Developing an event marketing strategy using digital media

Case: Data Group Jyväskylä

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to develop an event marketing method using online resources for the business brunch organized by Data Group Jyväskylä. The objectives were to discover through which media the event attendees and invitation receivers want to be approached, and what kind of content would be the most appealing for them.

An action research strategy was chosen for this study. The data was collected using a mix-methods approach including two questionnaires. The first, printed questionnaire was for the six attendees at the event. The second questionnaire was sent online to the company executives who had not registered for the event. The main focus was on the online questionnaire. The online questionnaire was sent to 298 recipients of whom 173 acknowledged it, but only 13 completed it. The questionnaires were developed from existing theories and adapted to comply with the company's style.

The results indicate that inconvenient time was the main reason for not attending the event. It was revealed that an influential speaker and different time of the event would motivate respondents to attend future events. In addition, the results revealed that e-mail was the most preferred approach. The case company also received a recommendation for enhancing the number of the participants in the event in the future.

Keywords/tags (subjects) digital media, e-mail marketing, event marketing, sales lead, action research

Miscellaneous The questionnaires and invitation attached

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Kuvailulehti

Työn nimi **Tapahtumamarkkinointimenetelmän kehittäminen käyttäen digitaalista mediaa** Case: Data Group Jyväskylä
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Työn ohjaaja(t) Heidi Neuvonen
Toimeksiantaja(t) Data Group Jyväskylä

Tiivistelmä

Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli kehittää tapahtumamarkkinointimetodi Data Group Jyväskylän järjestämää brunssia varten käyttäen digitaalista mediaa. Tavoitteina oli selvittää, minkä median kautta osallistujat ja kutsutut haluavat, että heihin otetaan yhteyttä ja millainen sisältö olisi houkutteleva.

Tutkimusmenetelmäksi valittiin toimintatutkimus. Aineisto kerättiin monimenetelmällä käyttäen kvantitatiivista ja kvalitatiivista menetelmää, joka sisälsi kaksi kyselylomaketta. Ensimmäinen kysely oli tulostettu, ja se oli suunnattu kuudelle tapahtumaan osallistujalle. Toinen kysely toimitettiin sähköisesti, ja se oli tarkoitettu niiden yrityksien johdolle, jotka eivät rekisteröityneet tapahtumaan. Pääpaino oli sähköisessä kyselyssä. Sähköinen kysely lähetettiin 298 vastaanottajalle, joista 173 avasi kyselyn, mutta vain 13 vastasi siihen. Kyselyt kehitettiin olemassa olevan teorian pohjalta ja muokattiin yrityksen tyylin ja tarpeiden mukaisesti.

Tulokset osoittivat, että pääsyy miksi kutsutut eivät osallistuneet tapahtumaan oli sopimaton ajankohta. Lisäksi tulokset paljastivat, että vaikuttava puhuja tai ajankohdan muutos motivoisi vastaajia osallistumaan tulevaisuudessa. Lisäksi tuloksista kävi yksimielisesti ilmi, että sähköposti olisi mieluisin tapa saada tapahtumakutsu. Tulosten pohjalta tehtiin suositus, jolla pyritään tulevaisuudessa kasvattamaan yrityksen tapahtuman osallistujamäärää.

Avainsanat (asiasanat) Digitaalinen media, sähköpostimarkkinointi, tapahtumamarkkinointi, liidit, toimintatutkimus
Muut tiedot Kyselylomakkeet ja kutsu liitteenä

CONTENTS

FIGURES

TABLES

1 INTRODUCTION

Ever since people have had something to sell, marketing has existed. The effectiveness of marketing methods has changed over thousands of years. Marketers have had to change their game as technologies advanced at a more rapid pace. Previously access to advanced technology was limited to a fragment of the population. These advancements were slowly spread out to the crowds over decades. The number of the members of a society that have started using a new technology or innovation within a specific time frame is called the rate of adoption. Nowadays, as the adoption rates are faster and more widespread than ever, the control is back in the hands of consumers. (Eridon 2012.)

Marketing, as we used to know it, has been transformed by the Internet and digital media after the launch of the first website in 1991. The web is used daily by over one billion people worldwide to find new information on products and services and many other things. The way companies market their services and products to consumers and other businesses have changed dramatically. It is vital for a company to have an up-to-date knowledge on digital marketing and the digital environment, if it wants to succeed in the existing markets. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 6.)

Previously conducted researches reveal that people will more likely join an e-mail list than follow companies on social media. Furthermore, people would rather get information about events through e-mail than social media and traditional mail. For companies it is also more beneficial to use digital marketing because it is less expensive than the traditional, also referred to as outbound marketing. Digital marketing also reaches tremendously more audience than outbound marketing. (Hallerman 2011; Miller 2011.) The following Figure 1. below shows the distribution of ways customers want to opt in with brands.
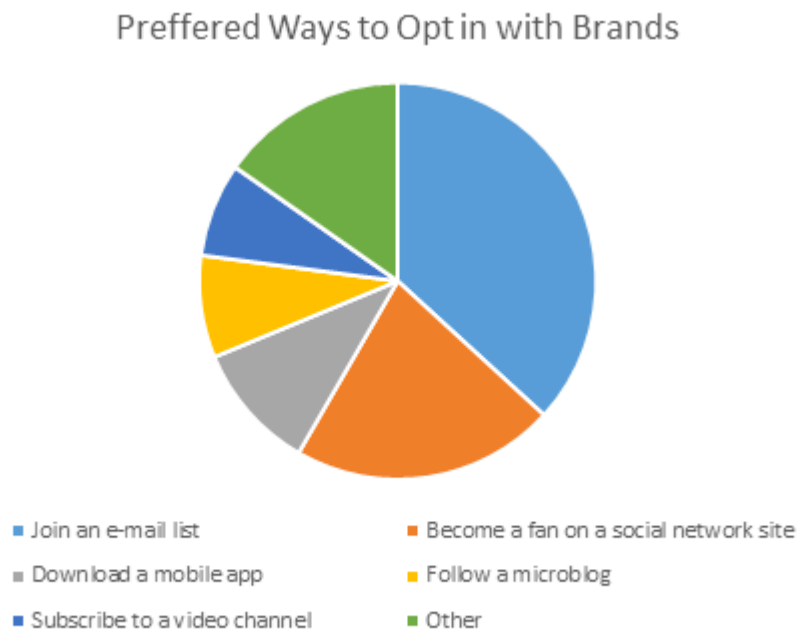
Preffered Ways to Opt in with Brands

- Join an e-mail list
- Download a mobile app
- Subscribe to a video channel
- Become a fan on a social network site
- Follow a microblog
- Other

Figure 1. The most preferred ways to opt in with brands (Hallermann 2011)

Many event organizers do not take into account those who would actually benefit from attending their event and therefore waste time to untargeted marketing. As a result almost half of the event organizers have not been able to increase their attendance numbers. This is based on a survey of event organizers and attendees, conducted by Hubspot and Eventbrite in 2014. Over half (79%) of the respondents go to events to learn something new but more than a third of them are being left disappointed. Based on the study and well-proven tactics Hubspot and Eventbrite draw up the steps to follow in order to succeed in events. It is really important to think about the attendee persona and target the marketing to the right people. Event organizers can use press releases and video marketing and create striking images to get the attention of people. They can promote their event content in social media and e-mail and also focus to personalize the message. (Toner 2014.)

In 2011 Hubspot and Constant Contact conducted a study on how businesses promote their live events. More than 900 businesses responded to their questions, and the results revealed that the most frequently used method was e-mail: over half (76%) of the respondents use e-mail to promote their events. Word of mouth and website were

the next frequently used methods. The survey revealed that a little under half (47%) of the respondents mail postal invitations and 40% use social media sites. A little fewer than half the respondents still call individuals by telephone and less than 7% use magazine ads. Only 11% of the respondents use blogging for event marketing. These results show an interesting mix of inbound and outbound marketing tactics, see Figure 2. Surprisingly many still use outbound tactics like postal mail and phone calls that is more expensive than inbound marketing. According to Hubspot's "2011 State of Inbound Marketing Report" inbound tactics are more effective and 62% less expensive than outbound tactics. (Miller 2011.)

Figure 2. Most used ways to market an event (Miller 2011)

Writing a compelling e-mail

According to Corey Eridon (2012), there are several components that can be followed in order to write a functional e-mail. Eridon states that the subject line is the key to a good e-mail, if it is not compelling enough, the receiver will most likely ignore it.

As shown in the Figure 3., highly targeted e-mails are more likely to be opened by the recipient. By list segmentation/targeting the e-mail becomes more personal. It reaches the people that are probably already looking for it.

Results From Email List Segmentation/Targeting

Figure 3. Results from e-mail list segmentation/targeting (Eridon 2012)

Using verbs, such as "buy, take, download" etc., can also make an e-mail more appealing. By using such verbs in the subject line, the recipient knows what is possible to do in the e-mail. It is important that the subject line is clear and to the point, and that it is coordinated with the e-mail content. According to Eridon it is important to write in the second person and be brief. (Eridon 2012.)
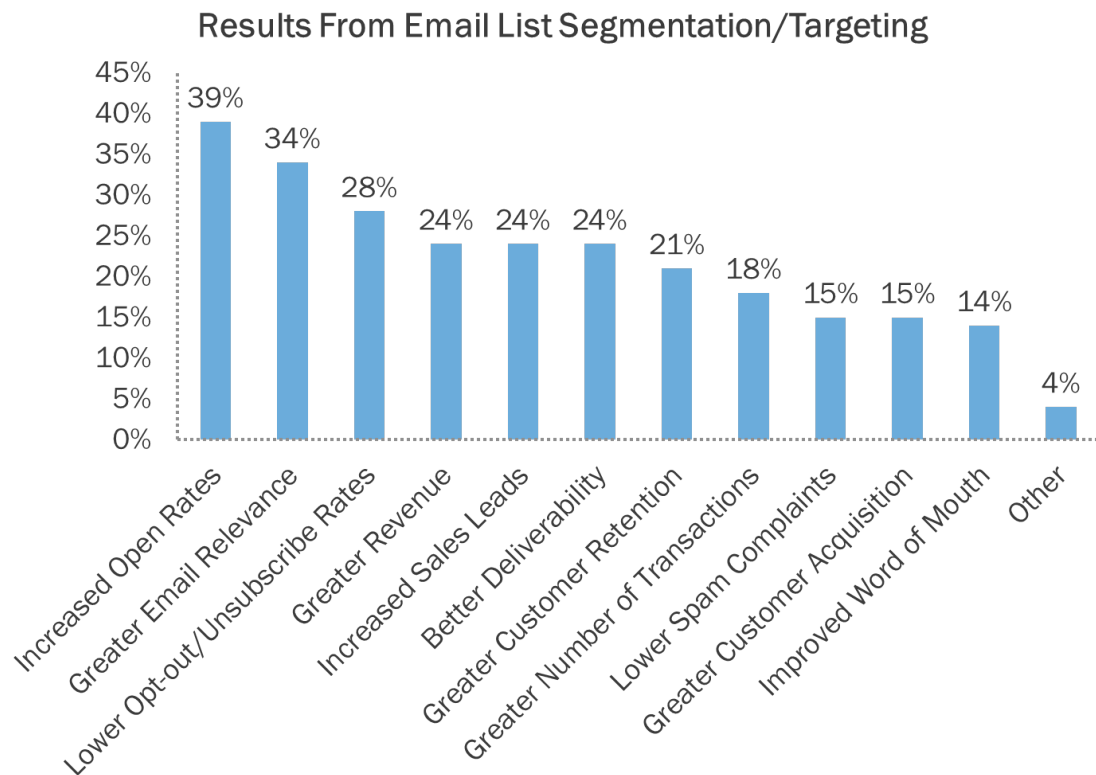
According to Anders Frankel (2012), there are a couple of things that should be kept in mind when writing an alluring invitation by e-mail. One of the first things that should be noticed is to keep the text short and simple. It is also said that the text should be in a form where it is easy to read. The writer should also keep in mind that he is addressing a human, thus it should be more personal. That is why the writer should not address the receiver formally, because it does not seem equally personal.

It is important to create an attractive title to the e-mail, one that stands out from the other e-mails and separates it from junk mail. It is advised that the title should have

the name of the company who is inviting the receiver and also the purpose of the e-mail should appear in the title. (ibid.)

One of the important factors affecting the number of e-mails being opened is the time and day they are being sent. It is said that they should not be sent on a Monday or a Friday, because on Monday people are busy with work and on Friday they are not looking for any extra work. An invitation by e-mail should answer questions like: What? Where? When? Why? An invitation e-mail should always have the most important content first. (ibid.) Next subchapter will introduce the case company.

1.1 Data Group Jyväskylä

Data Group Jyväskylä is an IT service company and it is a part of the Data Group Oy chain. Data Group Oy consists of over 50 private Data Group branches. It is also a subsidiary in Suomen Ohjelmistopalvelu.fi Oy. They have opened their services in Jyväskylä in 2008. Data Group Jyväskylä's slogan is "The right IT-solution for your business". They call themselves a full service IT-house, because they offer everything a company could need regarding IT-services. They serve business customers with all matters concerning IT-devices and software systems in Central Finland. Through Data Group Jyväskylä, a company gets software, training, maintenance and support. They offer Lemonsoft ERP software system through Ohjelmistopalvelu.fi, which is their regional partner. Data Group Jyväskylä and Data Group Turku are both subsidiaries of Suomen Ohjelmistopalvelu.fi Oy, thus they have the same ownership. (Data Group Jyväskylä 2015.)

The executive of Data Group Jyväskylä expressed a concern for the little return on investment of their brunch events. They needed to create a way to increase the participation rate, in order for them to acquire new customers and sell their products and services. Since, the company needs customers to make profit.

1.2 Research problem & objectives

Data Group Jyväskylä wants to acquire new customers and will organize a business brunch for the first time. In Data Group Turku this has been done before but their problem has been that they cannot get enough participants to their business brunches. At the brunch they inform the participants about their services and solutions. They invite small and medium size businesses to the brunches. In Turku they have been

using opt-in e-mail technique to send the invitations. They send the invitation e-mail to roughly a three thousand companies and they usually get around fifteen participants. They would like a better return on investment for the events. Data Group Jyväskylä is using some event marketing tools, but there is no data to indicate that they are the right ones. The objective is to research how Data Group Jyväskylä can develop their event marketing in order to get a better return on investment. Thus, it is important to research what kind of event marketing methods target audiences prefer.

This study aims to answer the following research question:

What is efficient event marketing in order to get maximum return on investment of the event?

The supportive questions to the primary research question are the following:

1. What kind of approach do the customers prefer?
2. What kind of content attracts the customer?

The aim is to be able to answer the research question and provide Data Group Jyväskylä with effective solutions for the future. The structure of this thesis is presented in the Figure 4. below.
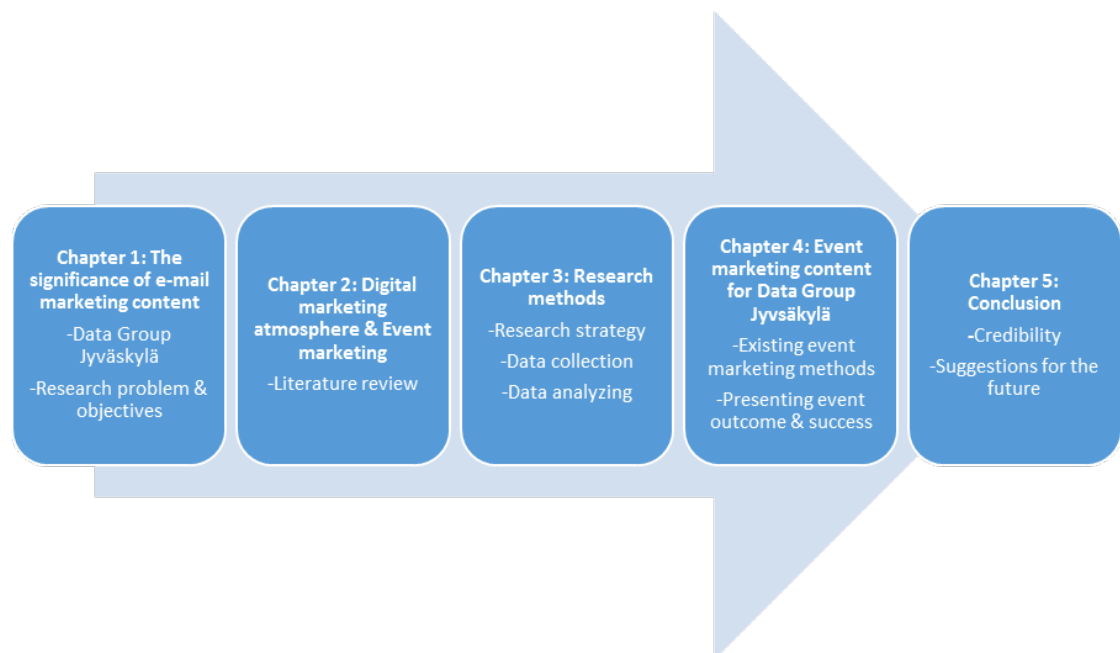

Figure 4. The process of the study

2 THE CONCEPT OF DIGITAL AND EVENT MARKETING

Digital marketing is defined as using digital technologies to reach marketing goals. This requires an online presence from the company. The company needs to manage their websites and company's social media sites effectively and also their other online communication systems that might include; search engine marketing, social media marketing, online advertising and e-mail marketing. A company should be able to turn possible sales leads into customers by managing their online presence effectively. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 10.)

A definition of digital marketing by Dave Chaffey & Fiona Ellis-Chadwick (2012, 655); "Describes the management and execution of marketing using electronic media such as the web, e-mail, interactive TV, IPTV and wireless media in conjunction with digital data about customers' characteristics and behavior."

Event marketing combines marketing and events. Marketing is goal-oriented and its purpose is to transmit messages from organizations and make people act the way they want. Event marketing on the other hand is goal-oriented and interactive which combines an organization and its target groups in an event. There are different definitions about event marketing but in general event marketing is strategically planned persistent activity where community or company communicates through a memorable event with the chosen target group. The following criteria must be fulfilled in event marketing: the event is planned beforehand, the target group and objective are carefully defined, and the event is interactive, memorable and experiential. Event marketing enables to build or strengthen the company's image or products' and services' brand. The crucial part in event marketing is that it is part of a company's marketing strategy. Event sponsorship, promotions, product launches, trade shows and flash mobs are also considered as a part of event marketing. (Vallo & Häyrinen 2014, 19-20.)

Digital marketing

When thinking of investing time and money in digital media and digital marketing, a company needs to consider two things. First they need to think if their target group/audience is online and using the web to search and purchase services and/or products. Secondly they need to determine if their product/service is suitable for the digital market. (Ryan 2013, 23.)

Digital marketing is beneficial because it can be used for a company to reach their objectives in for example marketing and sales domain. The Internet works as marketing research to discover what customers are looking for. The Internet also allows customers to approach the data of the company and possibly purchase items at anytime and anywhere in the world. It provides a possibility to earn customer gratification via digital channels. It also helps the company to improve their supply of products and/or services. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 15.)

Digital marketing is very important in the current world, since it is stated that around one third (⅓) of the world's population is on the net. That means around 2.5 billion people out of seven billion. By using the Internet, a company is able to reach wider audience than it could in any other way. Digital media fits in the marketing mix, the four P's. The place being the Internet, which people can access through laptops, computers, mobiles, etc. Price in the digital market is crucial since the competition is tough and due to any price comparison sites, one cannot afford to overprice. Unlike in the offline market, in the digital market customers can find out in few clicks what the competitive companies have to offer and at what price, thus the pricing has to be accurate. The product also has to be very appealing to the customers. It has to be something that the customers value. Promotion is everything you do to make the company or brand more seen, offline and online. (Ryan & Jones 2013, 33-34.)

Professor Debra L. Zahay created the "four I's of Internet marketing". Internet marketing is considered to be the same as digital marketing. The four I's are: interactive, information-driven, immediate and involving. In the Internet world it is easy for a company to interact with their clients. The company also gets a lot of precious data from the clients when they visit their websites, since every move they make on the website can be documented. Companies can also send e-mails or update

their social media at any time, which is why digital marketing is called "immediate". Thus, when a company wants to offer a sale or a product to a specific target group, they can do it on their digital media, for example the black Friday sales. A marketer should always try to make the company's Web page interesting and provide multiple attractions. By making an attractive content, the marketer can encourage the visitor to make a purchase or click on a video. (Roberts 2003, 128.)

To sum up, if the digital marketing is done effectively and if there is a functional digital marketing strategy, digital marketing is beneficial for the company because it reaches wider audiences. It is also cost effective.

2.1 Digital marketing strategy

In order to achieve great digital marketing a company needs to develop a working digital marketing strategy. The way that all Internet channels and traditional channels communicate and unite is a major part of the development of a digital marketing strategy. The digital marketing strategy also needs to coordinate with the business strategy, and set specific objectives for the development of the business and brands. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 14.)

According to Damian Ryan & Calvin Jones (2009, 23), the infrastructure of the digital marketing strategy is down to the following components:

- Knowing your business
- Knowing the competition
- Knowing your customers
- Knowing what to achieve
- Knowing how you are doing.

A company should determine if it has the skills and technology needed to thrive in the digital market and if digital marketing fits in the company's business plan. The company should also figure out who their biggest competitors are in the digital market, and what they have to offer and what not. They could learn something from the competitors and create something that differs from them and the previous

marketers. The company should also define their customers, as in if they want to attend to the same target group as they do in the offline market. Knowing what the company wants to achieve is important since if it does not know where it is going, it will probably never get there. By setting clear goals and objectives, it would be easier to monitor the achievements. In the digital media it is easier to find out how a company is performing. Since every action that happens online can be tracked and from that can be learned what is working and what needs to be improved. (Ryan & Jones 2009, 23-26.)

It can be said that after all, digital marketing strategy comes down to three things: understanding, evaluating and researching your business, your competition and your customers. (ibid., 35.)

Media channels

Today's market is more competitive than ever. Marketers need to adapt to this by considering the three primary forms of media channels: paid media, earned media and owned media. Paid media, as the name suggests, is the type of media that is bought. A company pays a site owner to post ads or pays for visitors. Earned media is achieved by word-of-mouth, conversations in social media and blogs. Owned media means the media that the company owns, including the company's websites, blogs, social media accounts, etc. Thus mostly all the media that is authorized by the company. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 11.) In the next subchapter different types of digital marketing methods are explained.

2.2 Types of digital marketing

There are many different forms of digital media channels. The main ones being: search engine marketing, online PR, online partnerships, display advertising, opt-in e-mail marketing and social media marketing. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 29.)

Social media has created a revolution in the marketing sector. Most known social media network formats are: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, MySpace. It took Facebook nine months to get 100 million users; to comparison it took the radio 38 years to get 50 million users. People have access to the Internet and can update their social media accounts everywhere and at any time. 80% of Twitter usage is on mobile

gadgets that mean personal bad customer experiences get published easily and fast. (Qualman 2009.)

Definitions of social media;

"Social media is all about leveraging online tools that promote sharing and conversations, which ultimately lead to engagement with current and future customers and influencers in your target market. The key to social media working, is having a content marketing strategy that involves the distribution of valuable, relevant and compelling content that promotes the behavior you are looking for that will ultimately drive your business. Most businesses start with the tools. Effective social media starts with a content strategy that helps to position you and your brand as the expert in your niche through provocative, informative and helpful content. Then, once that is accomplished, the social media tools are now available today that make the plan come together." (Pulizzi 2011.)

Nowadays the word of mouth matters more to customers than ever before. It is also believed that people trust word of mouth more than advertisements and what brands say about themselves. There are about 200,000,000 blogs, over half (54%) of the bloggers post daily, and less than half (34%) of the bloggers share positive and negative opinions on products and brands. If a company invests in a blog, the exposure they are putting themselves open for is massive. (Ryan & Jones 2009, 165.)

If a company decides to put up their own blog, it is important to remember a few matters. One is to remember that a blog is considered to be personal. Audience wants to hear and read ones' personal opinions, not to be pushed with promotion for a certain company. The blog needs to stay personal even if it is the company's own blog. One of the many important factors is to keep the blog updated regularly. (ibid., 189.)

Nowadays it is easy to share your personal thoughts and experiences on the Internet and especially on social media to a huge amount of people. Every company needs to put extra effort in being a superb company and take every critique seriously. Since if the company remains lousy and does not take in account customer's critique, the word gets out and it can turn very badly for the company. Social media marketing is an

effective tool to monitor customers' behavior and communication with each other. (Kotler 2013.)

Figure 5. Most commonly used social network sites (The 60 Second Marketer 2013)

Search engine marketing is a digital marketing method. The objective is to seemingly show a certain company's website on search engine searches. This can be done for example by search engine optimization. (Creswell 2007, 266.)

Opt-in e-mail marketing is a type of digital marketing that needs the customers' permission to receive e-mails from the company. It is also something that is requested by the customer. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 29, 664; Roberts 2003, 462.)

Online PR digital marketing technique involves third parties, such as blogs. Online PR's main goal is to boost the brand's/product's image by good comments on the brand/product. It also involves answering negative comments about the brand, product or company. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 29.)

Direct marketing can be used as a method to lead customers to the website. This can be done by direct mail to mail by offering something tempting, such as special sales or better offers that are only available online. (ibid., 548.)

It is vital for a company to have a good website. If the website performs well and the customers feel like they get what they came for, they will come back. If the website is poor, the customers will go look elsewhere. That is why it is important to create a website with good visual design, style and structure. The website needs to support the company's brand and also have the right information for the customers. It has to be easy to find, up to date, clear, relevant, accurate and detailed. (ibid., 398-401.)

The first thing a company should think about when considering to open a website, is whom is it for. The reason why the website is important is because it is the one thing a company can control in the digital environment. The company can publish what they want to, the website can be designed in a certain way and changed if it needs to be changed. (Ryan & Jones 2009, 40, 43.)

It is often said that a company's website should be user-centered. This means that the design of the website is based on maximizing the user experience. In order to achieve a user-centered website, these questions amongst many others should be considered: Who are the most important users? Why are they accessing the site? How often? What are they looking for? How will they want to receive their information? (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 399.)

Content is the most important thing to think about when designing a website. It can set a company apart from its competitor with exclusive content. It works as the base for everything a company does online. The content is what attracts customers to visit the website and if the content is good, they will keep visiting the website. But if it is bad they will not re-visit. (Ryan & Jones 2009, 79.)

Content marketing is a very important aspect of digital marketing. It works as bait to sales leads. Its' purpose is to create and share important, significant and rational content to captivate the audience. Its' purpose is also to get more customer reaction and to get the company more seen in the digital environment. (Content marketing institute 2012.)

Content marketing definition;

"Content marketing is the marketing and business process for creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire, and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience – with the objective of driving profitable customer action. A content marketing strategy can leverage all story channels (print, online, in-person, mobile, social, etc.), be employed at any and all stages of the buying process, from attention-oriented strategies to retention and loyalty strategies, and include multiple buying groups. Content marketing is comparable to what media companies do as their core business, except that in place of paid content or sponsorship as a measure of success, brands define success by ultimately selling more products or services." (Pulizzi 2012)

2.3 Sales leads

Sales leads are potential customers or businesses that are interested in a certain company's products or services. A sales lead is a piece of information, for example a name and a phone number or an e-mail address. Many companies practice lead nurturing in order to get qualified leads. This means the company is actively giving valuable information about their products and services in order to build a strong brand image. Thus when the customer is ready to buy they know where to turn to. (Sullivan 2008, 8.)

The most powerful aspect of public relations and social media is likely their proven ability to influence people to take action. That is why they are both popular tools to generate leads, whether used together or separately. Companies can use public relations in many different ways, including reputation and image management, or promoting products or services. Potential prospects notice when a company's service or product is featured in the media, such as TV, magazines, newspapers, radio programs or influential blogs. These placements can immediately raise the traffic on company's website and contribute to search engine optimization. Creating blogs for a target audience is an effective way to establish a company name and their expertise. Blogging provides a continuous stream of a relevant content. Updating a blog can be time consuming, but if it is done properly, it can become a lead-generating machine. (Fishman 2013, 32-33.) Different lead generation tactics are described next.

Lead generation

Generating leads is a process that companies must practice consistently and continuously. Leads are only leads and turning them into prospects takes effort so it is important to have many leads waiting to be contacted by the sales department. A sales person cannot close every sale. Thus, a sales department has to know how many leads they have to close every month and how many appointments they have to make. Lead generation services are offered by several marketing agencies for businesses that do not want to develop their own systems. It is important to use several different lead generation methods in order to get as many leads as possible. The most successful ones are search-engine marketing, social-media advertising, display advertising, e-mail marketing, direct mail marketing, cold calling and trade shows. (McNabb 2010.)

Social media is a valuable tool used in lead generation process. It is important to post coverage in social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn, but also how to do it effectively. The timing of posts and how the company posts is also very important. The company needs to know their audience and adjust the posts accordingly. The more people will see the posts, blogs or videos, the more people will share the content and the story spreads like a wild fire. This will create more opportunities for leads. Social media is ideal for interacting with consumers and building brand loyalty. The use of social media encourages lead generation and can have a great impact on sales of products or services. (Fishman 2013, 32-33.)

Qualified leads

Qualified leads are alleged good leads that the company sees as qualified buyers. Qualifying leads helps the company to separate the prospects from others. Lead scoring means that every sales lead is given a score based on different information. The information can be a job title, geography, industry, company revenue or a lead's online behavior. The company can give scores on lead's web visits, search activity, e-mail response, social media activity or downloads. All this information is helpful when qualifying leads. Thus, a sales department knows what to offer to the potential customer. To sum up, using different lead generation tactics companies can maximize the number of leads and by scoring them it is easy to recognize the qualified ones. (Grant 1995.)

2.4 Event marketing

Overall knowledge of event marketing has increased and event organizing is being taught in different courses. The quality of events has been improved since people are paying more attention to professional event organizing. The problem is repeating the same well-proved events when organizers should invent something new and surprising in order to create impressive and memorable events. Nowadays events are being organized keeping in mind the input-profit ratio not just for the fun of organizing. In this social media era people have many superficial relationships in their working life and events are great way to deepen the interaction. (Vallo & Häyrinen 2014, 8-9, 21.)

Events can be the best marketing tool a company have if thoroughly planned and executed. Of course it should not be used alone because event marketing is integral part of overall marketing operations. Beside of event marketing the marketing operations includes public relations, personal selling, direct marketing, online communication, advertising and telemarketing. Events enables companies to interact with their customers and prospects face to face and allows companies to get immediate feedback. (Saget 2006, 45-46.)

Event marketing should conclude brand recognition as it is vital part in marketing mix and builds awareness of a company's products or services (ibid., 7). Brand is an image based on product's or service's trademark and its strengthened or weakened by the consumers own experience. Brand is built through marketing communications and the promise should be redeemed in daily encounters. Using brand recognition in events helps the participants remember the company and its products. Image is an image of the company, products or services and it is formed of beliefs and images even without an experience. It is also affected by marketing communications. Reputation is the company's stakeholders' valuation about the company. It consists of multiple factors and cannot be build with advertising. Company's reputation is born and developed in different situations with the stakeholders. Events are challenging because they are personal face-to-face situations and the company either succeeds or fails in the eyes of stakeholders. (Vallo & Häyrinen 2014, 36-38.)

The fundamental key for a successful event is to understand the company's sales initiatives and business objectives. Allison Saget explains that there are five basic

steps in strategic event marketing. First is to examine the whole organization and its relationships with customers, prospects, partners and employees. Saget encourages companies to create their own event network where people can learn from each other by communicating. The next step is understanding and establishing the business objectives for the company and a particular event with the executives. Then assessing the various functions within the company and understanding how they work and interact with each other. It is important to research the company's and its competitors' websites regularly because the content in them is already checked and approved. This saves tremendous amount of time on event's content development. Finally Saget suggests that marketing should make friends with sales because they know who are the prospects and customers. Once the company understands their business objectives and sales initiatives the next step is to make them come alive in an event. (Saget 2006, 2-3.)

Every product, service and different marketing actions need SWOT-analysis to be made and event marketing is no exception. Muhonen and Heikkinen (2003, 47) have made a SWOT-analysis for event marketing and it is presented in Table 1. below.

Table 1. Modified swot-analysis for event marketing (Muhonen & Heikkinen 2003, 47)

MODIFIED SWOT-ANALYSIS FOR EVENT MARKETING	
Strengths	**Weaknesses**
- enables personal encounters - is easily transferrable according to situations - leaves a long memory trace - offers the possibility to network - creates responsive reactions - creates loyalty among the customers - is unique - better knowledge of the target group - competitors are not present	- expensive way to create contacts - implementation requires expertise - the amount of contacts may be small - results are hard to test and measure - events are one-time occasions
Opportunities	**Threats**
enables the collection of current market information	the negative memory trace of an unsuccessful event

• changes the existing image • remains permanently in the target group's mind • helps to make influence on the target group • raises above from the flood of marketing messages • speaks to the target groups that are hard to reach • stands out from the other marketing messages • creates a two-way ties between the company and stakeholders • accumulates important and specific information about customers	• unprofessional implementation • wrong target group • false information options • distractions in the event, too many messages • general marketing environment

Event marketing as a marketing tool is more intensive and personal than other traditional marketing communication tools. The competitive advantage of events are senses that can be utilized, that participants have strong mental image of the event that they remember for a long time. Event marketing has many strengths and interaction and personality between the participant and organizer is one of them. Company can set objectives and get immediate feedback on its success. The target group can be defined according to the needs and objectives. Events can even help the company to stand out from the competitors. It is important to set a clear objective that is linked to the company's marketing strategy and that people inside the company can answer the questions why the event is being organized and for whom is it targeted.

Different objectives can be for example:

- promote and sell products or services

- acquire visibility

- promote the company's image

- strengthen existing customer relationships

- acquire new customers or partners

- motivate, train or coach the company's own staff

(Vallo & Häyrinen 2014, 21-23.)

An important part of any event is to measure whether or not the event was successful, and to use the right metrics to do it. Rachel Sprung from Hubspot presents five substantial metrics and the first one is the number of Twitter mentions. The company should choose a short hashtag and share it with the attendees before the event. This would make it easier for the attendees to tweet about the event and discuss with others. The company can track all the event-related conversations under the same hashtag. The second metric is survey data. It is important to conduct a survey for the attendees after the event. Any feedback that the company will receive is helpful and will provide crucial information about the content and promotional strategies. The next metrics to follow are when and how the attendees registered. The company should track the different promotions because it will indicate when certain messages and media were the most effective with the audience. For example if they registered after the company published a blog post about the event or when the company held a contest to promote the event. The company can monitor people's activity as they register for the event by creating a tracking URLs for each promotion. This will indicate if the audience sign up after reading an e-mail the company sent about the event or if they clicked a link on Twitter. The last and most important metric is the number of attendees. The company should set a goal for the desired number of attendees. An increase in the attendance for annual or regular events shows that the event was successful. (Sprung 2011.)

The use of social media in event marketing

Social media has barged in marketing and public relations over the last few years. It has made consumers more active, powerful and open. Social media offers many new opportunities and tools when organizing an event. It can be used before the event, in the event and after the event. A company can for example create an event in Facebook or use the company's Facebook profile to inform about the upcoming event. Twitter messages or blogs can be also used to market the event. Social media is quick and inexpensive communication channel and it is easy to update information concerning the event. It is better to use social media as a supporting tool and use other marketing channels as well. Social media can be used as an idea-sharing channel, invitation

channel, marketing channel, messaging channel or feedback channel. (Vallo & Häyrinen 2014, 86-90.)

To sum up, event marketing can be very effective marketing tool if it is thoroughly planned and executed. It can strengthen the company's image and deepen the relationships with the customers. Events are unique and can be remembered for a long time, which can provide a competitive advantage for a company.

3   METHODOLOGY

Research can be defined as exploration of facts and knowledge. Kothari states that, "Research is an art of scientific investigation." The acts involved in research are: investigation of problems, defining hypothesis, collecting and analyzing data and concluding it. It can be viewed as a journey from something safe and familiar to something completely new. (Kothari 2004, 1-2.)

Pragmatism argues that when designing the research method the most important consideration is the research question and it allows multiple aspects to answer it. This is why the position of pragmatism was chosen in this study. Pragmatism enables the use of mixed or multiple method designs, quantitative and qualitative approaches. In pragmatist's view it is possible to work with variations in epistemology, ontology and axiology. The focus is on practical applied research and integrating different perspectives to help interpret the data. (Saunders et al. 2009, 109, 119.)

Ontology means "branch of philosophy that studies the nature of reality or being." There are two aspects of ontology, objectivism and subjectivism. Objectivism means that social entities exist separately from social actors. Subjectivism means that the actions of social actors create social phenomena. (ibid., 110-111, 596-600.) The Figure 6. below shows the different layers of research.
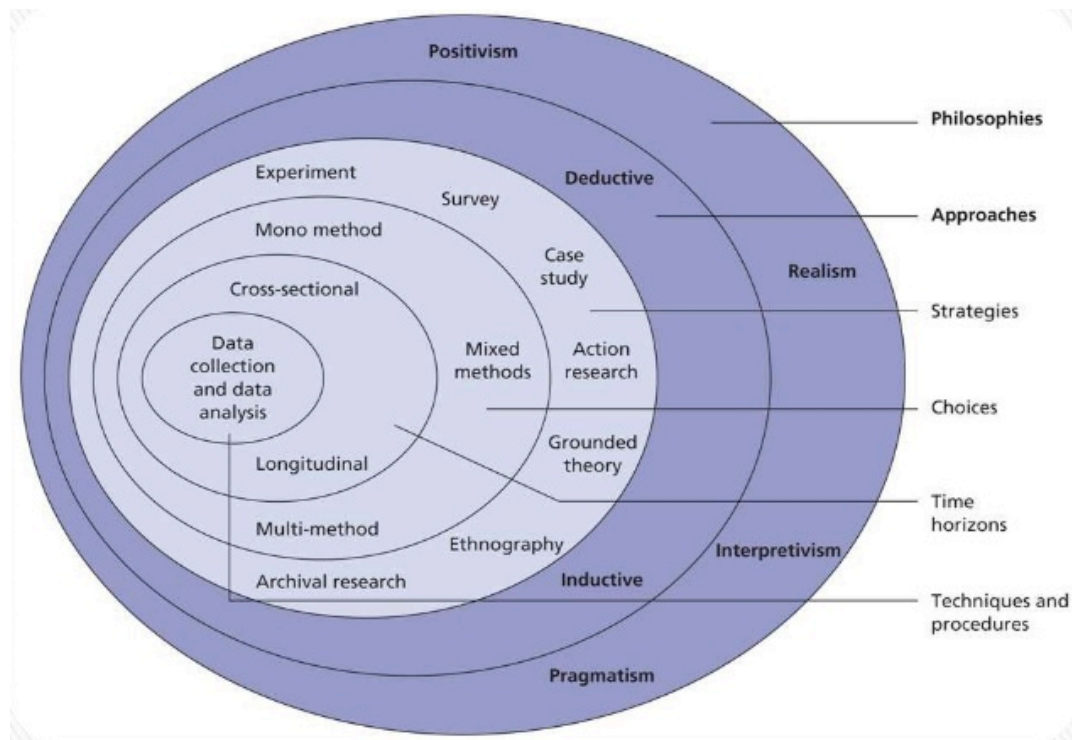
Figure 6. Research onion (Saunders et al. 2009)

3.1 Research design & strategy

John W. Creswell (2007, 249) states that research design is the "entire process of research", from the determination of the problem to the reporting of the findings.

Research design covers questions such as: what, where, when, how much. Research purpose can be put to three main categories: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. (Kothari 2004, 31, 35.)

Exploratory research is described as "what is happening; to seek new insights; to ask questions and to assess phenomena in a new light" (Robson 2002, 59.) Descriptive study objective is "to portray an accurate profile of persons, events or situations." (ibid.) Descriptive study can be combined with exploratory research. Explanatory research seeks to find relationships between variables. (Saunders et al. 2009, 139-140.) The purpose of this study is to obtain information and causes that affect people's choices to attend a business brunch, and gain valuable insights into how to maximize the return on investment of the event, by seeking the existing data and asking

questions using a questionnaire. For this reason, a combination of exploratory and descriptive study was chosen.

Research strategies can be mixed together, for example one can use the survey strategy with action research strategy in order to get the best results out of the research. The survey strategy is generally used for exploratory and descriptive research and it allows collecting a large amount of data from a sizeable population in a cost efficient way. The data collected by the survey strategy is unlikely to be as wide-ranging as those collected by other research strategies, which is why the action research and survey strategy were combined in this study. (ibid., 141, 144.)

The idea of action research refers to the theoretical framework and organizing principles that guide practice and procedures, which is why it lies under the heading of practice-based research. The term "action research" implies a process of people working together and learning with and from each other in order to understand their practices and situations, and to take meaningful action to improve them. (McNiff & Whitehead 2013, 25.)

Action researchers want to know whether they can do something in a better way and how can they improve the practices and solve a problem. There are three stages that action research often includes:

1. initiating action, seeking information that will help to understand and solve the problem
2. monitoring and adjusting action, that will help to improve a current practice
3. evaluating action, preparing final report on a completed study

(Sagor 1993, 7-8.)

In action research, intervention refers to the change in the target organization, which seeks to open up new perspectives on organization's practices. The intervention itself does not necessarily aim to increase efficiency but it may result in a new way of thinking. (Heikkinen et al. 1999, 44-45.) Action research is the most suitable research strategy, since the authors are being active participants in this study. The aim of this study is to create a more efficient way to market the company's event to improve their

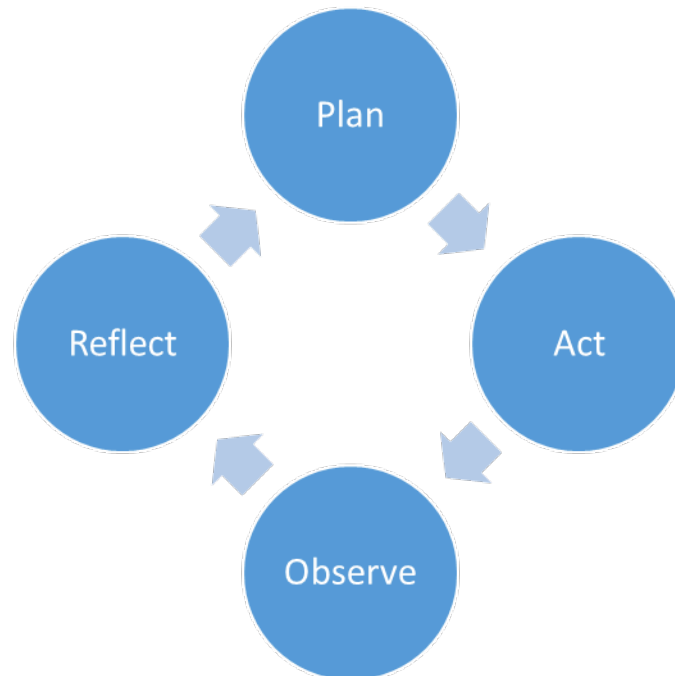existing event online marketing strategy. The process of action research is shown in the Figure 7. below.

Figure 7. The process of action research (Heikkinen et al. 1999)

All in all, the research strategy that suits this thesis the best is action research combined with survey research strategy. Survey research strategy allows the authors to collect data from a large audience via a questionnaire. (Saunders et al. 2009, 144.)

3.2   Data collection

Data collection can be done either using qualitative or quantitative approaches. Quantitative data collection method targets numbers and quantities, whereas qualitative data collection method is the type that relays on words and other non-numerical data. It is used when a concern needs to be analyzed. Qualitative research method studies behavior, opinions and attitudes. Qualitative data is often collected on the field, in the natural setting of the participants who are included in the study. (Kothari 2004, 30; Creswell 2007, 37; Saunders et al. 2009, 598.)

One can use primary and/or secondary data for answering research questions. Primary data is the type of data that is not already available. It is discovered through different methods. Primary data is data from interviews, observations, questionnaires, etc. Secondary data is the type of data that is already available for the public. It can be collected from, for example, articles or previously done interviews. It is research data that is already conducted by someone else. When collecting secondary data, the researcher needs to pay extra attention to the reliability of the data. (Kothari 2004, 95-112.)

Questionnaire

Evaluating the data collection methods for primary data for this thesis, a questionnaire was the most suitable. Since it is the type of data collection that can be quickly, easily and cost effectively distributed to the participants and to the people that did not attend the event. The questionnaires were made by researching literature and studies, which proved an effective way to create a questionnaire. The questionnaires were kept short and simple. The layout was clear with closed-ended and open-ended questions, thus respondents can share their perspectives freely. (See Appendix 2 & 3.) The second questionnaire, that was sent to people that did not attend the event, consisted mostly close-ended questions, thus it was more appealing to quickly answer it. (Appendix 3.) The questionnaire is a method that is used to measure the success of the event and the event marketing. (Saunders et al. 2009, 361-365.)

Saunders et al. (2009) define population as "the full set of cases from which a sample is taken". In this study, the population consists of the people that arrived at the event and the people that did not. Thus this study has two separate populations, one for each questionnaire. But, since this study aims to research ways to get more attendants to the brunch events, the main focus is on the people that did not attend the event. This is the population that needs to be researched, in order to find out what can be done differently in order for them to attend.

Two questionnaires were conducted. Before the questionnaires were handed out and sent to the population, drafts of them were shown to the company executive and adjusted by the feedback given. The first questionnaire was given to the participants at the event and collected afterwards. Thus the population for this questionnaire was the

people at the event. The original idea was to interview the participants and write the answers to the questionnaires by the researchers, but due to the delay of the brunch the surveys were handed out and participants were asked to fill them. (Appendix 2.) The second questionnaire was sent via Data Group Jyväskylä to the people that did not show up at the event. Both questionnaires included a message that explained the purpose of the questionnaire. Data was collected between 17.03.2015-01.04.2015.

The questionnaire that was given at the event was printed on paper and given to the six participants at the event. The questionnaire to the people that failed to arrive was sent by e-mail to 298 respondents. The respondents consisted of companies that received the first invitation e-mail and opened it, but did not register. The amount of people that acknowledged the questionnaire by e-mail was 173. The actual number of responses from the questionnaire was 13 (4.3%). Data Group Jyväskylä decided to include a prize to motivate people to answer the questionnaire. The prize was a laser printer, which will be drawn among the respondents of the questionnaire.

Population and sampling

Sampling techniques are needed when it is impracticable to survey the entire population or when there are time or budget constraints. Population describes a set of cases from which the sample is taken. In this study population consists of small and medium sized company executives and due to the large population and time constraints, sampling technique was applied. Sampling techniques can be divided into two groups that are probability sampling and non-probability sampling. In probability sampling the chance of each case being selected from the population is known and equal for all cases. In non-probability sampling it is impossible to answer research questions that requires statistical inferences to be made about the characteristics of the population. Also the probability of each case being selected from the total population is not known. (Saunders et al. 2009, 212-213.) This study concentrates on possible new customers that are small and medium sized company executives from different business areas, which makes it impossible to identify the sampling frame. This is why non-probability sampling was chosen as it offers various sampling techniques to choose from. Self-selection sampling was the most appropriate for this study as the

questionnaires were sent to a large amount of companies, also to find out who were willing to participate in it and find the topic interesting. (ibid., 233, 241.)

3.3 Data analysis

According to Saunders et al. (2009, 124) data analysis can be done through two separate research approaches, inductive and deductive. In inductive approach the researcher collects data and from that, creates a theory based on it. When using a deductive approach, there is already an existing theory and a hypothesis and the researcher constructs a research strategy to test the hypothesis. In this study, one hypothesis concerns the significance of the e-mail subject line. This study uses the deductive research approach, since the content used on the e-mail was collected and built from previous studies that proved the methods effective. Also the questionnaires were developed from existing information proving certain methods and layout effective.

Researchers go through a familiar set of steps when analyzing the data, regardless whether using qualitative or quantitative data analysis. Steps are as follows:

1. "Preparing the data for analysis
2. Exploring the data
3. Analyzing the data
4. Representing the analysis
5. Interpreting the analysis
6. Validating the data and interpretations."

(Creswell & Plano Clark 2011, 204.)

The qualitative data collected from the open-ended questions on the questionnaire was analyzed using qualitative data analysis methods. The procedure of data collection, data analysis and creating recommendations is interactive in nature. The analysis of the data appears while doing the data collection, as well as after it. This type of data collection and analysis allows the researcher to notice the possibly important patterns, themes and relationships while collecting data. There is no regulated way to analyze qualitative data. But it is possible to break down the data to three main processes: summarizing of meanings, categorization of meanings and structuring of meanings

using narrative. (Saunders et al. 2009, 488, 490.) The quantitative data was analyzed using excel and SPSS. The method of analysis that was used was Chi-squared (Chi2) and cross tabulation.

Background variable of the online questionnaire

The questionnaires were aimed at the people at the event and the people that did not attend. The main target group was the people that did not attend, since they are the ones that can boost the participation level. The first questionnaire was collected in order to get more insight. That is why the main focus is on the second questionnaire. The second questionnaire was conducted online and sent via e-mail, and 173 acknowledged the e-mail. The total amount of responses was 22, but only 13 completed the questionnaire. Only the completed questionnaires were analyzed.

The following Figure 8. shows the gender distribution of the online questionnaire. 69% of the respondents were male and 31% were female. There are a high number of males in this study. The questionnaire itself did not asked the respondents' gender but the information was gathered from the statistics of the APSIS program, which was the tool used to send the questionnaires.
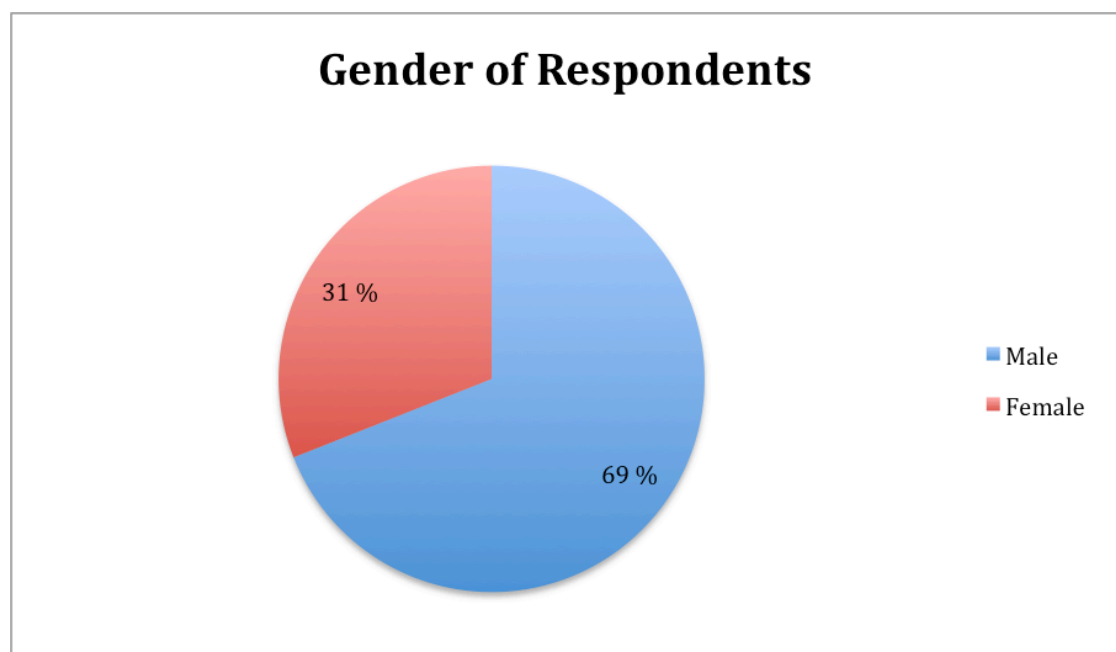

Figure 8. The gender of the respondents

3.4   Research implementation

In analyzing the current event marketing methods, the authors interviewed the sales director. When organizing business brunches Data Group Turku sends the invitations to three thousand company executives by using the opt-in e-mail technique. Contact information is drawn from the customer register, which should always have the updated information regarding e-mail addresses etc. They have been using APSIS and e-maileri, these programs provide specific information of the time the e-mails are being opened and viewed. They send the invitations about a couple of weeks before the brunch and again a week later to those who have opened the e-mail but not responded. They also send confirmation e-mails as a reminder a couple of days before the event. Usually they get approximately 15 participants. They have tried different dates and times when sending the invitations but this has not shown any significance in the number of participants. Since the invitations are always sent to executives, they had discovered that they also read their e-mails during the weekends.

This was the first time to organize a business brunch in Jyväskylä and it was decided with the company to use the same opt-in e-mail technique to send the invitations. The invitation was sent to 983 company executives and 157 (15,97%) opened the e-mail. The brunch was held on Tuesday 17.3.2015 in Aalto conference room, Innova 1 Jyväskylä and it started at 9 o'clock. Seven participants registered for the event but only five of them showed up. One participant showed up without having registered. We can say that the ratio is almost the same for Turku and Jyväskylä: 3000:15 and 1000:6. It was also considered to use social media to inform about the event but it was discovered that Data Group Jyväskylä is not active in that section. They have a Facebook page that has three likes, as of March 18th, 2015. They do not have any other social media sites. The time was thought to be too short, to start working on their social media sites and inviting participants through them.

4 EVENT MARKETING METHODS FOR DATA GROUP JYVÄSKYLÄ

The aim of this chapter is to explain the existing event hosting methods of Data Group Turku, analyze and present the results of the questionnaire, and finally propose ideas based on the findings for both Data Group Jyväskylä and Turku.

Data Group Turku has a habit of hosting brunch events for possible prospects, in order to get new customers. Data Group Turku co-hosts the events with Ohjelmistopalvelu.fi and Document House. All three companies present their services and products individually, while the participants indulge in the inclusive breakfast setting.

When analyzing Data Group Jyväskylä's existing event marketing methods, it can be concluded that their main method has been e-mail marketing. They have a Facebook page, but it is not used actively, thus the use of that is excluded from this study.

The company wants to know if the e-mail content can be designed in a better way, in order to attract more audience and get more participants to the event. It is worth mentioning, that since this is the first time Data Group Jyväskylä organizes the brunch event, comparison cannot be made to previous events. Hence, the change in participation rate cannot be evaluated.

It is important to think about the attendee persona and target the marketing to the right people. E-mail marketing can be used to promote company's events and event content. (Toner 2014.) Data Group Jyväskylä has determined that their target audience is online and their products and services are suitable for the digital market.

It was discovered while researching theory, that e-mail marketing is the most used method to market an event. It was decided to change the existing content of the invite to a new one based on theory. The researchers created the new content by researching theory and methods that have been proved to be efficient.

The results from the questionnaires will be presented in the order of the supportive questions. The following subchapters provide the presentation of the approach that the customers prefer and the content that attracts the customers.

4.1   Customer preferences

Two participants at the event answered the question, about potential suggestions for improving the invitation. Four (67%) participants left it blank, this may be because they did not have time to fill it or they did not have any suggestions for the improvement of the invitation. One participant (17%) thought that there should be no changes and another participant (17%) thought that an e-mail invitation is always appropriate.

In the second questionnaire the respondents were asked if there was some other method or channel that they would like to receive the invitation. 100% of the respondents said that there is not a better way than e-mail. Hence, the respondents were unanimous.

4.2   Attractive content for customer participation

Six persons who were at the event answered the first questionnaire. As shown by the first questionnaire for those attending, the ones who found the topics and products interesting and relevant to their business registered and attended the event. See Figure 9. below.
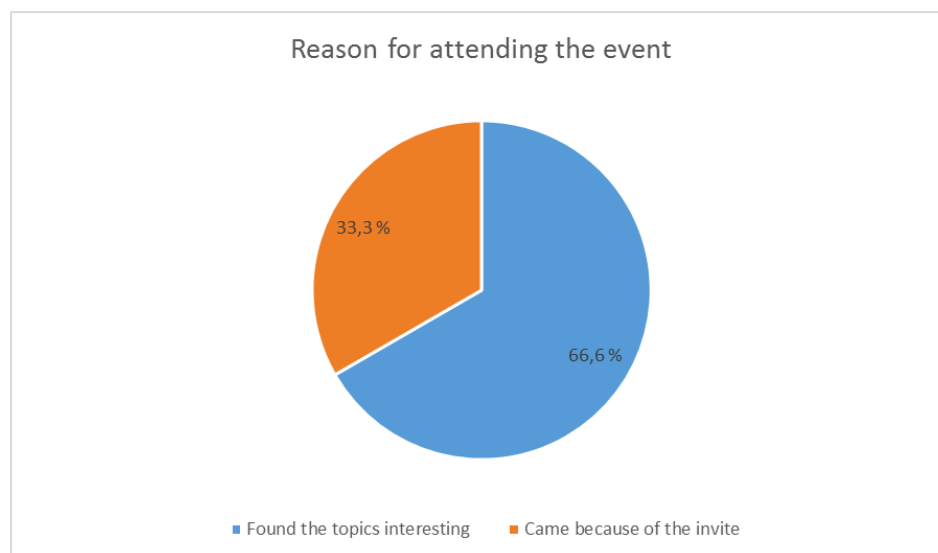

Figure 9. Reason for attending the event

A question about potential suggestions for improving the event was left unanswered by three respondents (50%). The reason for that may be the fact that the event ended half an hour after it was supposed to, and the participants had to go back to work. Another explanation could be that they did not have any improvement suggestions. One participant (17%) hoped for a more practical approach to the subjects. Two participants (33%) were happy with the event and would not make any changes.

The results indicated that the main reason for not attending the event was inconvenient time. The Table 2. below shows if the gender of the respondent affects the reason for not attending.

Table 2. Influence of gender for not attending

	Female	Male	Total (N)
n =	4	9	**13**
	%	%	**%**
Inconvenient time	50	89	**77**
Services not relevant	25	0	**8**
Other	25	11	**15**
Total	100	100	**100**

Chi2=3,14, df=2, 1-p=79%. More than 20% of the frequencies are less than 5, thus the rules of Chi2 are not really suitable.

10 (77%) respondents said that the time was not convenient, one (8%) respondent said that he did not feel that the services were relevant and the rest of the respondents (15%) had other reasons, which were not specified. The results do not show statistically significant difference between genders, since Chi2=3,14 and df=2. Majority of both, men and female, stated that inconvenient time was the reason for not attending. The results should be treated with skepticism, since not all of the required criteria of the Chi-squared test are met.

The Table 3. below shows if the gender of the respondents affects the way they would be motivated to register for future events.

Table 3. Influence of gender on what would motivate to register for the future event

	Female	Male	Total (N)
n =	4	9	**13**
	%	%	**%**
Event held at a later hour	25	22	**23**
Influential speaker	25	22	**23**
Client telling experiences	25	11	**15**
Other	25	44	**38**
Total	100	100	**100**

Chi2=0,64, df=3, p-1=11%. More than 20% of the frequencies are less than 5, thus the rules of Chi2 are not really suitable.

The Table 3. above reveals that over fifth (23%) of the respondents would attend if the event was held at a later hour. Another fifth (23%) would participate if the event would have an influential speaker. 15% of the respondents would attend the event if there were a client telling about their own experiences about the services. Less than half (38%) had other reasons that were not specified. The results show slight differences between genders, one fourth (25%) of females would prefer a client telling about experiences, whereas only 11% of males would prefer that. Event held at a later hour and influential speaker had almost the same response percentages between both genders. Moreover, the results do not show statistically significant difference between genders, since Chi2=0,64 and df=3. The results should be treated with skepticism, since not all of the required criteria of the Chi-squared test are met.

The respondents were also asked if they want more information about services and/or products. Ten (77%) said no and three (23%) said that they would be interested to receive further information. See Figure 10. below.
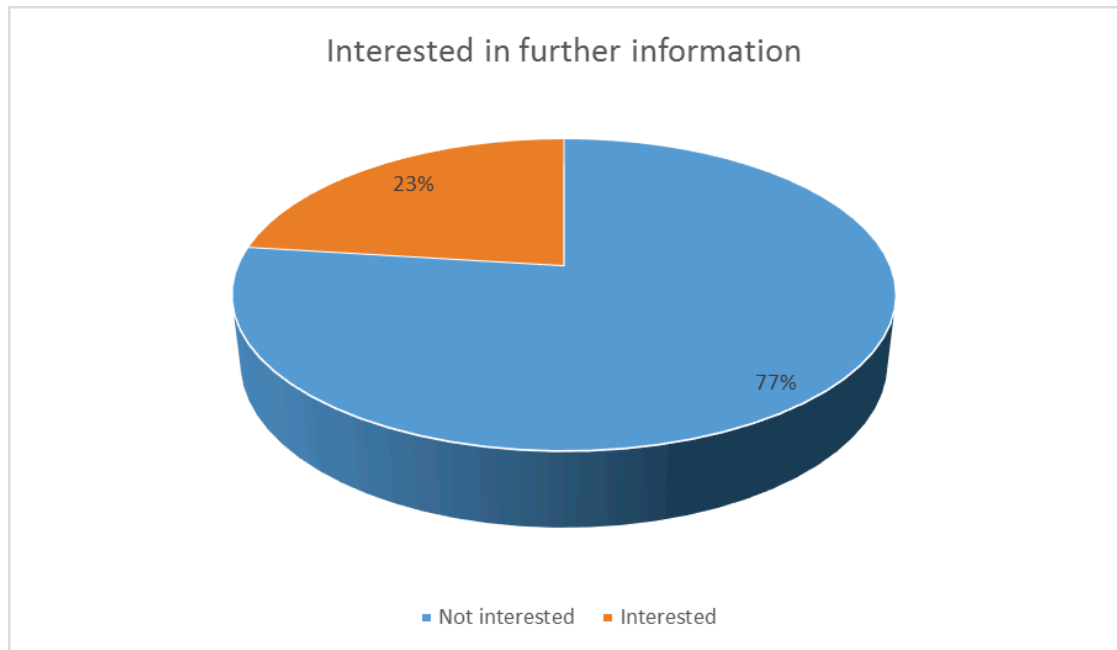
Figure 10. Interested in further information

Four respondents (66%) considered the event as a success. They described the event as follows: "instructive", "good setting", "good, I got a lot of new ideas", "interesting topics." One respondent (17%) thought that the information was too difficult and overwhelming. There was one participant (17%) who thought that the event was not for him.

Testing hypothesis

A hypothesis concerning the importance of e-mail titles was rejected. Since the e-mails were sent on behalf of Data Group Jyväskylä and Ohjelmistopalvelu.fi with different subject lines in order to compare the attractiveness of the topic. It was discovered that the subject line did not have an affect on the opening rate of the e-mail. Hence, the same people opened the e-mail and the same people left it unnoticed. Data Group Jyväskylä sent the e-mail using APSIS and Ohjelmistopalvelu.fi sent the e-mail via e-maileri.

4.3   Recommendations

The following subchapter provides recommendations for Data Group Jyväskylä and Data Group Turku on what to consider when marketing their business brunches in order to increase the attendance number. The recommendations are based on an existing theory and on the findings of the questionnaires, and are researched by the authors.

The invitations were sent 12 days before the event and then again, a couple of days later. The day before the event a confirmation e-mail was sent as a reminder to the participants. In the future the invitations could be sent at least three weeks earlier before the event so people would have more time to organize their schedules and register for the event. As the results of the second questionnaire indicated, over half (77%) of the respondents did not register for the event because the time was not convenient. This may be due to the fact that they did not have enough time to arrange their schedules and participate or that the starting time of the event was not convenient. In the open question one respondent replied that: "Usually the calendar is so full that the event should be very topical that it could be fitted into the schedule."

One respondent said that: "The hassle at work usually prevents the participation to events that are during working hours." It could also be considered that the starting time of the event should be changed. Three (23%) of the respondents said that if the event were held later in the afternoon they would participate. Usually the events have started at 9 o'clock but in the future the company could try to change the time to start at 10 or 11 o'clock. Then it could be compared if the later time would attract more people to attend the event. Also it could be considered to change the event to start at 8 o'clock in the morning. The attendees could start their day at the event and after that have the rest of the day dedicated to work instead of going back and forth between work and the event. It also should be considered to hold the event as a lunch, instead of a brunch. Since in Finland lunch is a more traditional and possibly more professional than a brunch.

The respondents revealed that an influential speaker, a current client and interesting topics would motivate to register for the event. The way to include all these, could be to theme the events. Since all different people find different topics interesting, by

theming the events the content would be more versatile. Hence, attract more participants. Before creating the themes for the events, it should be decided how often Data Group Jyväskylä want to host events. The problem that may occur is how the company can create more different topics, since their services and products only concern the IT branch. This could be executed by co-hosting the events with companies from different branches.

The first step, would be to decide the time of the event. Either have it early in the morning, or as a lunch event. Since the study revealed that the main reason for not attending was the inconvenient time. It could be recommended, that they try both ways. After having tested the three different times, the brunch time which this study focuses on, early in the morning and at lunch time, the comparison could be made between the three in order to define the most efficient one.

The second step would be to create a theme to each event. Since the study revealed that influential speaker or a client telling about own experiences would attract participants. Thus, for every different theme, there would be a different speaker, either a current client or someone influential. This way they are able to attract wider audiences since companies find different subjects interesting.

They could also try to send the invitation using other digital channels, such as social media. Even though all the respondents (100%) answered that there is no better way to receive an invitation as e-mail, there are several articles about how social media can be utilized in event marketing as stated previously in the literature chapter. They could create an event page in their Facebook profile and send invitations through there. But before that can be done it is necessary to create more followers and likes to their Facebook Page. This can be done for example by organizing competitions on their Facebook Page and updating it regularly.

Even though the company has previously tried different times to send the invitation e-mail and noticed that it does not show any significance on the attendance numbers, other research revealed that indeed the time of the e-mail is sent can affect on how many people reads the e-mail and reacts to it. Thus it is suggested that the company should send the invitations on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday. (Frankel 2012.)

They should value the attendees' opinions and collect feedback regularly from them, thus they can keep improving the event and satisfy the customers. The feedback could be collected via a questionnaire, verbally or by sending a questionnaire via e-mail. Also the target audience should be carefully considered as it could result for more people attending the event. If the feedback is collected regularly, Data Group Jyväskylä will be able to notice if some methods are more effective than others. This study will work as a comparison for the next data collected from the future brunches held in Jyväskylä. That is what action research focuses on, the future, in other words, the effectiveness and the power of the intervention can be measured after collecting more data from the future events.

5 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to develop an effective event marketing method for Data Group Jyväskylä, by exploring existing theories and seeking information from possible customers. Also identifying what kind of approach do the respondents prefer when sending invitations and the possible changes to the event to guarantee maximum participation rate. Based on the findings a recommendation was provided.

This study revealed that timing and relevancy are the key factors affecting the participation rates. All of the participants in this study (100%) preferred e-mail as the most desirable approach and the best method when receiving business event invites. E-mail is considered to be easy to use and traditional. The time and date when the invitations are sent could affect on how many people acknowledge and respond to the e-mail.

It was also revealed, since the e-mail invitations are sent to the executives, that their schedules are usually full. Thus the event and the topics would have to be relevant and interesting enough for them to attend. It was also acknowledged, that an influential speaker and a change in the time event is held, could motivate people to register and attend the event.

The recommendation offers suggestions for the case company to follow when planning their future business events. It is based on the results of the questionnaires and also on the existing theory about organizing events. It offers different suggestions regarding the event invitations, such as how and when to send the invitations. In order to discover how the recommendations affect the future events, it is important to measure the attendance numbers and compare them to the previous ones. This study will be the base for the data from the next event held at Data Group Jyväskylä. It is also important to remember to survey the attendees' opinions on the events and suggestions for the future. (Sprung 2011.)

Event marketing is an effective marketing tool. A powerful marketing strategy will be formed when it is used together with other marketing actions. Data Group combines event marketing with radio, TV, magazine advertisements and monthly newsletters. (Saget 2006, 45-46.) Digital marketing offers inexpensive methods for companies to market their brand and products. It is vital for a company to have an up-to-date knowledge on digital marketing and the digital environment, if it wants to succeed in the existing markets. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 6.)

It can be concluded that the research questions were answered. The research was conducted and based on the findings, a recommendation proposal was given to the case company. But since action research is future oriented, there is no data available at this point to prove the effectiveness of the recommendation proposal or to prove the effectiveness of the intervention. (Kananen 2011, 150.) Due to this thesis, Data Group Jyväskylä is able to adjust their existing event marketing methods to the findings of this study.

5.1 Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity need to be considered in order to ensure the quality of the creditability of this study. Reliability refers to the extent to which the data collection techniques will yield consistent findings, in other words, if the research was done again, would the same results appear. Internal validity is concerned with the questionnaire and whether it measures what it was intended to measure. (Saunders et al. 2009, 156, 372.) External validity refers to the generalizability of the findings due the population. Different sampling techniques were studied and non-probability

sampling was chosen due to the lack of a sampling frame. Because the self-selection sampling technique was used it is impossible to make generalizations that would apply to the whole population. Also, due to the small samples (first questionnaire 6, second questionnaire 13), it is preposterous to make any generalizations. In all the cases, the dependencies between genders were not significant. The possible fact that causes this is that almost all frequencies were under five. Hence not all the criteria required to make assumptions, according to Chi2, were met. Because of this, the results should be treated with skepticism. Since the research method used was action research, it is a little difficult to measure the reliability of the study. The whole study focuses on the intervention, in other words, the intervening variable, which means that the same result is not essentially achievable (Heikkinen et al. 1999, 113-114).

All secondary data was collected from printed publications and web published articles from research databases or company platforms that can be considered reliable. (ibid., 274.) Hence, all secondary data used was versatile. All in all, it was challenging to obtain a sufficient number of respondents to the second questionnaire, although it was sent via Data Group Jyväskylä and a prize was included in order to motivate higher response rates. Even though the questionnaires were developed based on existing theory, it is worth mentioning, that the theory was in English and directed to English speakers. The factors Finns find effective may differ from the theory collected.

Triangulation was used to improve the reliability of this study. Thus different research methods, quantitative and qualitative, were used to verify the results.

As told in previous chapter, this was the first time Data Group Jyväskylä organized the event. Thus, the only comparison can be made to Data Group Turku. The target groups between the two different cities might differ from each other. It can be concluded, that the comparison is not accurate.

5.2   Suggestions for future research

While conducting this study, other research ideas emerged. Since the majority of people and businesses are active online and use digital channels, a study that concerns Data Group Jyväskylä's social media development would be useful. That, in turn, leads to a study that uses social media to send the invitations to the events. Then it could be compared, which method is more effective. Other interesting research idea

would be to seek into the customer preferences, concerning different media channels, between small and medium sized companies and large companies.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Invitation

dg Data Group

Hei,

Meillä on ilo kutsua Sinut järjestämäämme aamiaisseminaariin tiistaina 17.3.2015, klo 09:00-10:30.

Teemana on yrityksen johtaminen ja kannattavuuden kasvattaminen oikeanlaisilla, tehokkailla ratkaisuilla.

"NYKYAIKAISET TYÖKALUT LIIKETOIMINNAN JOHTAMISEEN" –Data Group

"TEHOKAS JOHTAMINEN LEMONSOFTIN AVULLA" –Ohjelmistopalvelu.fi

"YRITYKSEN PROSESSIT JA DOKUMENTOINTI KUNTOON" –Document House

Aamiasseminaari järjestetään **Aalto kokoustilassa tiistaina 17.3.2015 klo 9:00** osoitteessa **Piippukatu 11, Innova 1, 40100 Jyväskylä**.

Tule paikan päälle nauttimaan maukasta aamiaista ja kuulemaan miten saat yrityksesi kannattavuuden kasvuun tehokkailla IT-ratkaisuilla!

Ilmoittauduthan linkin kautta viimeistään 13.3.2015.

dg

Ilmoittaudu tästä

Tilaisuudesta vastaa Data Group, Ohjelmistopalvelu.fi ja Document House.

Ystävällisin Terveisin,
Data Group Jyväskylä
Puh. 030 6360 611

datagroup.fi/Jyväskylä

Appendix 2. A copy of the first questionnaire

Tämän kyselyn tarkoitus on kehittää Data Group Jyväskylän tapahtumamarkkinointi strategiaa. Toivoisimme, että voisitte täyttää kyselyn, siitä olisi paljon hyötyä. Kyselyn täyttäminen vie vain hetken.

1. Mikä sai Sinut tulemaan paikalle?

2. Mitä mieltä olit tapahtumasta?

3. Olisiko tapahtumassa parannettavaa?

4. Olisiko kutsussa parannettavaa?

5. Olen kiinnostunut saamaan lisätietoa
   - Data Groupin palveluista
   - Ohjelmistopalvelu.fi:n palveluista
   - Document House:n palveluista

6. Onko Sinulla muuta palautetta tapahtumasta tai palveluista?

Jätä yhteystietosi niin otamme yhteyttä Sinuun:

Kiitos ajastasi.

Senni Pöysti & Carina Ström, Jyväskylän ammattikorkeakoulu, yhteistyössä Data Group Jyväskylä.

dg Data Group

Appendix 3. A copy of the second questionnaire

Data Group Jyväskylän Brunssi-tilaisuus

Tämä kysely koskee Data Group Jyväskylän 17.3.2015 järjestämää brunssia ja kyselyn tarkoituksena on selvittää syitä, jotka vaikuttavat tapahtumien osallistujamäärään. Kaikkien vastanneiden kesken arvomme palkinnon. Kysely on tehty yhteistyössä Jyväskylän ammattikorkeakoulun tradenomiopiskelijoiden kanssa koskien heidän lopputyötä. Toivoisimme, että käyttäisit hetken ajastasi vastataksesi tähän kyselyyn.

1. Miksi et päässyt paikalle?

○ ajankohta ei ollut sopiva
○ en koe palveluita tarpeellisiksi
○ kutsu tuli liian myöhään
○ en huomannut kutsua sähköpostissani
○ Muu syy

2. Mikä saisi sinut osallistumaan kyseiseen tapahtumaan tulevaisuudessa?

○ vaikuttava/merkittävä puhuja
○ asiakas kertomassa kokemuksistaan palveluista
○ myöhäisempi kellonaika
○ Muu syy

3. Olisiko muuta tapaa millä haluaisit kuulla tapahtumasta?

○ ei, sähköposti toimii hyvin
○ sosiaalinen media
○ kutsu postissa
○ lehti-ilmoitus
○ Muu vaihtoehto

4. Haluaisitko saada lisätietoa tuotteista/palveluista?

○ kyllä, Data Groupin palveluista
○ kyllä, Ohjelmistopalvelu.fi palveluista
○ kyllä, Kameleon palveluista
○ en

Muut terveiset

DATA GROUP JYVÄSKYLÄ
Lap Power Oy
Piippukatu 11
40100 JYVÄSKYLÄ

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myynti.jyvaskyla@datagroup.fi
www.datagroup.fi/jyvaskyla

Kotipaikka: Jyväskylä

alv.rek.
y-tunnus: 0973062-4

Cancel

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Finish

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