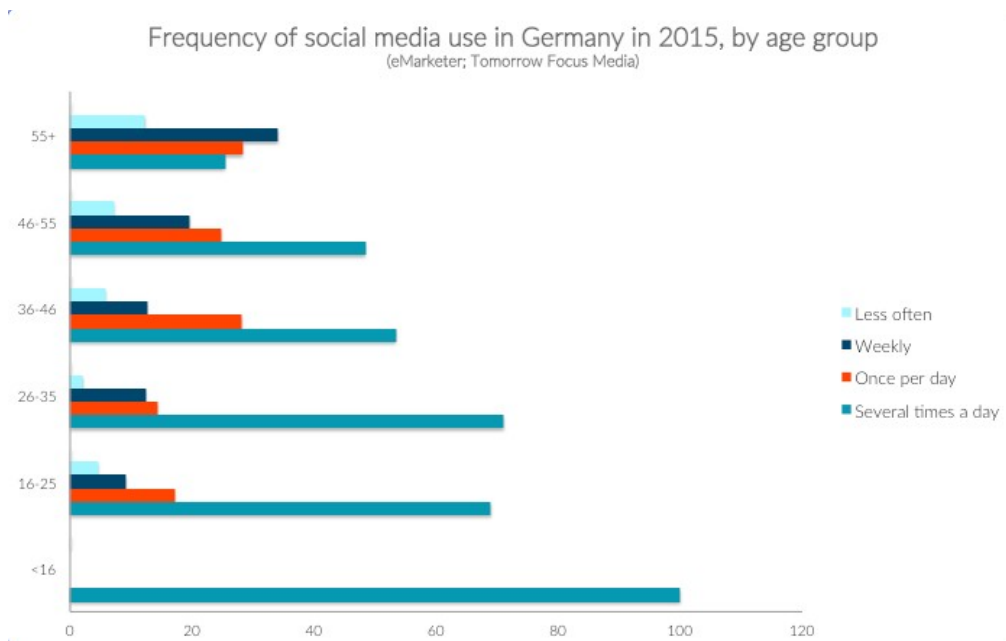


Figure 5 Frequency of social media usage by age in 2015 (eMarketer 2015)

In order to answer the research questions and assist the case brand Scandinavian Skin Candy in development of a social media plan, it is crucial to figure out which social networks are most commonly used by people in Germany. The analysis conducted by EMarketer in November 2016 illustrates the most popular social networks among German citizens:

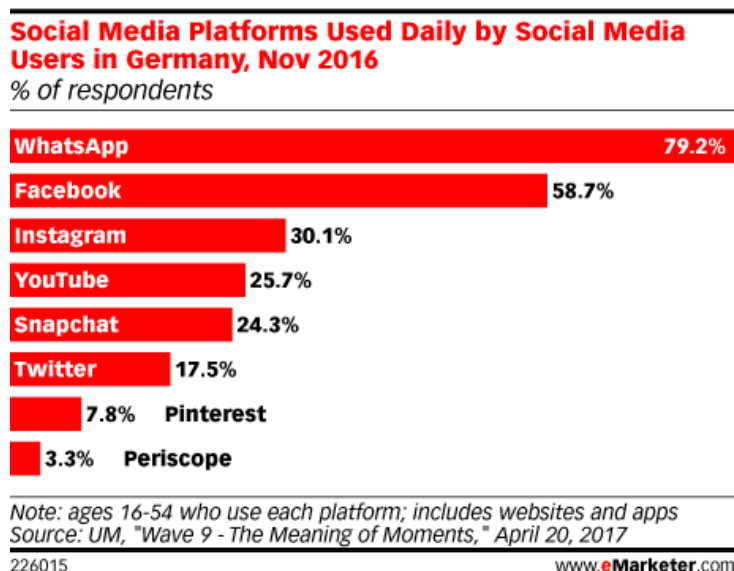


Figure 6 The daily used social networking sites in Germany (eMarketer 2016)

As it can be seen on the chart, excluding the messenger service WhatsApp, Facebook (58.7 %), Instagram (30.1 %) and YouTube (25.7%) are the most frequently used social media in Germany.

Facebook is the world's largest social networking platform created to "Give people the power to build community and bring the world closer together." It was founded in 2004 and has more than 1 billion active users today (Facebook, 2017).

Instagram is a free photo and video sharing platform. The application allows its users to upload content and share it with friends and followers as well as to see what did others share. (Instagram, 2017).

YouTube is a video sharing website where users can create and upload videos and watch content online. The mission of YouTube is to “Give everyone a voice and show them the world.” (YouTube, 2017).

Considering the research problem, it is significant to find out whether the German citizens use online resources in order to find information on the topic beauty and skincare. According to Statista (2015), Germany is one the fourth position among the leading countries with the highest online personal care and beauty shopping rate:

**Global markets with the highest online beauty and personal care shopping rate as of October 2015**

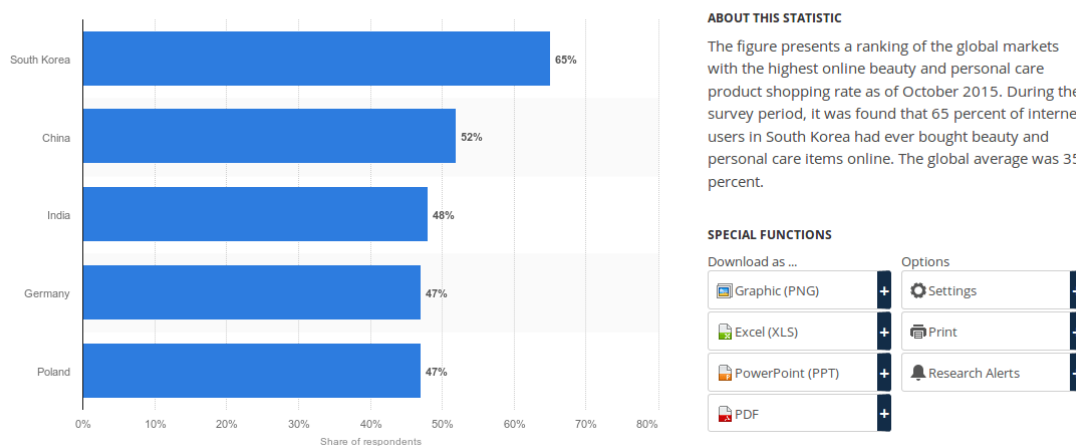


Figure 7 Global markets with the biggest online personal care and beauty shopping rate (Statista 2015)

Taking into account the fact that 47% of people in Germany purchasing beauty and skincare products prefer to do it online, it is logical to assume that Germans actively use online resources when they are interested in a certain beauty product or service.

The case company Scandinavian Skin Candy is a producer of professional waxing and skincare products aiming to reach German customers, which is why the statistical information above will be helpful for the future research.

To summarize, social media is a big trend in Germany and is used by the majority of people on a daily basis. Germans are active users of social networking sites, such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, and they use social media to inform themselves about new products and services, and, in particular, in the beauty industry.

## 2.5 Social Media Marketing

In today's world social media is not only used from people in order to communicate with each other, it is also a tool which allows contact between the businesses and their consumers. Social networking sites help companies win new customers and more important, they help to improve the business by transmitting the consumer feedback to the firm's management. (Waters and Lester 2010, 51-53.)

According to Lipschultz (2017, 26), social media nowadays has a huge impact on the company's sales reputation and also its competitive capabilities. Thus, in order to succeed and resist the tough competition, a modern enterprise needs to employ Social Media Marketing.

Social Media Marketing can be defined as a kind of promotional activity which is aimed at reaching the target customer group by means of using social media with a purpose of improving sales performance, strengthening brand loyalty or similar business goals (Wilson, 2010, 14).

As far as Social Media Marketing is concerned, the two concepts play an important role, they are the 4P's and 4 C's of marketing. The marketing mix or 4P's framework is normally used by specialists in traditional marketing. According to Lee and Kotler (2015, 83) the idea of a marketing mix is to sell a product, at a fair price, using



effective promotion methods through an appropriate distribution channel.

The marketing mix model was mentioned for the first time by McCarthy in 1960. He called the framework “4P’s” and described it as transmission of marketing planning into practical use (Baker and Hart 2016, 33). Nowadays the model is applied by many marketing specialists.

The first component of the marketing mix framework is a Product (a good or service) offered to a market for a purchase, use or consumption, which needs to comply with the needs and wants of a consume (Lee and Kotler, 2015, 85).

Another element of the 4P’s model is Price. Yudelson (1999, 44), defines price as something offered by a purchaser in terms of time, money and effort in order to acquire the product. Place includes all the activities of a firm aimed at making product available for a consumer involving distribution, logistics and transport. Promotion is the last component of a marketing mix which is an activity that conveys the product value and convinces customer to buy a product. (Armstrong and Kotler, 2014, 46.) The image below (Figure 8) represents the marketing mix framework:



Figure 8 The Marketing Mix model (Armstrong and Kotler 2014)

The discipline of Internet Marketing has evolved as a result of the development of communication and information technologies. As far as Internet Marketing is concerned, the crucial aspects of it are conversation and interaction between seller and consumer, where the main objective is the satisfaction of the consumer's needs. (Baker and Hart 2016, 40-41.)

The relationship mentioned above influenced the traditional marketing mix model and another framework called 4C's was introduced by Robert Lauterborn. In his model the researcher replaced Product with Customer Value, Place with Convenience, Price with Cost and Promotion with Communication (Zarrella 2010, 30). Choo (2006, 22), states that consumer plays a key role in the era of world wide web and due to this the customer-oriented 4C's framework is more relevant.

In the 4 C's model the buyer has greater importance than the product. Businesses sell products offering customers value and solutions to their problems. The target of the new marketing model is to provide consumers with necessary solutions, not just sell them products or services. (Armstrong and Kotler, 2014, 50-52.)

Furthermore, the price component in 4C's framework represents only one of the costs for the consumer who intends to purchase a product. The purchasing process involves some other costs such as usage and transportation expenses. Place is substituted by convenience according to the 4C's concept, and the objective is to make the buying process convenient for the customer. (Choo, 2006, 24.)

Communication is the last element of the marketing model according to Lauterborn. The global network provides opportunities for conversation between businesses and consumers, and nowadays

enterprises try to reach new customers through social media channels. (Armstrong and Kotler, 2014, 52-53.)

The Marketing Mix of Traditional Marketing has changed significantly since the evolution of social media. According to Barker, Barker, Bormann, Roberts and Zahay (2017, 41-42), Social Media Marketing emphasizes communication between the seller and the buyer and creation of customer engagement, that is why it is necessary to define a marketing plan in a different way.

In social media the product is represented by content. The content quality has an impact on marketing objectives. Considering content as a product implies aiming at improvement of its quality and consistency. The target consumers need to know, why the content is worth their attention. In order to compose the right content for Social Media Marketing, the business owners need to define the goals of the content, whether it is for entertainment, informative purpose, or other. The next issue to consider is adaptation of the content for the target customers. At this point, it is significant to take into account such issues as the culture, language, social status and occupation of the target customers. Finally, the content needs to be adapted to different social media channels, such as Facebook and Twitter considering the features of those websites. For instance, it needs to be defined, whether the focus should be on text or imagery. (Barker, Barker, Bormann, Roberts and Zahay 2017, 43 - 45.)

In Social Media Marketing price means the cost of data access and consumption associated with the marketing process implementation. When calculating the costs, it is important to take into consideration which tools to choose, in order to meet the chosen objectives and think on return which will be provided by the selected tools. However, in case of using various social networking sites, there are no direct costs involved, due the fact that they are free to use. (Rohm and Weiss 2014, 91.)

Place is concerned about delivery of a product to the customer using the most suitable channel. The consumers need to know how and where to get the product. In Social Media Marketing a crucial role plays choosing the right network. In order to reach the target customers the business owners need to know which social networks do the customers use, how often do they use social media and how much time do they spend there. (Rohm and Weiss 2014, 92-93.)

As reported by Barker, Barker, Bormann, Roberts and Zahay (2017), in Social Media Marketing promotion includes all the activities aimed at increasing the awareness of the content among the target consumers. On social media engagement is created by likes, re-shares and re-posts which allow to draw the attention of wider audience to the content, and, as a result, increased awareness. In order to achieve this goal, it is significant to define the way to advertise the content, how to raise the interest of the consumers, and how to create the engagement. (47-48.)

To conclude, even though Traditional Marketing and Social Media Marketing have a common goal – to reach the customers, retain them and win the new ones, they have a plenty of differences. Traditional Marketing focuses on selling a product at a fair price, using effective promotion methods, through an appropriate distribution channel. (Lee and Kotler 2015, 83.) In Social Media Marketing the key objective is to deliver content to a customer by means of using social media, in order to create the awareness and engagement among the consumers. (Zarrella 2010, 42.)

## 2.6 Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media Marketing for Small Businesses

According to Schaffer (2013, 11), Social Media Marketing can be beneficial for business regardless of its size. The researcher claims

that small and medium-sized companies can profit even more from using social media and get maximum advantages from it.

Despite the fact that Social Media achieved its popularity quite quickly, around 91% of marketers in 2014 claimed that Social Media Marketing was a crucial element of their companies' strategies (Social Media Examiner, 2014). The author will firstly discuss the advantages of Social Media Marketing.

Nowadays the consumers use social media not only to gather the necessary information about the product or service, but also to get in touch with its producer and other consumers as well as to share their experiences. The aim of social media is to raise awareness among the customers and nowadays social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram help businesses to increase their brand recognition and make successful advertisement. (Kotler and Armstrong 2014, 78.)

Wilson (2010), claims that especially small companies can profit from Social Media Marketing, rather than the traditional one. For instance, one of the benefits of Social Media Marketing is that it enables a company to reach a huge number of potential customers in a very short period of time. Furthermore, social media allows to contact the consumers directly and easily, as well as to interact with them. Social Media Marketing provides an opportunity to build long-lasting customer relationships by asking for consumer feedback and responding to the demands of the clients. (8-13.)

Moreover, one of the benefits of social media is its low cost when it comes to reaching the target customers in comparison to traditional media such as newspapers or TV. In order to advertise on traditional media a company has to make huge investments, while using social media for this purpose is free. As far as smaller businesses are concerned, it might be a problem for them to invest a large amounts of money in advertising, which is why using Social Media Marketing is beneficial in that case. (Barefoot, Szabo, 2010, 89-90.)

According to Barefoot and Szabo (2010, 92-93), Social Media Marketing provides a great opportunity for the Research and Development departments to collect the consumer feedback on products and services, in order to correct the mistakes and increase customer satisfaction. In addition to that, using social media for marketing purposes enables small enterprises to boost brand awareness and create goodwill. The report of Ohio State University (2015) states that organizations actively using social media platforms have more loyal customers. The figure below (Figure 9) illustrates the benefits of Social Media Marketing:



Figure 9 Advantages of Social Media Marketing (MOS SEO Services 2013)

In spite of all the positive aspects of Social Media Marketing, it is significant to mention that it also has its challenges. As reported by Rohm and Weiss (2014), using Social Media Marketing requires sufficient knowledge in that sphere and a clear strategy. In order to succeed in Social Media Marketing just creation of Facebook or Instagram account is not enough. Development of a Social Media Marketing strategy is a time-consuming and complex process requiring effort. In order to be successful in using social media for

marketing purposes it is significant to make posts with engaging information and manage an account on social media on a daily basis. (52-53.)

What is more, Drury (2008, 25), claims that Social Media Marketing demands a completely new way of customer communication. While in traditional media the key concept is to transfer the information about the firm to the customer, Social Media Marketing implies communication between the seller and the buyer, as well as exchange of ideas. Correspondingly, small-sized companies need to have specialists who possess knowledge and skills in consumer communication or hire social media consultants. One more challenge of Social Media Marketing is that sometimes consumers share not only their good but also their bad experiences using social networks. Thus, it is extremely important to react quickly to negative user comments and take action in order to prevent the possible consequences such as damage to company's reputation. (Schaffer 2013, 100-101.) The diagram below (Figure 10) illustrates the challenges of using social media for marketing purposes:

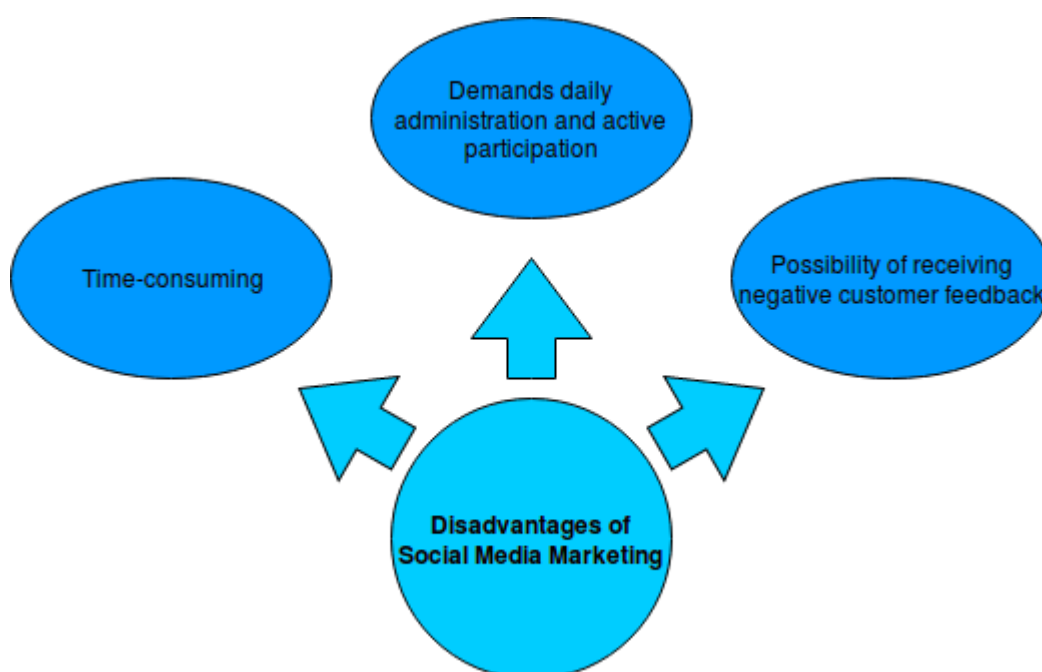


Figure 10 Disadvantages of social media as a marketing tool  
(Adapted from Schaffer: The challenges of using social networking sites in marketing 2013)

Despite the fact that Social Media Marketing involves its disadvantages, it can be useful and effective for business performance of a small organization. Nevertheless, specialists need to be ready to invest time and work on a structured social media plan in order to achieve success.

## 2.7 Social Media Marketing Strategy

The general definition of a strategy is a plan which aims to differentiate a company from its competitors by means of having a competitive advantage. As reported by Thomas and Barlow (2013), it is important for each business to define its goals and a way to reach them. As far as Social Media Marketing strategy is concerned, it is an element of a company's general marketing strategy and it includes two main issues which should be considered by a firm. The first aspect is to decide upon which target market the company wants to reach (customers) and the second one is how to satisfy their needs (value proposition). (21-22.) Kotler and Armstrong (2014) claim that in order to choose the target customers, the market needs to be divided into market segments. Afterwards, the most suitable segments need to be selected, which is called target marketing. The value proposition means the values which a business provides for its consumers with a purpose of serving them in a best way. Those values distinguish a brand from all the others. Hence, having a good value proposition means having competitive advantage in the target market. (213-214.) Concluding that, the final goal of any marketing plan is getting a competitive advantage and communicating it to consumers leads to prosperity of a brand.



In order to create a Social Media Marketing strategy, the business owners need to start with examining their own firm and the business environment. To start with, a company should assess its Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats associated with social media. (Safko and Brake 2009, 669.) Examining the main external and internal aspects for the firm is helpful in comprising of strategic goals. However, the business owners should assess their organizations not only from the point of view of social media, but also as a whole, due the fact that it allows to have a better insight into the current situation. The SWOT analysis is beneficial for examining a situation, nevertheless, it is also crucial to analyze the competitors, consumers and the business environment. After the analysis of those elements, a company needs to define its strategic goals as well as decide on an action plan necessary for the achievement of them. (Kotler and Armstrong, 2014, 220.)

As reported by Kotler and Keller (2009, 345), designing the communications inside a Social Media Marketing Strategy means choosing the suitable communication channels. Usually consumers use several social media platforms. Therefore, organizations need to use different social networking sites in order to market successfully. However, being present on every social media platform is unnecessary taking into account the fact that every social network is unique and requires different efforts. (Zarrella, 2010, 74-75.) In order to implement an effective social media strategy, it is crucial to know which channels of social media does the target customer group use. There is no right way to choose the right social media, yet the key idea is to select the ones where the consumers spend most of the time on. All in all, a strategy will not bring the expected results if it is not executed successfully, therefore it is crucial to dedicate a lot of time to it and remember that social media strategy is always changing, so as the demands of the customers. Thus, it is significant to measure the success of the chosen social media strategy. (Kotler and Armstrong, 2014, 231-233.)

One significant aspect, which should be considered by the companies before undertaking the Social Media Marketing process, is coming up with exact goals the organization is trying to reach. There is no doubt that those objectives vary from firm to firm and each business has its own way to succeed in using social media in marketing. According to Evans (2010, 10-21), there are five main targets of Social Media Marketing:

1. Improvement of Brand Awareness
2. Enhancement of Public Relations
3. Improvement of firm's reputation
4. Improvement of Research and Development
5. Boost of Sales and Leads

As far as the goals of Social Media Marketing are concerned, they should be S - specific, M - measurable, A - attainable, R - realistic and T - timely (Weinberg, 2009, 54). Those aspects need to be considered while developing a Social Media Marketing strategy.

Brand awareness is about the brand becoming relevant to the potential customers. That implies posting of content on a regular basis, which answers the questions of the clients and helps to establish a connection between the seller and the buyer. An example of a S.M.A.R.T goal concerning brand awareness could be to gain 200 Instagram followers by the end of a week. (Levinson and Levinson 2011, 213.)

Levinson and Levinson (2011), claim that online communication with the customers is crucial due the fact that it allows to find out the consumers' opinions about the brand and respond to comments in a timely manner. When companies interact actively with their clients they create brand loyalty which means building long-lasting relationships with customers. Here an example of a S.M.A.R.T goal

could be to gain 15 5-Star reviews on Facebook by the end of a month.

As far as an increase in company's reputation is concerned, social media provides an opportunity to share brand loyalty with many people in real time. Earlier the organizations used to rely on word of mouth. These days, someone can, for instance, share a picture of food from his or her favorite restaurant and get a discount or a free coffee there. Thus, the brand reputation increases and the consumer feels connected. A S.M.A.R.T goal concerning the company's reputation increase could be to get 5 mentions on Twitter every week within the next two months.

Constant integration with the consumers on social media enables to be aware of the users' concerns and create timely solutions to them. In addition to that, brands can follow their competitors in order to figure out which complaints they receive, how they deal with them and which new products they have brought to the market lately. An example of a S.M.A.R.T is to engage 5 customers on different social media networks about problems in a month. (210-213.)

Using social media to generate sales and acquire leads is a target of many companies. However, in order to achieve this goal it is significant to dedicate time for the first four objectives. Social Media enables organizations to communicate with the consumers on organizational and personal level and create engagement. A S.M.A.R.T goal would be to achieve an average 10% Click Through Rate on Instagram posts by the end of the quarter. (Evans 2010, 38-43.)

As reported by Schaffer (2013, 86), every fifth small business does not have a Social Media Strategy. That can be a bad sign for those firms, due the fact that using social media in marketing makes a business more competitive in that sphere. Hence, launching of a Social Media Strategy is an extremely important step.

According to Hay (2011), there are three key elements which are significant for social media strategy planning. The first one is called interactivity and implies integration with consumers online and making posts in blog. Another crucial part of having a successful Social Media Strategy is collaboration and it means active assisting the progress of social bookmarking websites. The last area is sharing, which can be obtained through posting visual content such as images and videos.

Applying those Social Media Marketing goals to the research objectives, it can be concluded that the case company Scandinavian Skin Candy should aim to increase brand awareness among German customers, build relationships with them, build and retain a good reputation in Germany, improve its Research and Development activities in the country and boost sales and leads in Germany. In order to achieve those goals, the brand needs to be interactive with customers on social media, communicate with its clients, respond to their feedback and be active sharing content on a regular basis. (17-19).

After the company has decided on its Social Media Strategy, which matches its objectives, it is vital to plan carefully what needs to be done in order to meet the goals. In order to achieve its full marketing potential, an organization has to fulfill the basic marketing requirements. (Zarrella 2010, 78.) As far as social marketing is concerned, there is a logical progression of its elements to be followed (Jantsch 2011, 8). The hierarchy of Social Media Marketing is illustrated (Figure 11) below:



Figure 11 The progression of Social Media Marketing elements  
(Small Business Branding 2011)

Jantsch (2011), recommends the owners of small businesses to follow the progression above when they are working on social marketing tactics.

Blogging is the pyramid's foundation and the researcher suggests to to read, comment and write a blog. RSS refers to filtering and aggregating the content and it is a tool with the help of which the content can be re-purposed, republished and created. The next part of the model is Social Search which plays an important role for small companies nowadays - it is about stimulating and managing the reputation through participation. Social Bookmarking helps to open up new channels for the business through taking part in social bookmarking and tagging content. In addition to that it can produce additional search traffic, however, it requires effort. Another significant area of the framework are social networks. Social networking sites are beneficial for the small firms which strive to profit from the potential prospects on Facebook, Instagram and suchlike. Those networks require a lot of effort to understand and companies have to take care of regular content sharing if they want to take advantage of them. The last part of the model is concerned about Micro - social platforms for real-time communication like, for

instance, Twitter. This element stands on the top of a pyramid and plays an important role for the business world these days. (26-29.)

As reported by Jantsch (2011), in spite of the fact that the process for achievement of Social Media Marketing objectives is common, the methods required differ depending on the case company. For instance, some organizations should start with a Facebook page, while the other ones need a Twitter account at first. The researcher claims that it is essential for small companies to know exactly how to act in each step of the social marketing progression. Only in that case the process will be effective. (56-57.) As far as the objectives of Social Media Marketing are concerned, Jantsch suggests the following pyramid model:



Figure 12 Pyramid of social marketing objectives (Jantsch 2011, 57)

To sum up, a company can choose whether or not to follow a social marketing logical progression, or act in compliance with an objective framework, the idea is to determine the tactics and operate according to the chosen strategy.

## 2.8 Evaluation of Social Media Marketing

In the previous part the author discussed Social Media Marketing as a concept as well as its planning process. When the objectives, tactics and strategical aspects of the key subject are being considered, it is crucial to examine the evaluation process.

Measuring Social Media Marketing is a significant part which can help a company to control its activities and contribute to the profit maximization.

According to Thomas and Barlow (2013, 99), implementing a social media strategy without evaluation of results is similar to advertising a company in a magazine without measuring the outcomes – a potential waste of money and time.

Based on the survey, related to the target market, made by University of Hamburg in 2015, 60% of German businessmen experience difficulties while measuring Return on Investment in social media. Hence, understanding the significance of a Social Media Marketing plan is sometimes not enough, it is also important to figure out whether the chosen strategy is beneficial for an organization.

Weber (2009, 115) states that many businesses nowadays are unsure about the criteria and ways to measure Social Media Marketing. Nevertheless, defining the goals of Social Media Marketing is helpful for evaluation of a firm's success.

On the other hand, Tuten and Solomon (2014), claim that evaluation needs to be implemented with exact targets, otherwise it will not make sense. Obviously, each of those targets requires various measurement strategy, yet both of them can be characterized either as qualitative or as quantitative. (80-81.) As reported by Thomas and Barlow (2013, 35-47), quantitative and qualitative metrics refer to KPI (Key Performance Indicators). KPI means metric of social media which defines the progress of strategy in goal

achievement. As far as quantitative Key Performance Indicators are concerned, they allow to assess the success of social media strategy with the help of numbers and data and evaluate the ROI or Return on Investment associated with Social Media Marketing activities. At the same time, qualitative KPIs measure the influence of Social Media Marketing efforts on objectives, for instance, impact, engagement and brand awareness. (Quesenberry, 2015, 175.)

In order to evaluate the Social Media Marketing efficiency, firstly, it is necessary to establish the firm's targets. Then, a combination of quantitative and qualitative Key Performance Indicators needs to be selected. Businesses have a choice from different KPIs, however it is significant to find the ones matching the company's objectives. Next, a benchmark should be set by a firm. There is a possibility for small-sized business owners to record their progress and outcomes by examining them in contrast to the baseline. Another important aspect is reporting of results and comparison with the initially set goals of the firm. Finally, the evaluation program needs to be fully analyzed. This step cannot be underestimated by a company for the reason that regular and accurate review is helpful in following the success of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. (Hay, 2009, 312-314.)

To conclude, evaluation of Social Media Marketing is essential for the enterprises, due the fact that it allows to see, whether the efforts paid off and contributed to the profitability of the organization. Thus, business owners need to invest time in this significant process.

### **3 Research Methodology**

This chapter is dedicated to the empirical research. In the beginning the researcher will define the research methodology and the design



of a survey. Furthermore, the author will disclose the process of Data Acquisition and describe the step-by-step activities. Then, the current Social Media Marketing of the case company will be presented. Finally, the author will discuss and analyze the research results.

### 3.1 Research Design

As reported by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2014, 8), research is a study implemented in order to discover things in a systematic way with a purpose of getting new knowledge.

Kothari (2013, 6) claims that the foundation of an empirical research is observation and it acquires information not from theory but from practical experiences. Empirical research allows to get knowledge about people behavior which is extremely valuable for a research.

In the beginning of the research it is crucial to decide which research approach will be the most suitable for a particular study. There are two research approaches: inductive and deductive.

As reported by Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill (2014), inductive approach implies data collection and theory development through data analysis. Inductive reasoning starts with specific observations, examples of social processes or events and progresses to wider theories and generalizations. (500-502.) Using this method, the researcher can identify trends and patterns associated with a certain set of data and thereby come up with a hypothesis. As a result, general conclusions or theories can be developed. (Bryman and Bell 2015, 23.) In contrast, using deductive approach, the researcher starts with hypothesis and theory, then carries out a research to test whether the hypotheses and theories can be justified through exact cases. Deductive reasoning begins at abstract and general level and then becomes more concrete and

specific. (Bryman and Bell, 2015, 24.) The key difference between the two research approaches mentioned above is that inductive reasoning is concerned with the new theory generation using the data, while deductive reasoning focuses on testing a theory (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, 2014, 501). The chosen approach for this research paper is deductive approach. In the beginning of a research the author compiled a theoretical framework by defining Social Media Marketing, its advantages and disadvantages, as well as strategical approach and evaluation of Social Media Marketing strategy. Furthermore, the researcher implemented an empirical research by conducting two in-depth interviews. After that, taking into consideration the literature review and findings from the interviews, the author composed and launched an online survey as a second part of the empirical research. When the data was collected, the author analyzed the data and presented the results of a practical research applying them to the concepts described in the literature review part. The results of a practical study confirmed the findings of the theoretical part. In the end the author gave recommendations for the case company and drew conclusions.

Moreover, in this thesis the researcher will use case study methodology. According to Yin (2013), case study is research method which investigates a phenomenon in a real-life context, where the boundaries between the context and phenomenon are not completely evident and several evidence sources are used. Case study focuses on thorough contextual analysis of a number of conditions or events and the relationships between them. (8-13.) The key motivation for selecting this method of study is a wish to examine a complex subject in details. The case company is Scandinavian Skin Candy, which was chosen voluntarily by the thesis author. The case company awoke the researcher's interest due to its unique products and willingness to improve its social media strategy. The research methodology includes four main objectives: case study design, data collection, data analysis and reporting the study results. (Yin, 2013, 85.)

The following steps, crucial for each study, include the choice of research methodology and ways to collect the data. In this thesis, the researcher will use both quantitative and qualitative methodology. As reported by Bryman and Bell (2015), the idea of qualitative research is to obtain in-depth information on a subject emphasizing its quality. Whereas, quantitative research aims to gather knowledge by processing huge volumes of data in order to get the answer to a research question. (392-293.)

As a rule qualitative data implies words and imagery, while quantitative data represents numbers. When the author obtains a plenty of knowledge about the problem, choosing a quantitative study is the best alternative. When the goal of a researcher is to get the context understanding and a holistic view of the problem, qualitative research will be the most suitable approach. (Bryman and Bell 2015, 394.) The main objective of the thesis is to examine, how the case company can attract and retain customers in Germany by using social media. Thus, in the empirical study the author decided to examine three aspects, crucial for a successful social media strategy (Evans 2010, 134):

- Which experience regarding social media does the case company already have
- What are the trends and statistics concerning the usage of Social Media in Germany?
- How do the German customers use social networking sites?

Qualitative approach allows to obtain a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon and helps to interpret the individuals' stories. (Silverman 2011, 10.) Hutter, Hennink and Bailey (2011) underlined three basic types of qualitative research: in-depth interviews, focus-group discussions and observations. An in-depth interview allows the researcher to capture descriptive data about the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors. (37-38.) In order to

gather the necessary information about the case brand and examine the current Social Media Marketing situation, the author conducted an in-depth interview with the CEO of Scandinavian Skin Candy.

A semi-structured interview refers to qualitative research methods and implies a number of pre-determined open-ended questions (Hutter, Hennink and Bailey 2011, 97). The author conducted a skype interview with a German Social Media Marketing professional, in order to understand better the company's target market and learn about Social Media Marketing trends in Germany.

According to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2016, 17), there are several ways to implement a quantitative research, which are: phone interviews, written questionnaires and surveys. As reported by Balnaves and Caputi (2001), survey research implies a number of questions targeted at extracting certain information from a specific group of individuals. The researcher decided to apply a quantitative survey method to gather knowledge about the usage of social media by Germans. The author composed survey questions based on the facts, statistics and opinions from literature review part and both interviews. The purpose of the quantitative survey was to examine "how many" people perform certain actions associated with social media and "how often" do they do that. (102-103.) For that purpose the researcher employed a structured online questionnaire with closed-ended questions.

The author has chosen suitable research methods in accordance with the research question. Qualitative type of research aims at revealing aspirations and motives. In contrast, quantitative research focuses on estimation of amounts or quantities (Kothari 2013). Hence, applying both research methods ensures a better problem understanding by combining different ways of knowing. (6-7.) In conformity with the reasons mentioned above, for the empirical research the author decided to employ both qualitative and quantitative methodology.

The next step of a research is gathering the data. Secondary data includes facts and figures collected before the current research by some other academicians (Sapsford and Jupp 2006, 14). This kind of data is beneficial when the researcher is not familiar with the research topics. According to Smith and Smith (2008), there are several different approaches concerned about division of secondary data sources. One approach is to classify them into external and internal, another one is to divide the sources into printed sources such as books and articles, and Internet sources such as websites. (38-39.) On the other hand, Lewis, Saunders and Thornhill (2014, 260-263) approach another way to divide secondary sources: survey-based, documentary and both multiple sources combined. In this thesis the researcher will apply data source triangulation by using both primary and secondary data. The choice of this method the author can support by the following benefits of triangulation (Bryman and Bell 2015, 104-105):

- Variety of sources provide a better insight into topic
- Reduction of uncertainties, when finding the same information in different sources
- More comprehensive approach

In this study, secondary data is gathered from various books, including the works of specialists in the area of Social Media Marketing, such as Dan Zarrella (2010), Tracy Tuten and Michael Solomon (2014) and Neal Schaffer (2013), which the author accessed through the library and online. In addition to that, the author used various scientific articles and materials related to the topic Social Media Marketing, as well as the case company's official website and its social media accounts. Moreover, the author collected information from different websites which are specialized in statistics, such as Statista and Social Media Examiner. Additionally, secondary data is gathered from marketing journals and reports. Secondary data is significant for this thesis due the fact that it improves the problem understanding, it provides a theoretical

basis to make collection of primary data more specific, as well as saves time and effort of a researcher (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2013, 213-214).

Primary data is represented by an empirical proof collected by the researcher by him or herself applicable for the current research. Data from primary sources normally excel data from secondary sources for the reason that they are gathered in accordance with the topic and correspond to the exact research objective. (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill 2014, 176-178.) Although collection of primary data is a complicated process which usually requires a lot of time, a good research paper is not possible without it. Primary data allows researchers to gather the data in accordance with a specific purpose of the study and to interpret it depending on their needs and objectives (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2013, 223-224).

When the secondary data was collected and theoretical framework established, the author began to gather primary data. The first part of the empirical study has consisted of two interviews.

The first interview participant was the CEO and owner of Scandinavian Skin candy - Mr. Harri Kujala. The interview was implemented via Skype and was about obtaining the basic information about the case company, as well as about the current situation concerning Social Media Marketing. Furthermore, during the interview it was found out that the company has already done a target market analysis and found some distributors for its products in Germany. Nevertheless, Scandinavian Skin Candy does not have a clear Social Media Marketing plan for the target country and did not make any efforts to win German customers yet. That is why the key purpose of the study is to assist the case company and develop a Social Media Marketing plan.

Another interview was done with a specialist in the area of Social Media Marketing from Germany via phone. The key point of the interview was to examine the main details of Social Media Marketing in Germany, including the key facts and numbers. The second

interview allowed the author to get a better understanding of the target market, as well as to get an insight into the main topic, which is essential for a further research.

The second part of primary data collection involved an online survey which targeted people from Germany. The purpose of the survey was to collect data on users' opinions and attitudes about the topic social media. According to the assignor company, the target customers are mostly women aged from 16 to 60 years old living in Germany. Considering the fact that the main product of the company is a sugaring paste, which allows easy and affordable epilation, the case company did not set limitations concerning the occupation, social status or nationality of participants. The author has created an online survey using the questionnaire tool [umfrageonline.com](https://umfrageonline.com). In order to get better results, it was necessary to get as many participants as possible, which is why the researcher sent a link to the survey to all the acquaintances including family, friends, former colleagues and fellow students, as well as posted the link on the personal Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts. The author managed to gather results from 120 participants, which will be disclosed further in this thesis.

Figure 13 portrays the methods of data collection for this research paper:

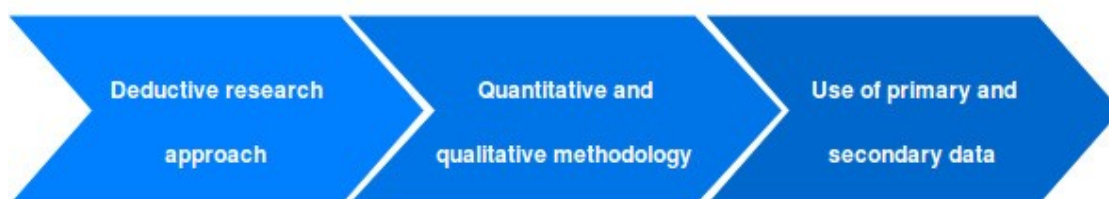


Figure 13 Methods of data collection

To summarize, the study was implemented according to a deductive approach and both quantitative and qualitative methods were used

by the researcher. Moreover, the author used primary and secondary data in order to conduct this research.

### 3.2 Data Collection

In order to present the data acquisition process in a holistic way, the author decided to use a Gantt chart model. A Gantt chart is a horizontal bar chart which was created by the scientist Henry Gantt as tool for production controlling. Gantt chart is often used in project management, represents a project schedule on a graph and is aimed to assist in planning, coordination and tracking of project tasks. (Geraldi, Lechter, Thomas 2012, 579.) The process of collection of primary and secondary data is shown below:

Task Name	Duration	Start	Finish
Desk research and secondary data collection	31d	08/01/17	08/31/17
Creation of interview questions & survey	10d	09/01/17	09/10/17
Primary data collection	29d	09/12/17	10/10/17
Analysis of data and results	16d	10/10/17	10/25/17

Table 1 Gantt chart representing data collection process

The data acquisition process was divided by an author into four parts:

- Desk research and collection of secondary data
- Creation of interview questions and survey design
- Primary data collection through interviews and survey
- Analysis of data and presenting the results

The first step is desk research and the author started collecting secondary data in August 2017. During the first month the



researcher gathered the information on key marketing concepts and Social Media Marketing. Secondly, the interviews were created and the survey designed. After that, the interviews were composed the survey launched for the target group. The link to the online survey made via [umfrageonline.com](http://umfrageonline.com) was spread by Facebook, WhatsApp messages, Twitter, E-Mail, as well as word of mouth.

When online survey was running, the researcher has conducted an in-depth interview with the CEO of the case company Harri Kujala. The interview was implemented via skype and the author obtained much useful knowledge about Scandinavian Skin Candy, including the general information about the brand, its current Social Media Marketing strategy as well as plans for the future and expectations concerned about the author's research. Moreover in October 2017 the researcher has conducted a phone interview with a specialist in the area of Social Media Marketing from Germany. The point was to gather information about the target market and investigate how to successfully implement a social media strategy in Germany.

All in all, the data collection and analysis process involved desk research, preparation of interviews and survey, obtaining of primary data and analysis of the results. It took the author 2,5 months to complete the process.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

As reported by Bryman and Bell (2015, 595), analysis of data is a certain type of work on the data gathered from the fieldwork. Data analysis is a practical process which is necessary to determine the research results in a qualitative research. Analyzing the data means converting the data into information. (Sunders, Lewis, Thornhill 2009, 151.)

In order to analyse the qualitative data from in-depth interviews, the researcher has chosen the flow model introduced by Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2013, 70-72) to simplify and structurize the raw data. The first element of a flow model is called data reduction. At this point, the interview scripts need to be simplified and abstracted, and the data selected and transformed. During the data collection the author was writing transcripts, dividing the data into topics and composing summaries. The next element data display means organization of data and includes interpreting the data in various figures, graphs and charts in order to get a better insight into topic, select the most significant indicators and present the data in an organized manner. The last part of the data analysis process is the development of conclusions. While collecting the data, the researcher outlined propositions and patterns important for the research. In addition to that, during the process of data analysis the author made sure that the results are matching with the research questions and objectives. (Miles, Huberman and Saldana 2013, 73-75.)

As reported by Chambers and Skinner (2005), in order to analyze the quantitative data of an online survey and interpret the results, four steps need to be taken. Firstly, it is necessary to make an overview of the results and make sure that all the questions asked are matching with the research objectives. In the beginning of the analysis the author got an overall picture of the results. Secondly, searching for patterns is an important step in data analysis of a survey. (68-69.) The researcher made an overview of the responses using the evaluation tool of a survey service [umfrageonline.com](http://umfrageonline.com). The author analyzed the response statistics and examined, which of the answer options were selected by the majority of the survey participants. The next step of the data analysis of a questionnaire according to (Milton 2009, 86), is a visual representation. At this point, the author used an automatic answer statistic tool of [umfrageonline.com](http://umfrageonline.com), where the answers were represented in pie and bar charts, depending on the type of the question and answer

possibilities. The last element of the data analysis of the online questionnaire is determination of an action plan in accordance with the results (Chambers, Skinner 2005, 72). After finding the patterns in the responses, the author made conclusions in accordance with the research objectives, questions and the pattern of answers. Finally, the author made suggestions for the action plan based on the points mentioned above.

The following part will present data analysis of two interviews and online survey, which compose the empirical research.

### 3.3.1 Current Social Media Marketing Situation of the Case Company

As already mentioned before, Scandinavian Skin Candy is a young professional beauty brand founded in 2010 in Finland. The main product of the company is a sugaring paste which is made with using a unique ingredient – Xylitol. Due the fact that the product of the case company allows less painful, more pleasant and affordable epilation procedure with long-lasting results it already gained popularity in Finland and abroad.

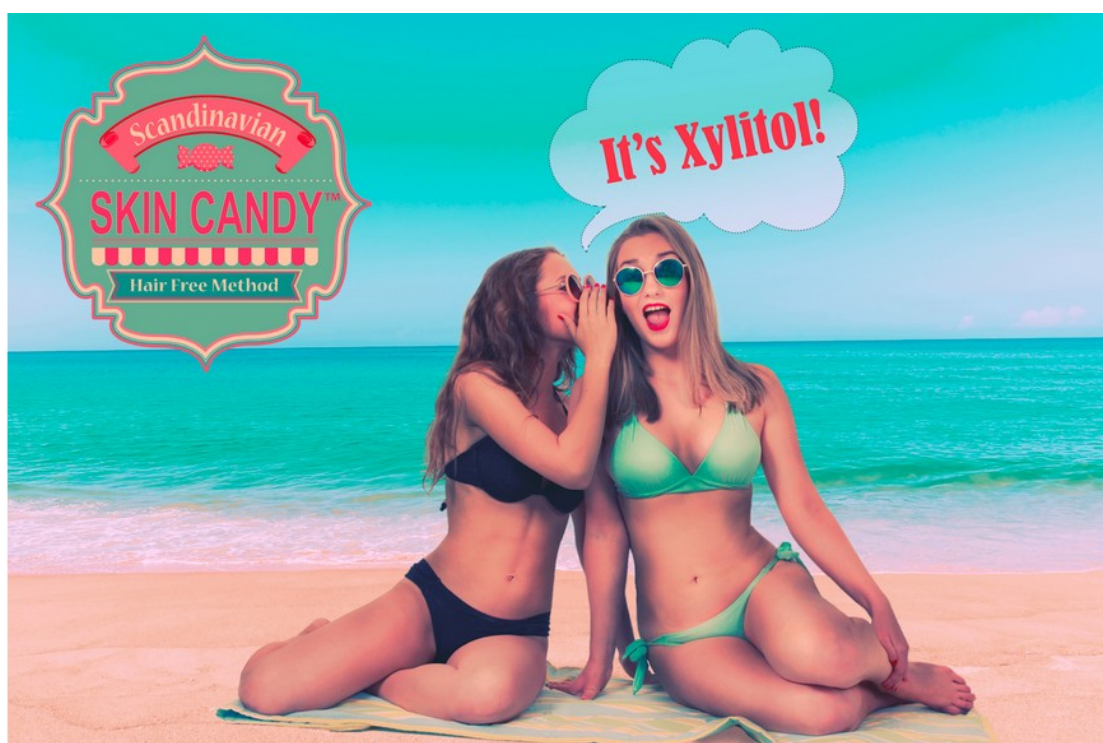


Figure 14 The advertising image from Scandinavian Skin Candy homepage (Scandinavian Skin Candy 2017)

The key marketing channel of Scandinavian Skin Candy is social media. The case company is actively using social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram and Youtube in order to keep in touch with its customers. As already discussed before, Scandinavian Skin Candy is already present in quite many countries, such as Sweden, Netherlands, New Zealand, Japan, Italy and so on. Furthermore, the brand gained popularity in Finland, where it became well-known and loved by the Finnish people due to its unique products.

In spite of the fact that Scandinavian Skin Candy is present on several social media platforms, it is mostly active on Instagram. Currently the brand has 482 Instagram followers and shares 2-3 pictures a week. As far as the content is concerned, Scandinavian Skin Candy is mostly publishing the pictures of its products, photos from events and the sugaring procedure. Moreover, the company is sharing pictures from different beauty events where it participates

and presents its products. (Scandinavian Skin Candy Instagram account, 2017)

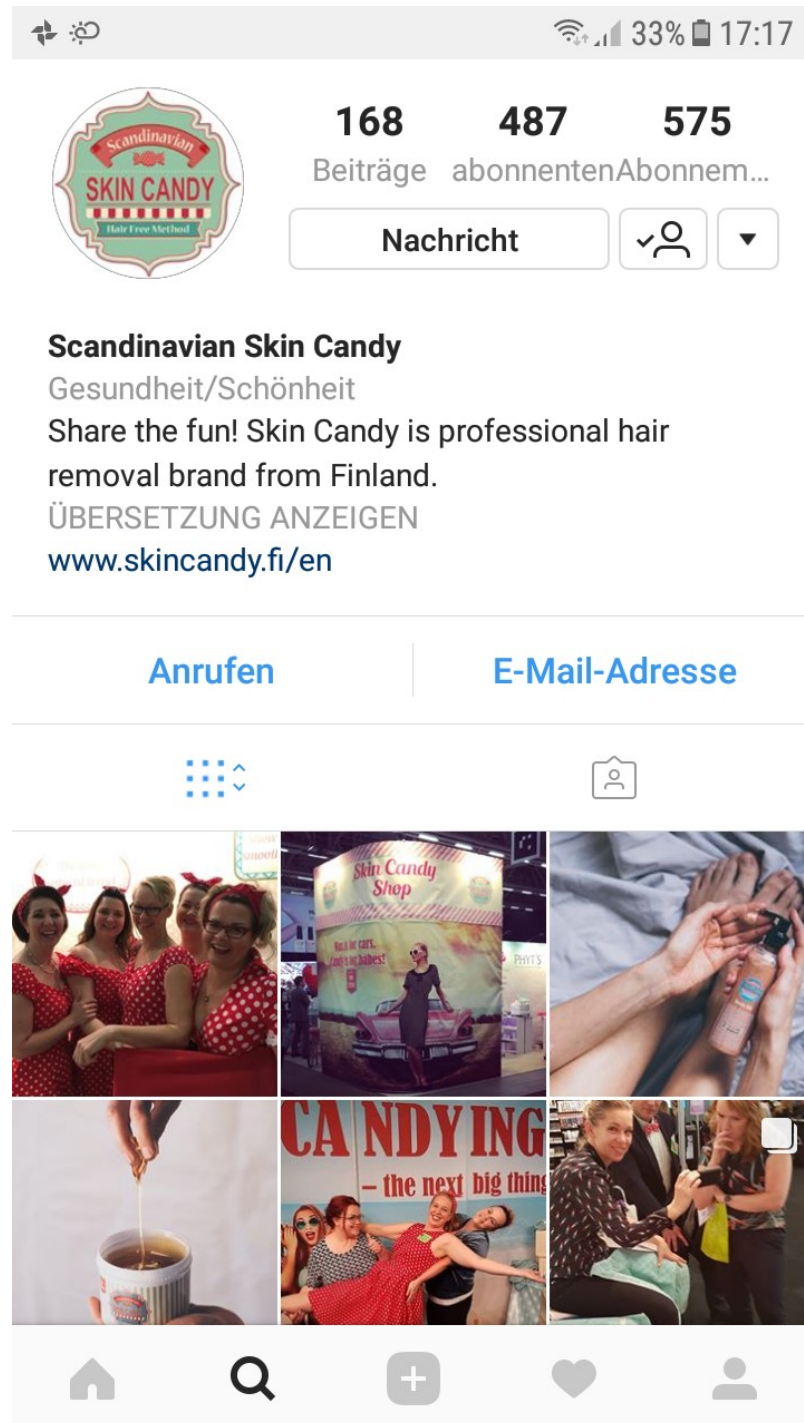


Figure 15 The Official Instagram account of Scandinavian Skin Candy (Scandinavian Skin Candy Instagram 2017)

Scandinavian Skin Candy is publishing video content via the Suomen Hoitolatukku Oy Youtube channel. The company posts videos about the sugaring procedure as well as videos taken during the beauty events. However, the brand Scandinavian Skin Candy still does not have its own YouTube channel yet.

What's more, Scandinavian Skin Candy communicates with its customers via Facebook. The official Facebook account of the company has 367 followers and publishes content similar to the one of its Instagram account. However, the brand has also separate accounts for Sweden, Netherlands and New Zealand. All of the accounts are in a corresponding language and have approximately the same frequency of posts with the main account of Scandinavian Skin Candy. The company's accounts are marked with "high responsiveness to messages" sign, which means that the brand takes care that its customers get answers to their questions or feedback quickly. (Scandinavian Skin Candy Facebook accounts, 2017).



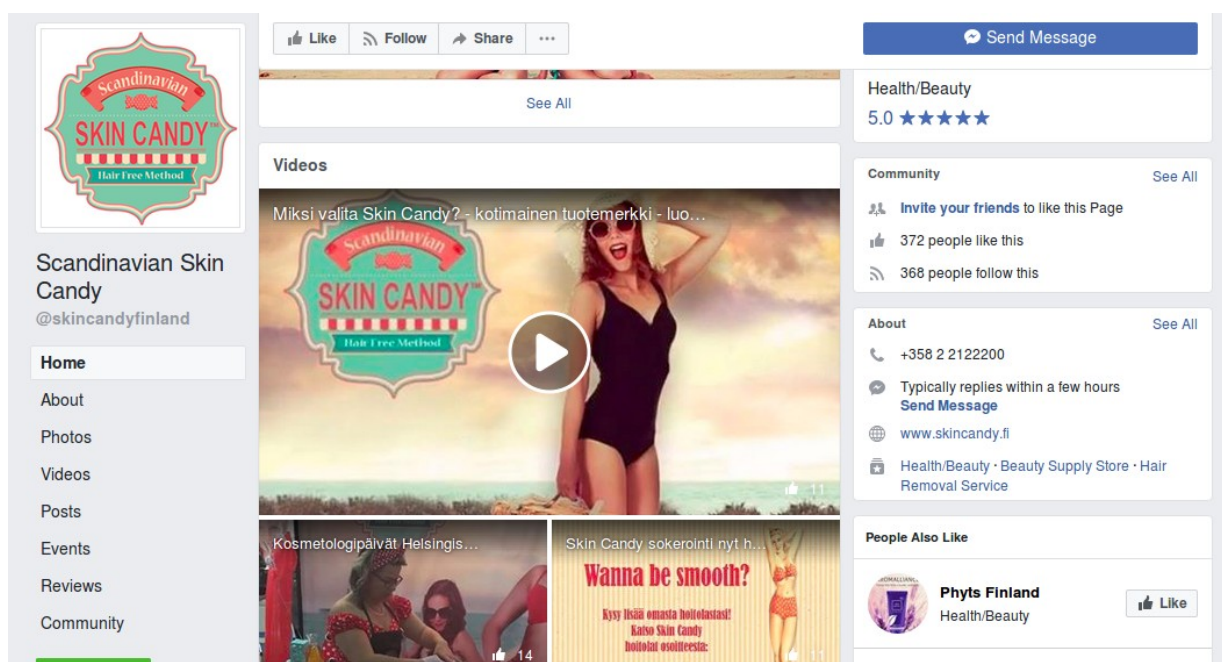


Figure 16 The official Facebook page of Scandinavian Skin Candy (Scandinavian Skin Candy Facebook 2017)

Currently the company is aimed at reaching German customers, which is why it is planned to create a Facebook and Instagram accounts in German language. The relevance of the issue will be tested by the results of the online survey. In order to figure out, whether the target customers are interested in case brands products it is necessary to conduct the research first.

Schaffer (2013, 59) claims that Social Media Marketing is a significant and effective element of an overall marketing strategy, but only if it is used rationally and actively. Scandinavian Skin Candy is a relatively new brand on the market and it just starts getting popular on social networking sites. Nevertheless, the products of the brand are winning new fans in different countries daily, which is why it is crucial to stay connected with the customers, in order to provide them with all the necessary information, answer the questions and react to their feedback. The current goal of the brand is to reach the German consumers by means of using social media. The further research will concentrate on this topic and will assist the case company in achievement of its objectives.

### 3.3.2 Interview with an expert in Social Media Marketing branch from Germany

This part of the research the author will dedicate to the interview with a specialist in the area of Social Media Marketing from Germany. Conducting a phone interview with an expert in this branch will provide the researcher with the necessary information about Germany as a market as well as some statistical data concerned about Social Media Marketing situation in the country.

According to the interviewee, these days social networks serve not only as a communication tool for German citizens, but are also used as sources of information on various topics. For instance, social media became source number one for referral traffic to the other web pages leaving Google and other search engines on the second place.

The interviewee states that the study of Federal Statistical Office (2016) has shown that 55% of German Internet users are using social networking sites for private purposes. In the age group from 16 to 24 years old, almost 90% of people use Facebook and other social media platforms. As far as the age groups 25-44 and 45-62 years old are concerned, here the indicators are 69% and 42% correspondingly. In comparison to the year 2014, there is a significant increase in those numbers, what can be explained by an extreme popularity gained by social media in Germany lately. (German Federal Statistical Office 2016.)

The specialist in the area of Social Media Marketing claims that the three most popular social media platforms in Germany are Facebook Instagram and YouTube. The expert also states that on average 83% of Internet users have an account on one or more of above mentioned social networking sites.



According to the interviewee, various studies implemented in Germany show the same results: the importance of social media is rapidly growing. However, many German enterprises underestimate the significant role of social networks in business world and only 32% of firms in 2016 have used Social Media Marketing as a part of their strategy. The position of an expert in Social Media Marketing is clear: especially small and medium-sized companies should put more effort into their Social Media Marketing strategy due the fact that their current online performance is quite poor compared to the bigger enterprises.

The interviewee claims that it is crucial for the marketers to know how, where, when and for how long the target groups are present on the social media. Those are the important social media statistics when it comes to most used social networking sites.

Furthermore, the interviewee disclosed some facts about the most “liked” branches on social media. According to the Social Media Marketing expert, the most popular brands on Facebook in Germany are in E-Commerce, retail, Fast-Moving-Consumer goods and beauty industries. On a popular photo and video sharing social platform Instagram beauty industry occupies the third position after cars and fashion and belongs to one of the most beloved search criteria.

In conclusion the expert in Social Media Marketing branch gave a comment on perspectives for foreign companies on the German social media market. The specialist asserted that in order to win customers in Germany, it is essential to be actively present on social media and interact with the consumers. In addition to that, it is a must to translate all the content into German language. In spite of the fact that most of the Germans of younger or middle age have no problems with understanding English, yet for the users’ convenience and reaching the older generation translating the posts plays an important role. On the most popular social media platforms businesses can reach a wide audience of all ages and professional classes. Despite the fact that the competition might be

tough, there is a possibility to address the target groups more specifically, according to the industry the company represents. Particularly, there is a great opportunity for small and medium-sized companies to do marketing via social media. From the statistical data they can derive significant information for the optimal orientation in accordance with their industry. Nevertheless, taking into account constant changes in the social media sector, it is recommended to keep the behavioral studies and user numbers in track. For a successful Social Media Marketing in Germany a consistent performance analysis and adaptation to the social networks development is necessary. (Interview with a specialist in Social Media Marketing branch from Germany, 2017.)

### 3.3.3 Online Survey

In this sub-chapter the researcher will present and analyze the results of an online survey. The author created the survey relying on the research question and subquestions. According to Schaffer (2013, 44) in order to learn about social media usage by the target group, the marketers need to know the following things about them: who are the target customers, how often do they use social media and what is the purpose of use.

When designing the survey, the author considered the following aspects which will be helpful in development of a Social Media Marketing strategy:

- Who are the potential customers?
- Do they use social media and how often?
- What do they use social media for?
- Are they interested in the industry the case company refers to?

- Which actions do they perform on social media?

The survey was spread among the German people of different ages and occupations. Due the fact that the case company's products can be used by both men and women regardless of their occupation, social status and nationality the participants were not selected according to certain criteria. However, it was an interest of an author to get clear results, and thus, the participants had to either answer all the questions, or quit the survey. The purpose of it was to sort out the participants for whom the topic was irrelevant or did not match their interests.

As already mentioned before, the survey platform used by the author was [umfrageonline.com](https://umfrageonline.com), a popular in Germany survey tool about which the research learned using the Internet. The tool allowed the researcher to create different types of questions such as single choice, closed and multiple choice question. The author came up with 8 questions of different types which was relevant amount, according to the author's opinion, in order to cover the topic, but, at the same time, not to overload the participants with work. The time when the survey was running was one month and the author managed to collect the results from 120 participants, considering only those who answered all of the questions. Among the participants 102 were female and 18 male.

The first question was about the age and can be translated as "How old are you?". Here the participants only had a choice from three age groups, which are: 16 to 24, 24 to 44 and 44 and above years old. The author decided to choose those groups in order to divide users into young people, adult to middle age, and middle age to seniors (Davino and Fabbris, 2013, 91). Participants under 16 could not participate in the survey due the fact that they do not belong to target customers. The results have shown that 40% of participants were from 24 to 44 years old. The author sent a survey link to many representatives of the middle age group, due the fact that they tend to have more stable life, higher incomes and be more interested in

fashion and beauty products (Bethlehem 2009, 38). The second large group involved participants aged from 16 to 24 (40% in total), which also included friends and fellow students of the author. Least participants represented the age group 44 and above – 20% of all the respondents. The following pie chart (Figure 17) illustrates the respondents' distribution:

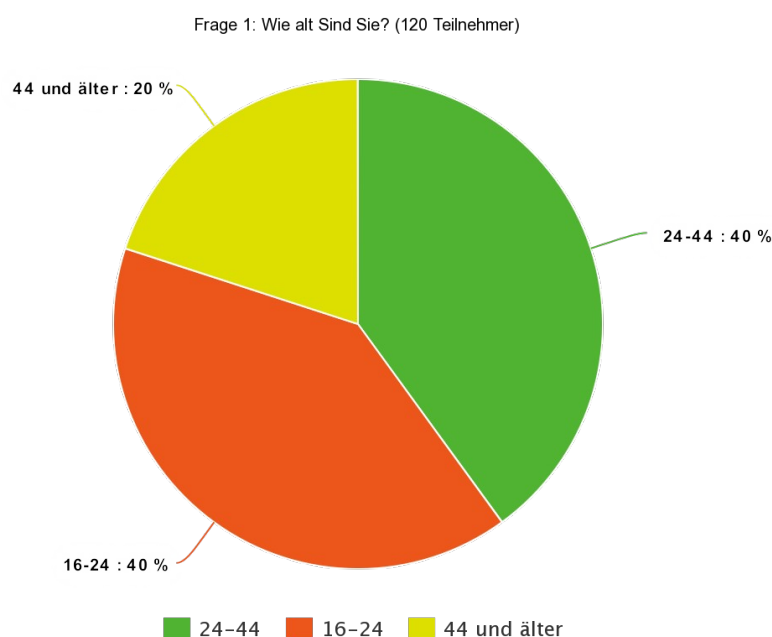


Figure 17 The survey respondents by age

The second question asked the respondents about their gender and is translated as: “Are you..?” (female or male). 85% or 102 of the survey participants were female and 15% or 18 respondents male. The pie chart below (Figure 18) represents the distribution of survey participants by gender:

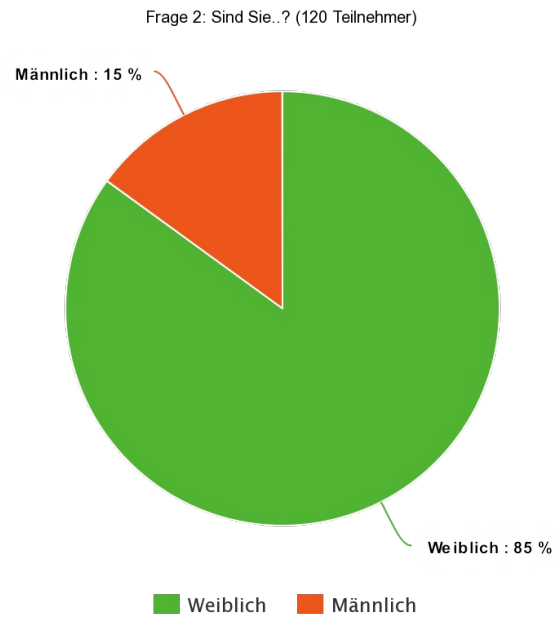


Figure 18 Gender of the respondents

The question number three asked the participants: “Do you use social networking sites, if yes, how often?”. The results shown that the great majority of 55% use social media several times a day. 30% of the respondents use social networking websites on a daily basis and only 15% of participants go online on social media couple of times in a week or more seldom. Those results mean that more than a half of Germans are active users of social media which is a favorable factor from a viewpoint of Social Media Marketing. The pie chart below (Figure 19) illustrates the usage of social media by the respondents.

Frage 3: Verwenden Sie soziale Netzwerke, wenn ja, wie oft? (120 Teilnehmer)

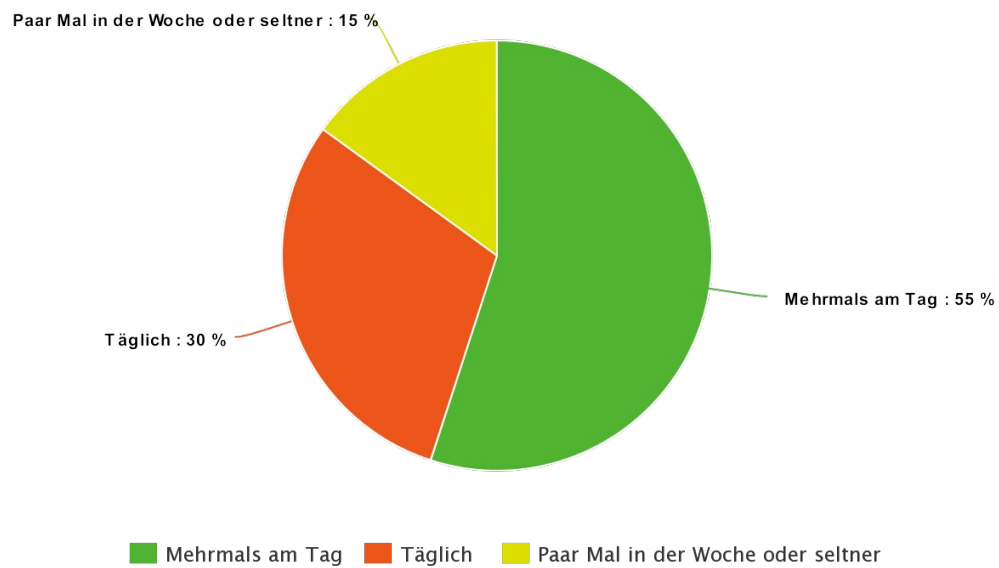


Figure 19 The frequency of use of social networking sites by the survey participants

The next question is: "From the below mentioned social networking websites, which one(s) you use most often?." According to the survey results, the three most popular social media platforms among respondents from Germany are Facebook, Instagram and YouTube with 114, 71 and 43 participants who chosen them. Those are followed by Twitter, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Xing and various blogs. Those findings will help the author in choosing the priorities when preparing a Social Media Marketing plan for Scandinavian Skin Candy. Figure 20 represents the most frequently used social media platforms by German people:

Frage 4: Von den unten genannten sozialen Netzwerken welche(s) benutzen Sie am häufigsten? (120 Teilnehmer)

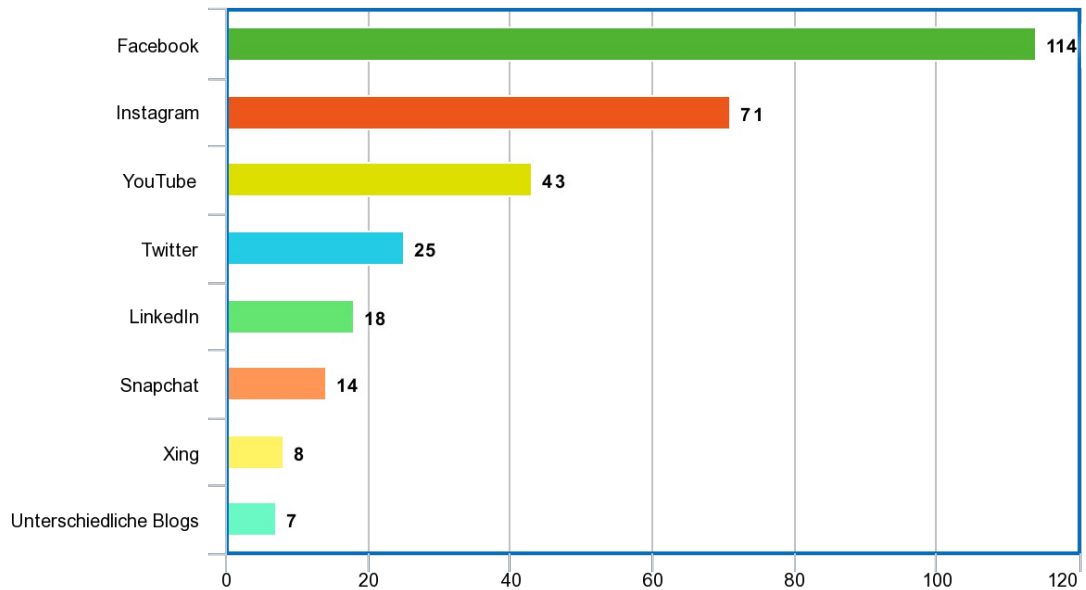


Figure 20 The most frequently used social networking sites

In the question five the author asked the respondents: “Do you pay attention on the advertisement on the social media?” 65% of German women and men gave a positive response to the question and only 35% answered with no. Considering this, there is a great opportunity for the case company to advertise via social media and be noticed by the German customers. The pie chart (Figure 21) illustrates the attention of participants to the advertisement on social media:

Frage 5: Achten Sie auf Werbung in den sozialen Medien? (120 Teilnehmer)

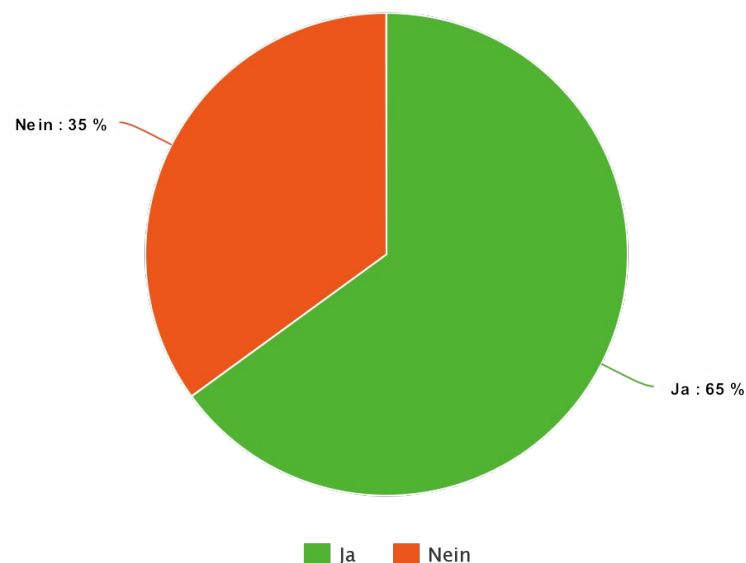


Figure 21 Participants' attention to advertisement on social networking sites

The question number six is: "Do you use social networking sites in order to inform yourself about beauty products and services?". According to the survey results, 60% of respondents answered yes to this question, which means that beauty industry is popular on social media in Germany and the case company has a chance to get attention from German customers. Figure 22 represents the use of social media with a purpose of obtaining information about the beauty products and services:

Frage 6: Benutzen sie soziale Medien um sich über die Beauty-Produkte und Dienstleistungen zu informieren? (120 Teilnehmer)

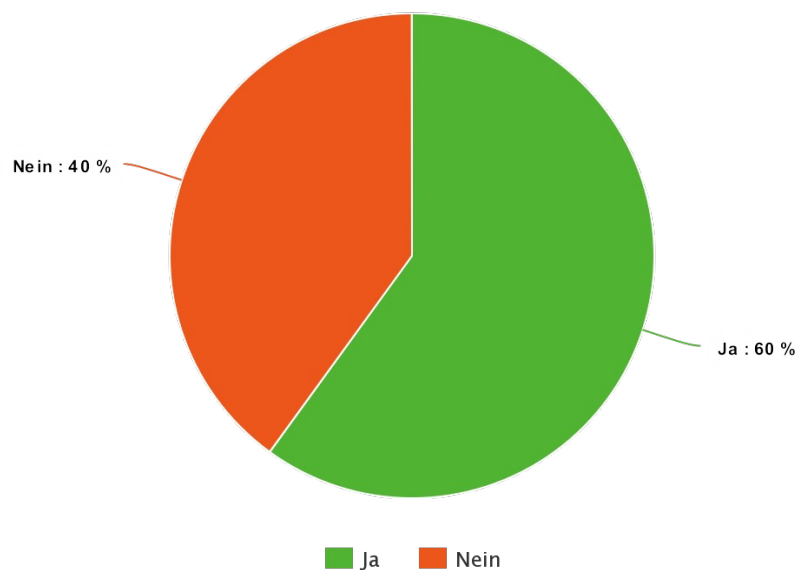


Figure 22 The use of social media by the participants in order to inform themselves about the beauty products and services

Question number 7 was the most complex one. The purpose of it was to find out, whether the German consumers are interested in presence of beauty brands on social media and which actions do they usually perform using social networking sites. The question



was: “Please choose one or several option(s) which are mostly suitable for you.”. There were the following answer possibilities:

- I follow social media accounts which promote beauty products and services
- I am interested in news, pictures and special offers of the brands which I follow on social networking sites
- If I am interested in a product or service, I usually read the reviews about it from other users
- I write feedback about the products or services on social media
- I comment the posts of my favorite brands and ask questions about products or services on social media accounts
- None of above

The results have shown that a great majority of users perform several of the actions mentioned above. Almost every participant (106 people) stated that he or she is interested in news, pictures and special offers of the brands which he or she follows. In addition to that, 76 respondents claim that they follow the social media accounts of the brands promoting beauty products or services. More than a half of survey participants read the reviews about the products, write feedback about products and services themselves and actively participate by commenting the posts and asking questions on social networking sites (60, 62 and 65 participants respectively). Only 10 of 120 respondents do not perform any of those actions. Considering the survey data, German customers are very active on social media: they use it as a source of information, are interested in content, read and leave feedback to the products or services of their interest. The bar chart below (Figure 23) represents the actions which the respondents perform on the social networking sites:

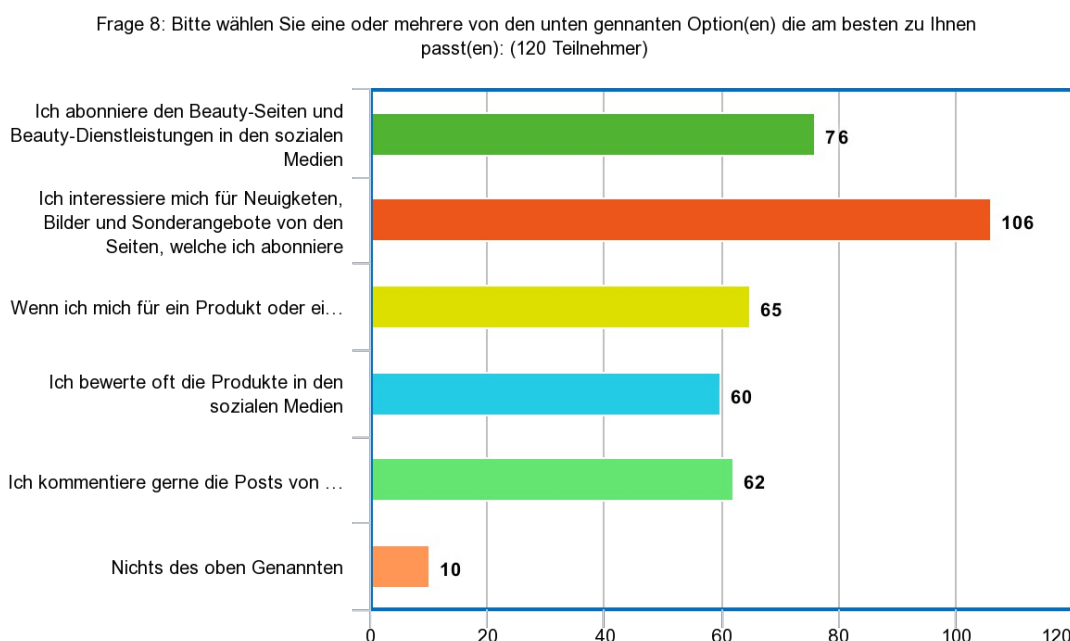


Figure 23 The actions performed by survey participants on social media

To summarize, the author has obtained a plenty of valuable data for this research by conducting the online survey. The author has answered the questions stated in the beginning of the part and got a clear picture about the opinions, attitudes and behaviors of the target customers. Generally speaking, the researcher has figured out that the great majority of German consumers are active users of social media, who follow their favorite brands on social networking sites and are interested in the content they are posting. In addition to that, they actively ask questions, write feedback and read reviews about products and services on social media. The findings correspond to the statistical data obtained through literature review and interview with a specialist in the area Social Media Marketing from Germany. After establishing the theoretical framework and conducting the empirical research the author will present the results of the study and draw conclusions.

### 3.4 Verification of Findings

The purpose of any research is to produce valid and reliable knowledge considering ethical issues (Bryman and Bell 2015, 210). The author took validity, reliability and ethics into consideration while collecting, analyzing and interpreting the research data. According to Herbst and Coldwell (2004, 17), statements about the studied phenomena need to be both valid and reliable. Reliability and validity of a research can be measured in two ways. First, the chosen research methodology needs to be appropriate for answering the research questions. Second, the conclusions and results of the research need to be considered from the viewpoint of validity and reliability (Herbst and Coldwell 2004, 18).

Trochim, Donnelly and Arora (2015,67) claim that reliability is concerned about the consistency of the data collected during the research, while validity measures whether the design of the study is appropriate to draw the current conclusions for the selected population.

As reported by Sapsford and Jupp (2006), each study needs to be analyzed regarding its internal and external validity. Internal validity defines, whether the results can be attributed to the independent variable, rather than some rival explanation. External validity is the extent to which the study outcomes can be generalized. (185-187.)

As far as this thesis is concerned, the key objective of it is to give answer to the research question and the sub-questions and thus, to help the case company in creation of a social media strategy adapted to the German market. In order to achieve this goal and validate the hypothesis, the researcher obtained data from credible and reliable sources of secondary data, such as books and scientific articles. The collection of primary data was implemented through two interviews and one survey. The first interview was conducted with the CEO of a case company Scandinavian Skin Candy. The

second interview was with the certified specialist in Social Media Marketing from Germany. The online survey targeted people living in Germany aged from 16 to 60 years old, which corresponds the target customers of the case company. In total 120 people participated in a survey. The survey was anonymous. The interview and the survey questions were designed by the author in accordance with the research questions and objectives, as well as the findings from the literature review. Both parts of the empirical research were approved by the thesis tutor and the assignor. The purpose of the interviews was to collect the information about the case company and the target market. The main objective of the survey was examine, which attitude do German people have to Internet marketing and how do they use social media. The aspects mentioned above prove reliability and internal validity of this thesis.

External validity of the study can be argued, due the fact that research was conducted taking into account the objectives and target market of the case company. Nevertheless, the author believes that the research results are to some extent externally valid. The interview with a Social Media Marketing professional and the survey provided beneficial data regarding the usage of social media in Germany. Consequently, the research outcomes can be helpful for the companies which aim to use Social Media Marketing as a part of their strategy in entering the German market.

Trochim, Donnely and Arora (2015, 130), claim that objectivity in social research means that the study findings depend on their nature rather than believes and values of the researcher. In this thesis the author defined research question and sub-questions according to the objectives of the assignor. In compliance with those questions, secondary and primary data were collected and analyzed. The author relied strictly on the thesis' objectives and theoretical framework, while interpreting the research results and giving recommendations to the case company. Thus, this thesis can be called objective.

## **4 Research Results**

This section presents the research results based on literature review and empirical findings. As mentioned before, the purpose of this thesis is to create a Social Media Marketing development plan for a case company Scandinavian Skin Candy considering the German market. Firstly, the researcher will disclose the company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats through SWOT analysis. Then, the author will answer the research question and subquestions by displaying the collected data.

### **4.1 SWOT Analysis**

SWOT analysis is an instrument which is widely used by marketers with a purpose of gathering internal data from inside of a company and external data from the target market (Trehan, 2015, 104). There are four components of SWOT analysis: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Correspondingly, Strengths and Weaknesses can be referred as internal factors, whereas Opportunities and Threats are external. (Speth and Probert 2015, 32.)

When the analysis of interviews and survey is implemented, it is time to define Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats related to the case company Scandinavian Skin Candy. The SWOT analysis will be conducted considering both literature review and practical research. In addition to that, the author took the benchmarking of Scandinavian Skin Candy social profiles on social networking sites Facebook, Instagram and YouTube into account.

The figure below (Figure 24) illustrates SWOT analysis for Scandinavian Skin Candy:

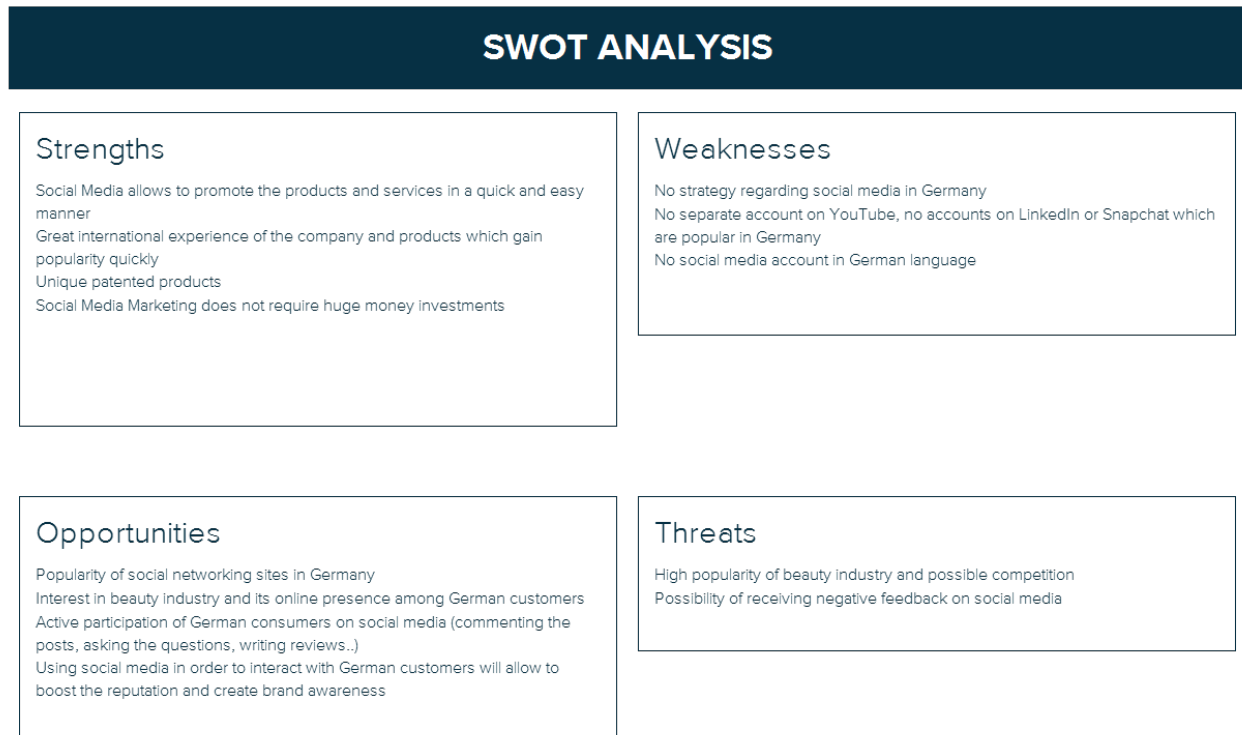


Figure 24 Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats for Scandinavian Skin Candy

Firstly, the author took into account internal factors of the organization. As it was already discussed in the theoretical part, social media is a relatively easy and inexpensive way to promote products. In addition to that, Social Media Marketing provides a great opportunity to reach the German customers before finding the distribution channels and already start establishing connections with the consumers. Furthermore, according to the CEO of Scandinavian Skin Candy, the company is already present in many countries and the products are gaining popularity all around the world. The company's social media accounts already exist in several languages, such as Swedish and Dutch and are also getting new followers on a daily basis, which characterizes Scandinavian Skin Candy as a brand with great perspectives for the future. The case

company's products are unique and patented, meaning that Scandinavian Skin Candy will not face competitors which offer exactly the same products.

However, the organization also have some weaknesses. First of all, the case company does not have any strategy regarding Social Media Marketing in Germany yet. Furthermore, Scandinavian Skin Candy only has social media accounts of Facebook and Instagram and does not have own YouTube channel. That means that the brand could create a separate YouTube account as well as start using Twitter or LinkedIn, which are also quite popular among Germans. In addition to that, the company should create a Facebook or/and Instagram account in German language, which is significant for reaching the target customers.

Furthermore, Scandinavian Skin Candy has a plenty of Opportunities regarding its Social Media Marketing strategy in Germany. As already discussed before, the German people use social networking sites a lot and are generally active on social media. This provides a great opportunity for the case company to communicate with the German customers via social media and establish long-lasting relationships with them. Moreover, according to the research of the theoretical part, Germans show high interest in beauty products and services (Statista 2015), which is also a great advantage for Scandinavian Skin Candy due the fact that the company promotes unique sugaring products. To conclude, the company should put effort into Social Media Marketing and focus on creating brand awareness, brand loyalty and boosting its reputation by means of active interaction with the target customers.

Nevertheless, trying to reach German customers, Scandinavian Skin Candy may also face some possible threats. Taking into account the fact that beauty industry and social media are big trends in Germany, one can predict that the company may face competitors which also promote beauty products on social networks. However, the products of Scandinavian Candy have a patent and the company

should use it a key advantage and make sure that its social media accounts provide all the necessary information about the products ,be active posing content on a regular basis and interacting with the consumers online. Another threat is a possibility of negative feedback, which can be harmful for the brand's reputation, especially when the brand is still young and struggling for popularity. Nevertheless, as already mentioned in a theoretical part, a timely response to negative comments and working on the solutions to the emerged problems are crucial for all the businesses striving to be successful on social media.

The author has reviewed the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of Scandinavian Skin Candy and based on those conclusions as well as theoretical and practical research the researcher will come up with an action plan for the case company.

## 4.2 Research Results

After analyzing the data collected during the empirical research, the author outlined the research results and drew conclusions. In order to summarize the findings, the researcher took into consideration the main points of both interviews and the survey.

The case company Scandinavian Skin Candy is a relatively new brand on the market, however, it is expanding rapidly and already gained popularity on many foreign markets. Social media is a key marketing channel for the brand and Scandinavian Skin Candy concentrates its marketing efforts on social networking sites Facebook and Instagram. The company has already an experience in adapting its social media accounts to foreign markets, examples for that are its Facebook accounts in English, Swedish and Dutch. The case company is determined to use Social Media Marketing to introduce their unique products for the German consumers.



Social networking sites are used by a great majority of German people on a daily basis and Facebook, Instagram and YouTube are the most frequently used social media channels. In order to reach the German customers, it is crucial for the marketers to know how, where, when and for how long the target groups are present on the social media. To win customers in Germany, active presence on social media, as well as interaction with the consumers are significant. In addition to that, it is essential to translate the content into German language. Moreover, for a successful Social Media Marketing in Germany marketers need to analyze the performance regularly and adapt to the development of social networks.

Furthermore, the researcher has investigated that the great majority of German consumers are active users of social media, they follow different brands on social networking sites and show interest in the content they post. Social media users in Germany ask questions to the sellers, read reviews and write feedback about products and services on social networks.

To sum up, the findings of the empirical research allowed the author to examine the current Social Media Marketing situation of the case company, learn about social media trends and behavior of social media users in Germany. The research results will help the author to draw a conclusion and to develop a Social Media Marketing plan and recommendations for Scandinavian Skin Candy.

## **5 Conclusion**

The focus of this research was to examine the use of Social Media Marketing as a tool to reach new customers. In particular, the researcher dedicated the thesis to development of a Social Media Marketing plan for a Finnish professional beauty brand Scandinavian

Skin Candy in Germany. In order to solve this task, the author created a research question:

How can the case company Scandinavian Skin Candy improve its Social Media Marketing strategy in order to attract consumers in Germany?

In addition to that, the researcher came up with sub-questions in order to answer the research questions:

- What is Social Media Marketing?
- How to create a successful Social Media Marketing strategy?
- How can Social Media Marketing strategy be adapted to the German market?

To answer the research question, the author started with defining social media. Social Media can be simply defined as a modern way to communicate. Social Media is used by many people in order to keep in touch and share opinions and various content, such as photos and videos. Due to extreme popularity of social networking sites these days, it has become an essential part of marketing strategies of modern enterprises. Social media allows sellers and buyers communicate and integrate with each other, which makes Social Media Marketing strategy a necessary tool for having a successful business nowadays.

As far as Social Media Marketing is concerned, it is a promotional activity which is implemented by means of using social networking sites, in order to reach various business objectives, for instance, expand the market, boost sales, win new customers or create brand loyalty. The main goals of Social Media Marketing involve increasing brand awareness and recognition, enhancement of public relations, improvement of firm's reputation, Research and Development activities as well as boost of sales. In order to achieve those

objectives, the company needs to set Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely goals.

The author discussed the steps, which are crucial for development of a successful Social Media Strategy. In order to become successful on social networking sites, the organizations need to start with examination of their business environment and Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis. Furthermore, it is essential to define the goals of social media strategy and, in accordance with them, to create an action plan. The next step is to choose the communication channels through which the target customers will be reached. In order to get the great results from Social Media Marketing strategy, it is crucial to constantly adapt to the changes and demands of the customers. Last, but not the least, is to measure the results of the undertaken strategy in order to find out, whether it is working for a company.

After implementation of literature review and empirical research, the author was able to analyze results, and, finally, answer the main research question.

The main purpose of this thesis was to assist Scandinavian Skin Candy in reaching the German market and attract German customers through social media. The author collected secondary and primary data and created a development plan for the case company's social media strategy.

As a result, in order to reach the German customers and improve Social Media Marketing strategy, Scandinavian Skin Candy should follow several steps: decide on the goals of Social Media Marketing, choose social media channels, implement the actions and evaluate the results. In addition to that, in order to win and retain clients in Germany, the case company needs to be active on social media, integrate with the customers online and adapt to the trends of social networks. It is significant for Scandinavian Skin Candy to create social media accounts in German language and consider the culture of the target country as an important aspect.

Based on those findings the author will create a development plan and give precise suggestions to the case company.

To summarize, taking into consideration the implemented research, the author suggests that Scandinavian Skin Candy should focus on certain social media platforms, which are most frequently used and popular among the German citizens. Furthermore, it is significant for the company to adapt social media accounts to the German market, by translating them into corresponding language, as well as to make sure that the content updates occur on a daily basis. Scandinavian Skin Candy should focus on the communication and integration with German customers as well as to be attentive to their ever-changing needs and wishes.

## **6 Suggestions and Recommendations**

The main goal of this research paper is to develop a Social Media Marketing strategy for the case company Scandinavian Skin Candy adapted to the German market. After the theoretical knowledge is obtained and the empirical research is conducted, the author will present the suggestions for the case company in a Social Media Marketing plan. The plan will be based on the literature review, practical findings and the SWOT analysis.

The author came up with a six-step Social Media Marketing development plan. The plan involves the sequence which the case company needs to follow, in order to implement a successful Social Media Marketing strategy in the target country Germany. The flowchart below (Figure 26) represents the development plan for Scandinavian Skin Candy:

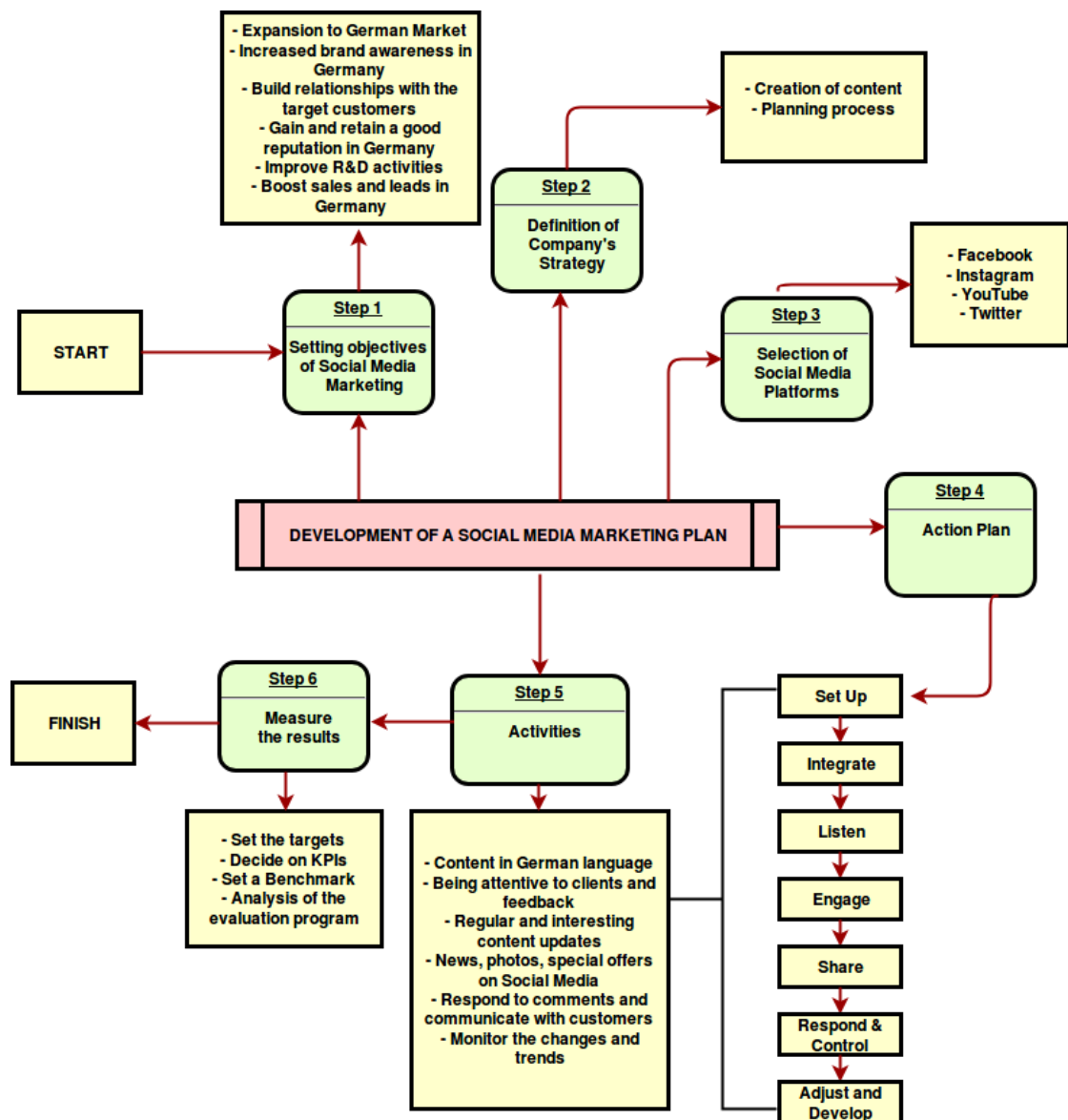


Figure 25 Social Media Marketing plan for the case company (developed by the author combining the findings from theoretical and practical research)

The first step of a development plan is setting objectives of Social Media Marketing. As it was mentioned in the literature review part, those goals need to be S - Specific, M - Measurable, A - Attainable, R - Realistic and T - Timely (Weinberg 2009, 54). As far as Finnish brand Scandinavian Skin Candy is concerned, the key objective of it is to reach German customers by means of using social media. As

already discussed in a theoretical part, in order to achieve this objective the company will have to focus on the following aspects: increasing brand awareness in Germany, building long-lasting relationships with German customers, gaining and retaining of a good reputation, improve Research and Development activities in Germany and achieve good sales and leads indicators. When Scandinavian Skin Candy will strive to achieve those goals, there is chance to become popular on the target market and to improve the overall performance.

The next step is the definition of the company's strategy. According to Scandinavian Skin Candy, the delivery of content plays a significant role. Firstly, the important aspect is to create content which informs the customers about the uniqueness and benefits of products (Interview with the CEO of Scandinavian Skin Candy, 2017). Secondly, as it was discussed in the theoretical part, the planning process, which involves deciding on actions and resources necessary for the goal achievement is significant.

Furthermore, according to the literature review, interview with a Social Media Marketing expert and results of the online survey (2017), the four most popular social media platforms in Germany are Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter. Thus, in order to win customers in Germany it is important for the case company to focus on those social networking sites. In addition to that, the survey respondents stated that they use the above mentioned social networks in order to inform themselves about beauty products and services, which indicates the popularity of beauty industry on social media in Germany. The mentioned social networking sites are free and easy to use, which is why it is a realistic goal to improve Facebook and Instagram presence, as well as to create Twitter and YouTube accounts aimed at German customers.

The step number four includes a plan of actions necessary for the goal achievement. In order to make sure that the Social Media

Marketing strategy is implemented right, it is necessary to follow certain steps (Quesenberry 2015, 203):

- Set Up. In order to reach the key objective and win customers in Germany, it is necessary to have pages on social media platforms and be active posting content and responding to comments. In addition to that, it is crucial to translate those pages into German language. For this purpose the case company can hire a specialist or engage external expert. **A S.M.A.R.T goal: Make a post per day during one month on a company's Facebook account in order to increase awareness about the brand among the target customers.**
- Integrate. The main idea is to be integrative with the target customers. At this stage it is crucial for Scandinavian Skin Candy to adapt to the German language and culture. In order to learn about the German culture, the company can rely on scientific literature, online sources and to check what are the potential competitors' activities on social media (Lavin and Cohan 2011, 76). Moreover, the company should use its current Social Media Marketing experience and use them in their strategy for the German market. **A S.M.A.R.T goal: With the help of the language expert create Facebook and Instagram accounts in German language within 1 month, to adapt those social media channels for the target customers.**
- Listen. This step involves being attentive to the customers' feedback and comments. Apart from sharing information, it is crucial for the brand to adapt to the consumers' needs and wants. This plays an important role in establishment of long-lasting customer relationships. **A S.M.A.R.T goal: Achieve a 100% feedback response rate on Facebook within 3 months, in order to inform the customers that their opinion is important and boost brand loyalty.**

- Share. Sharing is a constant process which is significant during the whole period of the implementation of Social Media Marketing. According to the survey results, German customers pay a lot of attention on the news, imagery, videos and information the brands are posting. That is why it is crucial for Scandinavian Skin Candy to have a lot of updates and provide their target customers with an interesting content on a regular basis. **A S.M.A.R.T goal: Upload one video a week to a company's YouTube account in German language to attract the attention of the customers and enhance the company's reputation.**
- Engage. The key purpose of Social Media Marketing is to attract and engage consumers. Hence, the case company should not only share information related to its products, but also provide the German customers with, for instance, news from beauty industry, lifestyle and skin care tips and so on (Schaffer 2013, 94). This will help to keep the interest of the customers. **A S.M.A.R.T goal: Make three posts a week about personal care and health on Instagram, in order to keep users interested and increase frequency of visits for the account.**
- Respond and Control. Controlling the actions happening on the social media accounts and timely responding to the customers' reviews and complaints are essential at this point. In order to maintain the company's reputation and avoid negative users' opinions it is significant for Scandinavian Skin Candy to keep in touch with the customers, answer their questions and comment on suggestions. **A S.M.A.R.T goal: Answer to every comment mention on Facebook for 3 months in order to personalize the communication with the customers and avoid negative impression about the brand.**



- Adjust and Develop. All of the above mentioned aspects need to be adjusted in order to ensure sustainable collaboration with the target customers. However, the clients' desires and preferences tend to change and social media sphere itself is very dynamic. Thus, constantly developing the strategy and being attentive to the changes occurring on social media is essential for a successful Social Media Strategy. **A S.M.A.R.T goal: Make a review of competitors' Instagram and Facebook accounts on a weekly basis, in order to learn about the trends of the industry.**

The last step is evaluation of the results. In order to measure the effectiveness of a social media strategy for the organization it is extremely important to undertake an evaluation process. As already mentioned in the theoretical part of this thesis, the company needs to set its targets concerning social media, then decide of Key Performance Indicators, set a benchmark and, in conclusion, implement an analysis of the evaluation program. (Tuten and Solom 2014, 234.)

All in all, the development of a Social Media Marketing strategy is a process which requires good planning, time investment and effort. However, dividing a development plan into steps allows to split the tasks and see the logical path of the actions to be taken.

As far as the case company Scandinavian Skin Candy is concerned, it has good perspectives in reaching German customers by using social media. When the brand will follow the steps of the development plan mentioned above, it can reach its target customers and establish long-term relationships with them, which will lead to the success of Scandinavian Skin Candy in Germany. The author sincerely hopes that the research was helpful for the case company and undertaking a new strategy will be helpful for a successful performance on the target market.

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## **Appendices**

Appendix 1. Interview with the CEO of Scandinavian Skin Candy Harri Kujala.

1. Tell about Scandinavian Skin Candy and its main product.
2. What is the target customer group of the company?
3. Which goals does Scandinavian Skin Candy has concerning the German market?
4. What are the current activities of the company on Social Media?
5. What has already been done in Germany and what are the future plans?

Appendix 2. Interview with a specialist in Social Media Marketing area from Germany.

1. How popular is Social Media in Germany?
2. How is Social Media is used by different age groups?
3. Which social networking sites are the mostly popular among Germans?
4. What are the most popular branches and brands on Social Media in Germany?
5. Do German companies use Social Media Marketing as a part of their strategy?
6. How can a foreign company use Social Media effectively in order to reach German customers?

Appendix 3. Online Survey

1. Wie alt sind Sie? \*

Bitte wählen... ▼

2. Sind Sie..? \*

Please choose... ▼

3. Verwenden Sie soziale Netzwerke, wenn ja, wie oft? \*

Bitte wählen... ▼

4. Von den unten genannten sozialen Netzwerken welche(s) benutzen Sie am häufigsten? (Wählen Sie eine oder mehrere Antwortmöglichkeit(en)) \*

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ YouTube
- ☐ LinkedIn
- ☐ Snapchat
- ☐ Xing
- ☐ Unterschiedlichen Blogs

5. Achten Sie auf Werbung in den Sozialen Medien? \*

- ☐ ja
- ☐ nein

6. Benutzen Sie soziale Medien um sich über die Beauty-Produkte und Dienstleistungen zu informieren? \*

- ☐ ja
- ☐ nein

7. Wenn Sie nach Beauty-Produkte online suchen, beachten Sie die Bewertungen, Kommentare und Bilder von den Produkten auf Sozialen Medien? \*

Bitte wählen... ▼

8. Bitte wählen Sie eine oder mehrere von den unten genannten Optionen, die am besten zu Ihnen passen: \*

- ☐ Ich abonniere den Beauty-Seiten und Beauty-Dienstleistungen in den sozialen Medien
- ☐ Ich interessiere mich für Neuigkeiten, Bilder und Sonderangebote von den Seiten, welche ich abonniere
- ☐ Wenn ich mich für ein Produkt oder eine Dienstleistung interessiere, lese ich die Bewertungen darüber in sozialen Netzwerken
- ☐ Ich bewerte oft die Produkte in den sozialen Medien
- ☐ Ich kommentiere gerne die Posts von meinen Lieblingsmarken, stelle gerne Fragen zu den Produkten oder Dienstleistungen in den sozialen Medien
- ☐ Nichts des oben Genannten



Fertig

(Text ändern)