



ROUTE 2.0
Leonardo Da Vinci – TOI

ROUTE 2.0

Results of the Frisian Regional Analysis

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Internet has revolutionised markets, the rules have changed and companies must adapt if they want to survive in this new environment. In the Netherlands, Social Networks & ICT are commonly used. Most of the Dutch companies are aware of the rise of social media, but still the majority does not know how to implement this into the policy of the business.

This document contains a research about how to develop the skills and competences necessary to integrate Communication Strategies and Marketing actions through Web 2.0 tools in the process of business management for European SMEs and microSMEs in the tourism sector.

For this project we used four different analysis tools for achieving the best possible results. Among them we find primary and secondary sources. Firstly, we did a data mining process, which resulted in interesting chapters on ICT, Social Networks and the tourism sector. Subsequently, 19 SMEs were interviewed, of which the results are described in chapter five. Eight of the respondents had a business in the accommodation sector, eight in leisure & culture and three in the information sector. To provide a greater wealth of information, we also conducted in-depth interviews with several of businesses. In that way it became possible to evaluate the questionnaire responses. Finally, Business Development Friesland organized a panel to share the outcomes of the questionnaires and interviews and to discuss the matter of social media in the tourism sector.

From the questionnaires, interviews and the organized panel, we may conclude that the use of social media can be of high value to the tourism sector. Many social media platforms can be applied to run a successful marketing campaign with limited resources. Benefits of using social media are: traceable and reachable target group, cost efficient, personalization, interaction, knowing customer needs. However, many SME's do not understand how to use social media effectively. Barriers to adopting social media into the marketing strategy are: time, danger of reputation damage, interference with privacy, overwhelming number of social media platforms.

The four analysis tools gave us the information necessary to give our recommendations about the use of web 2.0 tools within training courses for tourism in Friesland.

At first, we would like to indicate that in general, Frisian companies are already active in the field of social media. Only a few companies are beginners. This conclusion leads us to a twofold recommendation, one focusing on the target group of already active companies and the other focusing on companies that are not yet active in the field of social media. In chapter 8.2 all of the recommendations are being explained.

Apart from these practical aspects, the training courses should also contain information about virtual communities (review sites, blogs etc.). Because that might be the most important Social Network for companies in the tourism sector. Besides focusing on virtual communities, the training course should also contain information about the safety aspects of social media as companies appear to have concerns about this matter.



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1 INTRODUCTION

Route 2.0 aims to develop the skills and competences necessary to integrate Communication Strategies and Marketing actions through Web 2.0 tools in the process of business management for European SMEs and microSMEs in the tourism sector. This will be done through the creation of a methodology for continuous learning to improve the performance and competitiveness of these organizations.

In order to develop the final training material that enables SMEs in the European tourism sector to achieve the goals that have been set, a training needs analysis will be executed in the partner countries to research the needs of the target group.

Route 2.0 is developed as part of the Lifelong Learning Programme. This is an educational program of the European Union for the period 2007 – 2013. The goal of this program is to provide a contribution to the knowledge economy through durable economic growth, more and better job opportunities and the increase of social connections within the EU.

For this project we will use four different analysis tools for achieving the best possible results. Among them we find primary and secondary sources. These are:

Datamining processes

Collecting, selecting and processing information from various sources to transform it into knowledge about the current status of ICT and the use of Social Networks among tourism enterprises and the trends observed in them. Search for information based on European, national and regional secondary sources such as bibliographies, directories, articles, publications etc.

Questionnaires

The questionnaire is the basic document to obtain information about the needs analysis.

The following steps were taken to obtain the information from the questionnaires:

1. Translating the questionnaires into Dutch
2. Making an online questionnaire
3. Making a list of interesting tourism companies in Friesland
4. Calling those companies and ask them to fill in a questionnaire
5. When companies don't have time to fill it in immediately, sent them an email
6. Give them some time to fill in the questionnaire; What is the response?
7. Calling more companies until we had 20 questionnaires completed
8. Incorporating the data statistically
9. Making graphs of the results
10. Drawing conclusions



Selection Criteria

Questionnaire	Target	Surveys
1. Accommodation	Hotels, motels, hostels, Camping,...	8
2. Leisure	Restaurants, cafes, pubs,...	6
	Leisure and culture: museums, theaters,...	3
3. Information	Travel agents	3
Total		20

All these companies are active in the tourism sector and belong to the category Small and Medium-sized Enterprises.

Interviews

In the questionnaires there are both multiple choice questions, but also open questions which will provide a greater wealth of information but with a lower degree of systematization that needs a deeper analysis. In this part, we want to collect and value all the data provided in the questionnaires. In that way, it is necessary to obtain precise information about the badly defined answers of the previous phase through clarification and formulation of new issues, achieving control and evaluating the questionnaire responses.

Panel

The panel entitled 'Social Networks and Tourist Marketing' is designed for Route 2.0 as a meeting to share the issues that have been mentioned for the needs analysis. Business Development Friesland will organize a panel to be attended by various experts in their respective fields.

The panel will be held while ending the other tasks of the field work, contributing definitively to the conclusions that appear in the regional report.



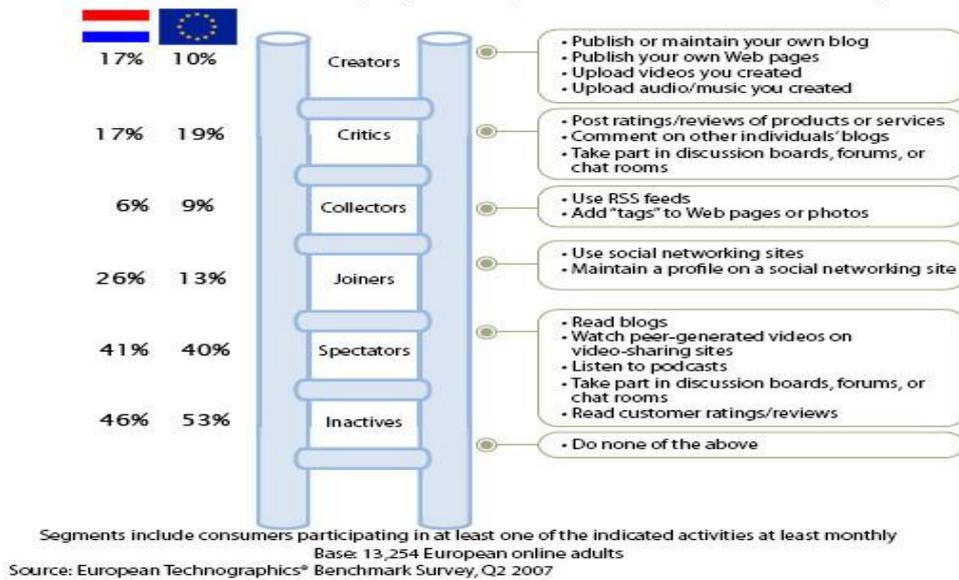
2 ICT AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

2.1 Use of ICT and Social Networks in The Netherlands compared to the European Union

Internet has revolutionised markets, the rules have changed and companies must adapt if they want to survive in this new environment. In the Netherlands, Social Networks & ICT are commonly used. Most of the Dutch companies are aware of the rise of social media, but still the majority does not know how to implement this into their business.

The use of social media in the Netherlands is quite different compared to the other European countries. The Netherlands is leader in the field of Twitter and LinkedIn, while Facebook is less popular, compared to the other European countries. However the use of Facebook is increasing. 72% of the Dutch companies use at least one Social Network. Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook are the most popular. Beside these Networks, the Netherlands has its own Social Network, called 'Hyves'. Hyves is the most popular Social Network, with 50% of the Dutch users.¹

The Social Technographics profile of online Europeans



The diagram above shows the use of social media in Europe and the distribution from Inactives to Creators. The largest group (46%) does not use social media at all. 41% of the online adults belong to the group Spectators who are viewing and reading social media like YouTube and forums, but do not participate in this.

Compared to Europe, the Netherlands is leading in the number of social media Users. The Netherlands relatively has a large amount of Critics and Creators. According to research, the high availability of broadband internet in the Netherlands promotes the active participation in social media and the publishing of content.²

¹ Blotenburg, S. Young entrepreneur. Consulted on 3th February 2012. <http://fd.nl/entrepreneur/young-entrepreneur/973969-1201/nederland-voorop-in-gebruik-social-media>

²Roekel, E. Marketingfacts. Consulted on 3th February 2012. http://www.marketingfacts.nl/berichten/gebruik_social_media_in_nederland_volgens_forrester/



2.2 Most active companies on various Social Networks

Hyves

Very well known in the tourism sector is Heineken. Normally, brands have lower scores on activity and interactivity on Hyves than Facebook or Twitter. In this case, it is different. Because of the combination of professional appearance and interaction, Heineken is the legitimate leader of the Hyves rankings.

Facebook

The Facebook page of HEMA may be one of the most original pages in the Netherlands. HEMA is frequently posting content in an original and surprising way. With the result that followers make hundreds of comments and likes. Because of the active dialogue of HEMA with their community, HEMA is the legitimate leader of the Facebook rankings.

Twitter

Most active company on Twitter is ABN AMRO. It uses twitter as a means to offer extra service. A few employees react on questions posed by consumers. The interactivity of twitter and especially the activity from ABN AMRO is very high. The channel looks professional and employees send personal and sympathetic tweets to their clients. Because of that, ABN AMRO is leader in the Twitter rankings.³

2.3 Current use and knowledge of ICT and Social Networks in Friesland

It goes without saying that social media & ICT are a trend in Friesland. From banks to nonprofit-organizations and from schools to the government, all organizations are using them to a greater or lesser degree. Companies in all shapes and sizes promote themselves with new web 2.0 tools. Teachers cannot keep-up with their students when it comes to the developments in social media.⁴ And of course, the new sector of employment which results in fast growing, innovative companies.

The term Web 2.0, which is commonly used in the press and among internet professionals, is unknown to the majority (90%) of the Dutch that are active on the internet. Internet users who say that they do know the term (10%) generally do not know what the term really means. Only a few can give a good description.⁵

When accessing the different research into the use of social media in the Netherlands, there are no large differences when comparing Friesland with the rest of the Netherlands. An exception can be found in the Dutch 'Hyves'. It is used more in Friesland than in the rest of the Netherlands.⁶

The popularity of Hyves is not growing anymore in the Netherlands, around 65% of the Dutch people use this Social Network and this percentage remains the same. Facebook, on the other hand, has increased in users from 28,8% to 40%.⁷

When accessing the Netherlands' most popular Social Networks at this moment, it becomes clear that Hyves is the most used but that Facebook is emergent.

³ Kloos, M. Social Media Monitor. Consulted on 23th of February. <http://www.socialmediamonitor.nl/Social-Media-Monitor-4.pdf>

⁴ NOS. Consulted on 13th February 2012. <http://nos.nl/artikel/244458-mobieltjes-zijn-probleem-in-de-klas.html>

⁵ Computeridee. Consulted on 6th February 2012. <http://www.computeridee.nl/nieuws/web-20-nog-niet-bekend-nederland-maar>

⁶ Alphenaar, J. W. PowerPR. Consulted on 9th of February 2012. <http://www.powerpr.nl/2011/12/hyves-vooral-populair-in-friesland-groningen-en-drenthe/>

⁷ Alphenaar, J. W. Marketingfacts. Consulted on 9th of February 2012.

http://www.marketingfacts.nl/berichten/20100917_social_media_in_nederland_cijfers_en_feiten



Results of the Frisian Regional Analysis

Age group	Facebook	Hyves	Twitter	Linkedin
15-24	39,5%	79,1%	17,3%	8,3%
25-34	44,7%	67,5%	16,8%	17,3%
35-44	36,6%	65,5%	18,2%	22,2%
45-55	32,7%	65,6%	19,6%	19,1%
55+	28,2%	46,4%	15,7%	9%

Compared to Facebook, Twitter still has a small network of users. Twitter is well known, but has not reached the user levels of Facebook yet. Future adoption looks good, but there is still a long way to go. 80% of the people know Twitter, only 16% use it. Facebook and twitter are a perfect couple, both sites serve different needs. When people join twitter, their Facebook usage does not decrease. Twitter users are typically using more social media than non-Twitter users.⁸

Friesland itself has benefited from the social media trend. With the help of a social media campaign the capital of Friesland obtained more attention. With the new slogan: "That is the beauty of Leeuwarden", Leeuwarden is promoted as the modern, dynamic and cultural capital of Friesland. Since 2010, Marketing Leeuwarden makes use of social media (Twitter, Hyves, Youtube and LinkedIn). Marketing Leeuwarden already has at least 1650 followers on twitter and 750 groupmembers on LinkedIn. This shows that Marketing Leeuwarden is active in the field of social media.

Short facts:

- The Dutch Social Network 'Hyves' is used the most in Friesland. Compared to the Netherlands, the Frisians are the most active in this network;⁹
- Leeuwarden has a 'social media club';¹⁰
- There is a Frisian twitter top 100;¹¹
- Besides the benefits of Social Media, also the disadvantages are being examined. People are afraid of the privacy issue. Is it safe to put your personal information on the internet?

⁸ Mans, R. Marketingfacts. Consulted on 9th of February 2012. http://www.marketingfacts.nl/berichten/20100322_cijfers_over_social_media_gebruik_in_nederland/

⁹ Alphenaar, J. W. Power PR. Consulted on 9th of February 2012. <http://www.powerpr.nl/2011/12/hyves-vooral-populair-in-friesland-groningen-en-drenthe/>

¹⁰ Leeuwarder courant. Consulted on 8th of February 2012. <http://www.lc.nl/friesland/regio/article13788333.ece/Leeuwarden-krijgt-Social-Media-Club>

¹¹ Twittergids. Consulted on 14th of February 2012. <http://frysk.twittergids.nl/>



3 THE TOURISM SECTOR

3.1 The Tourism sector in the Netherlands

Tourism is an important economic sector in the Netherlands. Over the year, 11 million foreign tourists visit the Netherlands and 50% of the Dutch people stay in their own country during the holidays. Many foreign tourists visit Amsterdam, but the Netherlands has more to offer. This includes the North sea, the 'Wadden' Islands or nature reserves like the 'Veluwe' or the 'Biesbosch'.¹²

3.2 The Tourism sector in Friesland

Friesland, situated in the northern part of the Netherlands, receives a large group of tourists. Every year, more than 2 million tourists visit Friesland. The objective of the promotion campaign is to increase this number by 3% annually. In Friesland, 11% of the people work in the tourism sector and the sector has a turnover of 1 million a year.¹³ According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, 11.7% of the total nights spent in the Netherlands, has been spent in the Northern Netherlands. 49% in Drenthe, 41% in Friesland and 10% in Groningen.¹⁴ Most of the tourists are attracted to this part of the country due to the scenery. Especially the Frisian lakes are very popular, because of the wide range of possibilities in water sports and recreation.

Water sports

A large part of the tourism sector in Friesland focuses on water recreation. Due to the large amount of lakes and canals, people from all over Europe come to Friesland to enjoy the Frisian watersports. At the moment, 271 marinas are registered in the North of the Netherlands. With 217 marinas in Friesland.¹⁵

Professional tourism in Leeuwarden

More and more tourists are interested in Leeuwarden. Not only because of its nice city-center or its cultural activities, but also because it is suitable for professional tourism. That is why 'Marketing Leeuwarden' needed to exert themselves to make Leeuwarden known as 'city of professional tourism'.

With 500 hotel rooms and more than 45,000 m² of exhibition space and the possibility to organize conferences for up to 8000 people, Leeuwarden has much to offer in this market.

¹² Wikipedia. Consulted on 22th of February 2012. http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toerisme_in_Nederland

¹³ OF. Consulted on 22th of February 2012. <http://www.of.nl/fryslan-toerisme>

¹⁴ Haas, M. Huig, P. H. Toerisme in cijfers. Leeuwarden, 2011.

¹⁵ Haas, M. Huig, P. H. Toerisme in cijfers. Leeuwarden, 2011.



4 ICT AND SOCIAL NETWORKS IN THE FRISIAN TOURISM SECTOR

A recent survey of the NBTC (Dutch Bureau of Tourism & Conventions) shows that tourists intensively use social media to plan and book their holiday. At least half of all the international guests who visit the Netherlands consult review sites and social networks. The same results for 70% of the Dutch, who also consult those websites. Currently, review sites and social networks play the largest role in decision making about where to spent the holidays.

Consumers attach importance to the interaction that social media enables. For example the use of third-party reviews for making decisions about the destination and/or accommodation. Or sharing holiday experiences on Social Network sites and the contact that can be made with providers.

Although 90% of companies in the tourism sector recognizes the importance of social media, the actual use of this tool stays behind. The use of social media and review sites lags behind consumer demand.

The main reason for not using social media, is the lack of knowledge about social media and the fear of losing control of the content of the information.¹⁶

Even when a tourism business uses some form of social media, it generally only sends out information. There is no matter of interaction. These businesses have no chance of success among the users of social media. Consumers want to interact with the businesses in the tourism sector.

The demand for help and support is definitely there. In case of companies which are not yet active, there is a demand for support on the technical side. They need help with the concrete tools and technical support. On the other hand, the companies which are already active in the field of social media, also need help. They need advice about the use of social media and they would like to see something like a platform for the exchange of knowledge about this subject.

To conclude:

Consumers use social media a lot, and let their decisions be influences by it. From this you can conclude that businesses in the tourism sector which have the latest online booking facilities and use social media, have an advantage over their colleagues that do not offer this.¹⁷

¹⁶ Irclay. The future of Social media. Consulted on 15th of February 2012. <http://irclay.hubpages.com/hub/The-Future-of-Social-Media-for-Hotel-Marketing-Travel-and-Tourism>

¹⁷ Plat, F. Klantinteractie kenniscentrum. Consulted on 15th of February 2012. <http://www.klantinteractiekenniscentrum.nl/artikelen/831/1/Internet-en-social-media-steeds-belangrijker-voor-toerisme-/Pagina1.html>



5 RESULTS QUESTIONNAIRE

5.1 Current use and knowledge of web 2.0 tools in the participant organizations

In the following chapter, the results of the questionnaires are being explained.

Eight of the respondents have a business in the accommodation sector, eight in leisure & culture and three in the information sector. The interviewed employees mostly have more than 10 years of experience in this field. All companies are SMEs, most of them have less than 10 employees. Mostly, these employees have a VET or Bachelor degree, and follow training courses on a regular base.

These courses are for example theoretical courses, social skills or company first-aid. Many companies do not have a marketing manager, and if they have one, the marketing managers have various educations.

All of the respondents have a website. Often, it is even possible to make a reservation or to order a product. Payment, on the other hand, is more difficult. Only 13 percent of the companies offer that extra service online.

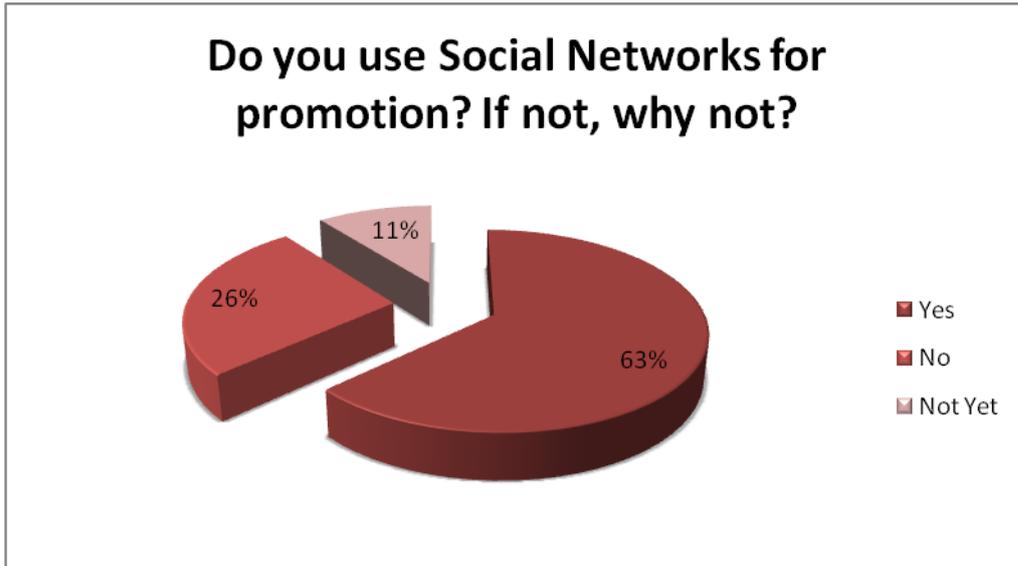
The most successful aspect of their websites is the user-friendliness and the convenience of the organization. Organizations would like to improve their internet sales by being more oriented towards their target group.

Most companies focus on families aged between 25 and 45. Most of the customers come from the Northern-Netherlands and have an average income level.



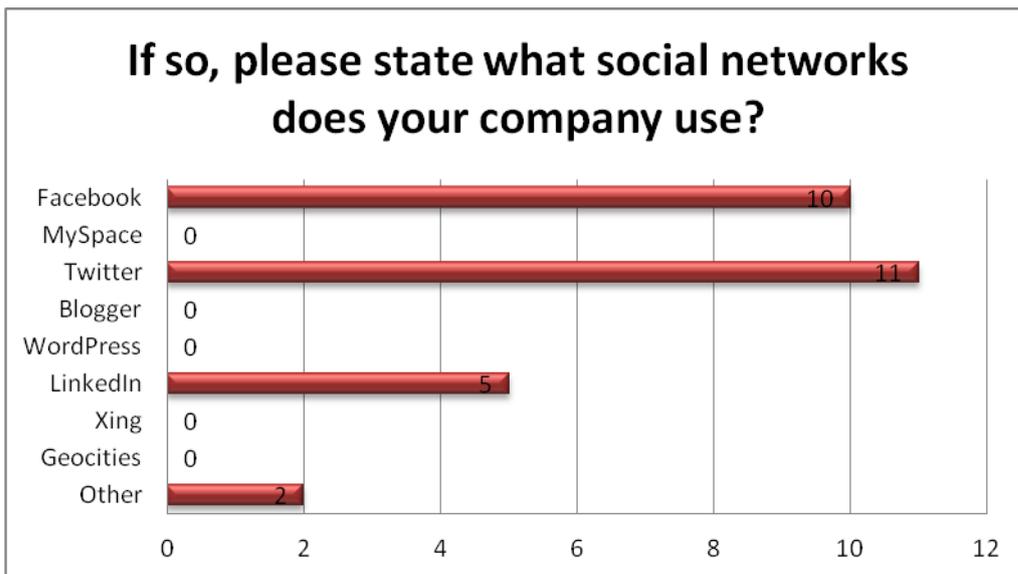
5.2 Use of Social Networks

Of the respondents, nine are owners, three are marketing managers and seven have another position. Of the 19 respondents, 12 are already active in the field of social media. Two of the companies currently follow a course because now, they do not know how to use social media. Five of the respondents do not use social media because they do not have time for it or because they are not yet caught up in this subject.



5.3 Which Social Networks does the company use?

The most used Social Networks by companies in Friesland are Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. Hyves is also popular, but less so than Twitter and Facebook. MySpace, Blogger, WordPress, Xing and Geocities are known, but not used in these companies.

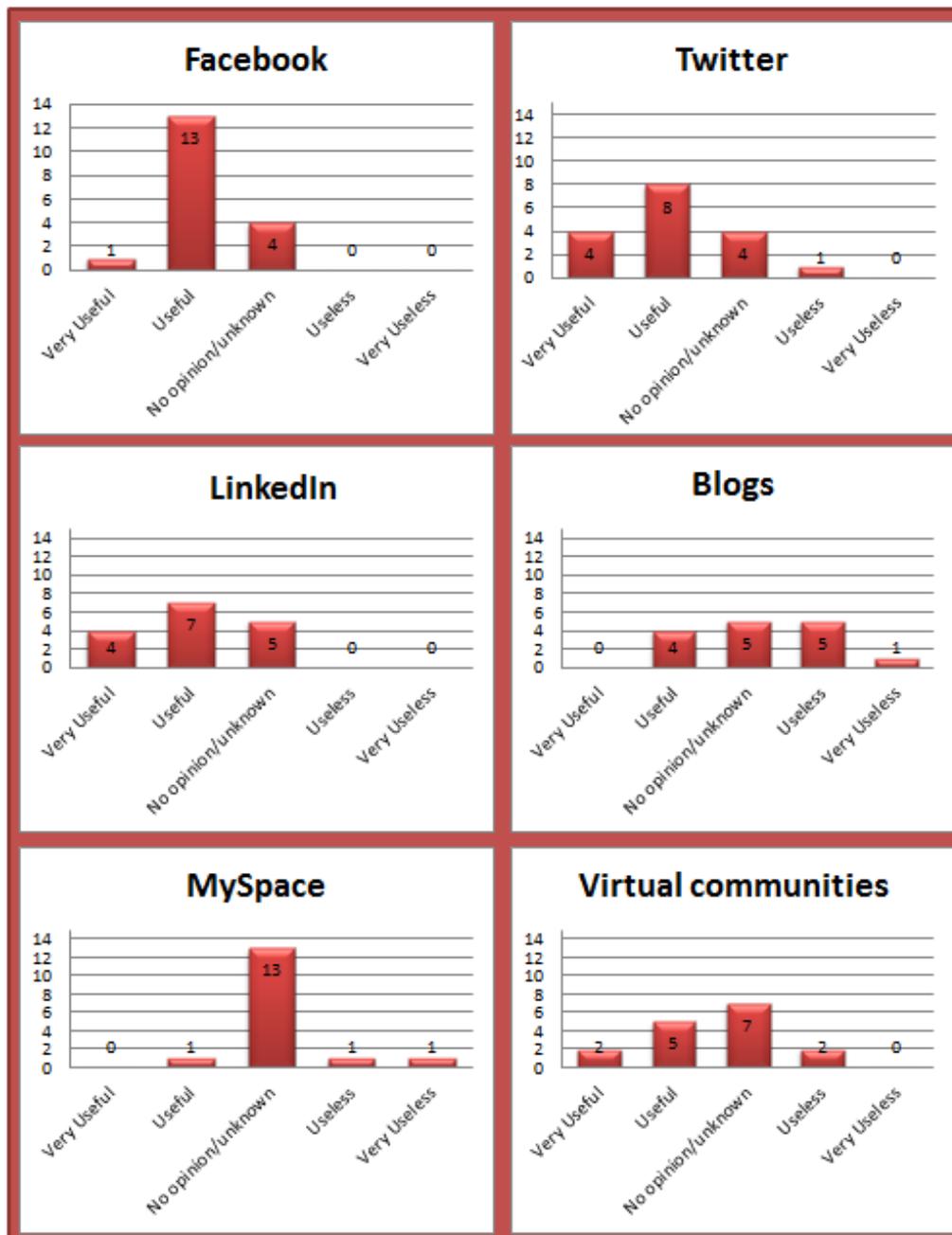




5.4 Opinion about Social Networks

Generally, respondents have a clear opinion about all of the Social Networks. Except a few who do not yet use Social Networks and are not able to give an opinion. In the graph it is visible that Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are seen as most useful. Facebook and Twitter primarily score high in 'Very useful' and 'Useful'. None of the respondents find LinkedIn is 'Useless' or 'Very Useless'. It is noticeable that most of the respondents are unfamiliar with the Social Network 'MySpace'.

What is your opinion about the following Social Networks?





5.5 Demand for training

As you can see in the graph below, a large part of the respondents do not want to follow an extra training in the field of Social Networks.



71% of the respondents does not want to follow any training in the field of Social Network. The smaller portion, 29% indicates to need help. The following reasons are given:

Do you consider taking more training in the field of Social Networking management and use of these communication tools? If so, please indicate what do you need?

- "Yes, I would like to know how to get the attention of people and how to interact with them".
- "Yes, I would like to know how to start and how to maintain the activity on those Social Networks. It seems like a lot of work to me".
- "I want to learn how to prevent any violation of privacy".
- "I want to learn how to implement Social Networks into the policy of the company".
- "Social media in general, what is it and what can you do with it"
- "I would like to learn more about the technical aspect of Social Networks"



5.6 Community manager

When we asked the question “Do you know what a community manager is”, 61% of the respondents said “Yes”. The other 39% had never heard of this term.



When taking a look at the question “Does your company have a marketing manager?”, 13 of the 18 respondents indicated that they do not have a marketing manager in their company.

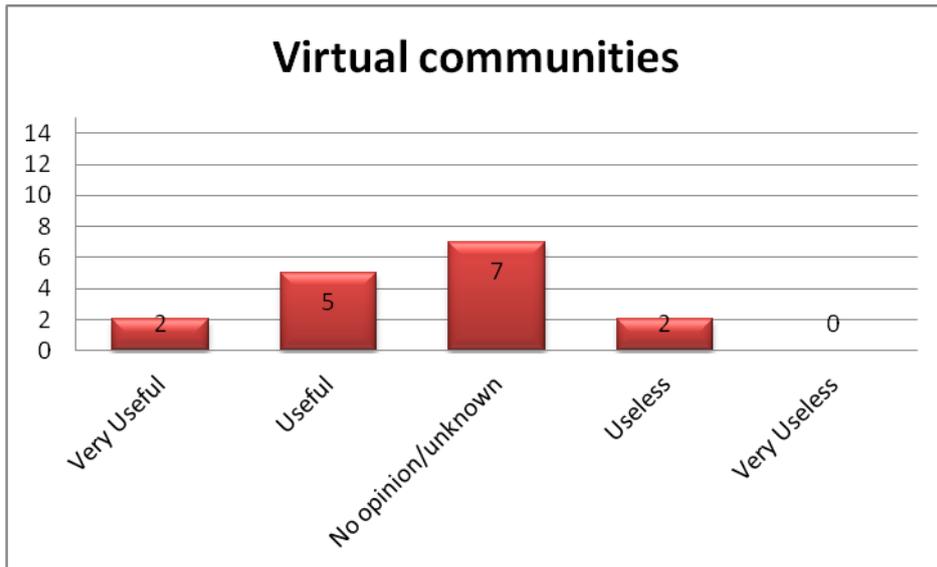


We can conclude that there is not enough room for this position in SMEs. If there is no room for a marketing manager (due to multiple factors), there certainly is no room for an even more specialized community manager.

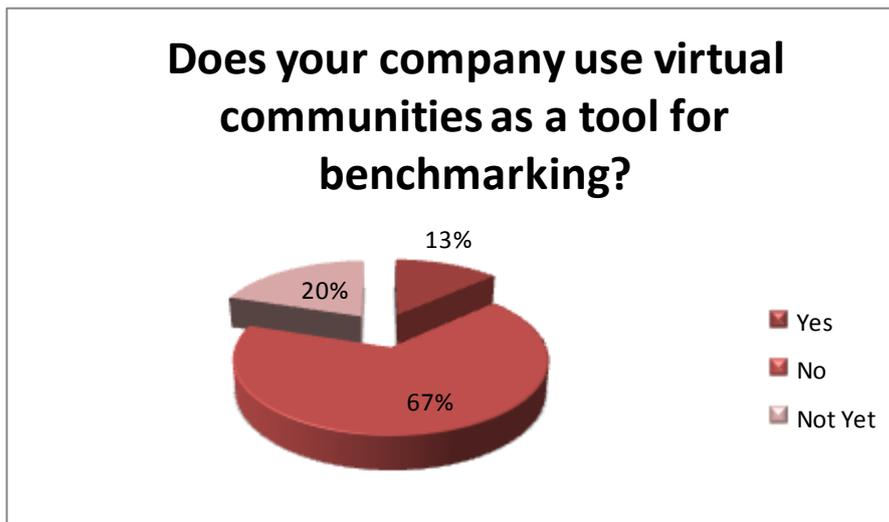


5.7 Virtual Communities

When looking at the results of the question: “What is your opinion about blogs and virtual communities?” it becomes clear that those subjects are fairly unknown in the Netherlands. The most outstanding fact is that people who do know blogs and virtual communities, find it useful. This means that this relatively new form of Social Networking has potential. People are interested and want to know more.



The results of the question “Does your company use virtual communities as a tool for benchmarking? If so, please indicate which ones” are as follows:

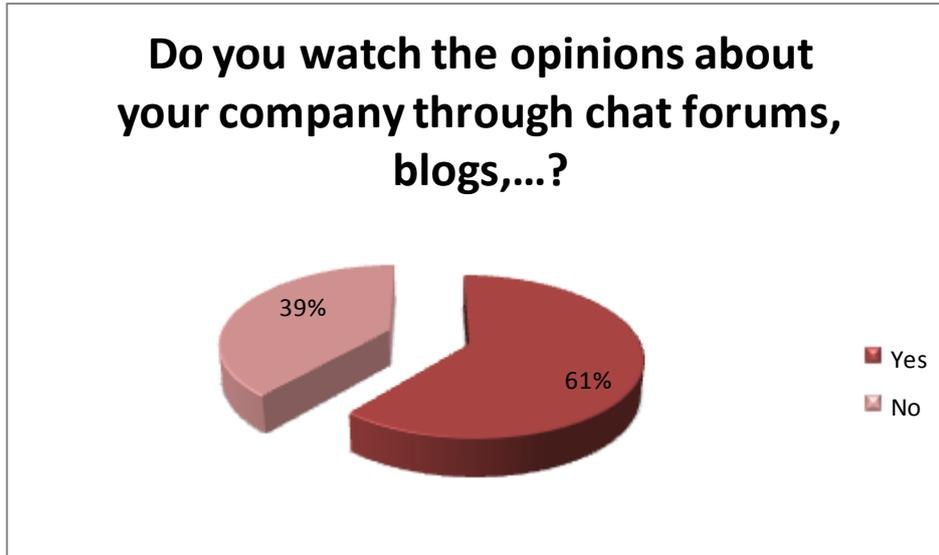


In this graph you can see that many companies do not use virtual communities as a tool for benchmarking. Only two of the respondents are active in this field, 3 are not yet active and the largest part of the companies do not use virtual communities as a tool for benchmarking.



5.8 Opinion about the company

As you can see in the chart below, many companies check the internet to see the opinions about their company.



5.9 Barriers to use social media tools

In a few questions, especially Q20 and Q23, the barriers to use social media tools become clear. In the list below, all of the reasons are given.

Q20: Do you use social networks for promotion, If not, why not?

Q23: Do you consider you need more training on social networking management and use of these communication tools? If so, please indicate which do you need?

Why people do not use social media tools:

- People do not know what social media is in general, they want to know what they can do with it. They feel they do not have enough specific knowledge about it to use it.
- A lot of work in the beginning
- A lot of work to maintain activity and quality
- Technical problems

Why people think it is difficult to use social media tools:

- How to contact people
- How to interact with people
- How to prevent any violation of privacy
- How to choose between the different Social networks (what fits best within the company)
- How to implement Social Networks into the policy of the company
- Technical aspect; complicated to use



5.10 Conclusions of the results

Of the 19 respondents, 12 are already active in the field of social media. Two of the companies currently follow a course on this. Five of the respondents do not use Social Networks. Based on these figures a conclusion can be drawn that the entrepreneurs in the tourism sector in Friesland already are quite active in the field of social media.

The most used Social Networks by companies in Friesland are Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and the Dutch 'Hyves'. Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are seen as most useful Social network sites.

The largest part of the respondents do not want to follow any training in the field of Social Networks. A smaller portion indicates that they need help with this subject.

The largest part of the respondents knows the term 'community manager', the other 39% did not. Apparently, there is not enough room for this position in SMEs. If there is no room for a marketing manager, there certainly is no room for an even more specialized community manager.

Companies are not active in creating blogs or virtual communities. On the other hand, they do visit those websites and read the opinions about their company. So, they follow the already existing websites but do not participate in creating them.

If you take a look at the barriers to use social media tools, a variety of answers are given. In general, most of the people have problems with the implementation of Social Networks into the policy of the company. Apart from this, companies also experience difficulties with the technical aspects, it is sometimes complicated to use. Companies also would like to know how to prevent any violation of privacy.



6 RESULTS INTERVIEWS

Interview 'Camping Ikeleane'

During the conversation with the owner of 'Camping Ikeleane', it became clear that the company is active in the field of social media. The company has a facebook and twitter account and they are fairly active on those pages. The owner wonders how to reach people on the internet, and how to interact with them. Because they already make use of social media, they do not have interest in training for novices. They would like to learn more about how to manage interaction with their customers.

Interview 'Camping Alkenhaer'

During the conversation with an older employee it became clear that it is difficult for the 'older generation' to connect with social media. When asking whether the company has a marketing manager, he answers a bit down-hearted this is a task of himself.

In spite of his uncertainty, this company has a beautiful website. The owner thinks that the arrangement could still be a little bit more convenient for visitors and he is working on that. He also indicates that he should change his texts on the website, so it will become better to find on the internet.

Facebook and Twitter as a concept are known, but does not know it well enough to give an opinion about it. He does follow the opinions about his own companies on forums, review sites and blogs.

The owner of this company weekly visits a course on social media. Together with his wife he wants to know more about social media and he wants to implement it into the policy of his company. When asked which topics would be interesting for him, he mentioned that it is difficult to start with social media. It seems like a lot of work and effort to him and he is afraid that it would maybe violate his privacy. He is not directly interested in our training materials, because he is already following a course.

Interview 'Makkum Beach'

This woman is more than 10 years active for this company, as a marketing manager. It becomes clear that she runs 'Makkum Beach', which is a luxurious camping with a lot of facilities. They focus on Families, couples and groups from the region. This company has between 10 and 50 employees who all follow courses, on a regular base.

The website of this company is modern and this marketing manager thinks that the strongest aspect is the completeness of information. She wants to be more active in the field of google adwords.

This company is already active in the field of social media. They use Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn and the staff is following a course about the use of social media. This woman is fairly positive about all of the Social networks, but is not able to give an opinion about Myspace, because she has never heard of it.

They are not active in the field of Virtual communities, but do follow the opinion about their company on the internet.



7 RESULTS EXPERT PANEL

The panel entitled 'Social Networks and Tourist Marketing' is designed for Route 2.0 as a meeting to share the issues that have been mentioned for the needs analysis. Business Development Friesland organized a panel attended by various experts in their respective fields.

7.1 Expert panel methodology

After analyzing the findings on the questionnaire and the interviews, Business Development Friesland organized an expert panel, contributing to the conclusions that appear in this regional report.

The expert panel was held on Wednesday February 8th 2012 and took place at Inqubator Leeuwarden. The following experts were invited to the expert panel:

- Mr. Lennard Drogendijk, director Inqubator Leeuwarden.
- Mr. Friso Visser, director Social Media Koffer
- Mr. Mitchel Laros, director Social Media Koffer
- Mr. Albert Kooy, Teacher Business Administration in Tourism Management, Stenden University
- Ms. Corrie Ponne, organizer and promoter of the food event Ljouwert Culinair
- Mr. Arjen Rusticus, director Restaurant De Walrus
- Ms. Albertine Vledder, Student European Studies at NHL University
- Ms. Marieke Feenema, Student Communication and Multimedia Design at NHL University
- Ms. Erna van der Werff, project manager Business Development Friesland

The agenda of the meeting 'Social Networks and Tourist Marketing':

- | | |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 15.30 | Welcome and introduction to the Route 2.0 project |
| 15.45 | Introduction of the experts |
| 16.00 | Presentation of the analysis of the questionnaires and interviews |
| 16.30 | Discussion on the importance of social media in the tourism sector |
| 17.30 | Conclusion and closure of the meeting |
| 17.45 | Drinks & networking |



7.2 Report of the Meeting

Welcome and introduction

After a warm word of welcome and an introduction on the Route 2.0 project by the host of the meeting, Ms. Erna van der Werff of Business Development Friesland, all experts were asked to briefly introduce themselves.



Introduction of the experts

Mr. Lennard Drogendijk is entrepreneur and director of Inqubator Leeuwarden. Inqubator Leeuwarden focuses on helping starting companies to firmly establish their business and to help them maximize their growth over a maximum period of four years. To this end, Inqubator Leeuwarden offers a shared office in which starting entrepreneurs can work on their business plan, can get advice on how they should proceed in the development of their business and follow different kinds of workshops. Inqubator Leeuwarden also offers office space for starting companies that have outgrown the shared office space and need their own office. Inqubator Leeuwarden has a vast experience in the use of social media to attract new start-ups and to communicate about the activities of the incubator.

Mr. Friso Visser and Mr. Mitchel Laros founded their company Social Media Koffer (SMK) in 2010. SMK advises small and medium sized companies on how to best deploy social media for the benefit of their businesses. With their extensive know-how and expertise on the subject of social media, and their knowledge on how and why companies use (or do not use) social media, they will make a great contribution to the discussion on Social Networks and Tourist Marketing.

Being a teacher in Business Administration in Tourism Management at Stenden University in the city of Leeuwarden, Mr. Kooy will contribute to the discussion from the educational point of view. Also Ms. Albertine Vledder, student European Studies and Ms. Marieke Feenema, student Communication and Multimedia Design at NHL University will share their vision on Social Networks and Tourist Marketing.

In her function as organizer and promoter of the most important culinary event in the city of Leeuwarden -Ljouwert Culinair- Ms. Corrie Ponne will share her experience and



knowledge on the use of social media to promote tourism events. With over 10.000 visitors, Ljouwert Culinair is the most popular culinary event in the city of Leeuwarden. Ljouwert Culinair is a fundraising activity of the Lions club Ljouwert '80. The objective of Culinary Ljouwert is to promote the catering and restaurant sector in Leeuwarden and to raise money for charity.

Mr. Arjen Rusticus is owner and director of the successful restaurant/grand café formula De Walrus. De Walrus has two locations, one in Sneek (a city in Friesland well known for its strong tourism industry) and one in Leeuwarden (capital of the Frisian province). In 2011, De Walrus won the Young Entrepreneurs Award for the Northern part of the Netherlands (JOP 2011). De Walrus is very active on Facebook and Twitter.

Presentation of the analysis of the questionnaires and interviews

Ms. Erna van der Werff presents the outcomes of the Route 2.0 field research. The most important findings of the field research focus on the reasons not to use social media.

Why SME's do not use social media tools:

- Lack of awareness/knowledge on the definition of social media
- Lack of awareness/knowledge on how social media can be used to the advantage of SME's in the tourism sector
- SME's feel that it takes too much time to set up an effective social media marketing campaign.
- SME's feel that it takes too much time to maintain activity and quality
- SME's are afraid of technical problems that might arise

Why SME's in the tourism sector feel it is difficult to use social media tools:

- SME's don't know how to contact people
- SME's don't know to interact with people
- SME's don't know to prevent any violation of privacy
- SME's don't know how to choose between the different Social networks (what fits best within the company)
- SME's don't know how to implement Social Networks into the policy of the company
- SME's don't know the technical aspect; they think social media is complicated to use

Discussion on the importance of social media in the tourism sector

Consumers look for information and make decisions for holidays, flights and hotels based on a range of factors – from personalization of content, delivery of services to mobile devices, and recommendations from their peers in social networks and other online communities. That is why companies in the tourism sector should embrace social and digital media as a key means of communication.

Small and medium sized enterprises that are looking to engage with today's consumers don't need to spend millions of euro's on marketing campaigns.

The expert panel mentions the following easy accessible social media 'devices' for SME's in the travel and tourism sector:

- **Twitter** - An ideal way to connect quickly and efficiently with audiences looking for recommendations and conversations around travel and tourism.
- **Facebook** – Build a customized landing page where you can feature awards and news unique to your organization. Build a community of people that are



enthusiastic about your service or product and make it easy for them to share their experience with friends and family. Integrate different API's like Google earth, Google maps or Twitter.

- **Contests and Lotteries:** Offer compelling deals and discounts to your fans, as a step on the path to gaining 'Likes'. Hotels can offer discounts for Facebook check-ins or free stays for contest winners.
- **Flickr and YouTube:** Upload and tag photos and videos to YouTube and Flickr
- **Blogs:** Include a blog on your tourism site. Blogs provide a steady stream of content, rank well on Google/Yahoo/Bing, and encourage interaction through commentary. Plus, they provide your business with an approachable voice.
- **Tourism-focused communities:** Consider starting profiles on sites like TripAdvisor, Lonely Planet's Thorn Tree etc. These all have loyal fan bases and give you an easy way to target an appropriate demographic while understanding ongoing topics of interest to those groups.

During the discussion, the experts agree on the following benefits of social media for the tourism sector:

- Cost efficient marketing tool
- Well traceable
- Gaining insight in how potentials are linked to your network
- Personalization of content (become recommended!)
- Interact with the target group
- The possibility to stay in contact with the target group
- The possibility to learn about the demands and needs of the target group
- Social media on mobile devices: to be able to reach the target group whenever, wherever

According to the expert panel, the barriers to adopting social media into the marketing strategy of companies in the tourism sector are:

- Time consuming
- Danger of damage to reputation/image because of the interactive character of social media. Everybody (e.g. former employees with bad intentions) can post whatever they want on internet
- Interference with privacy
- There are hundreds of social media platforms and it's easy to become overwhelmed

7.3 Expert panel conclusions

The use of social media can be of high value to the tourism sector. Many social media platforms can be applied to run a successful marketing campaign with limited resources. Benefits of using social media are: traceable and reachable target group, cost efficient, personalization, interaction, knowing customer needs. However, many SMEs do not understand how to use social media effectively. Barriers to adopting social media into the marketing strategy are: time, danger of reputation damage, interference with privacy, overwhelming number of social media platforms.



8 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Conclusions

Social media is a fast growing field. It is therefore very important for nearly every business field to take advantage of social media tools as a part of the marketing strategy. These social media tools make it easier to communicate with customers and prospects.

Especially in the tourism sector, where a lot of potential guests start with an internet research before they book an accommodation, there is a high potential for the use of social media.

The most important argument in this subject, is that companies that use social media are a lot stronger in the market than companies that do not use social media. Companies that use social media are able to promote themselves on the internet with sites like Facebook or Twitter, but also on review websites. Consumers attach a lot of importance to the interaction that social media enables. For example the use of third-party reviews for making decisions about the destination and/or accommodation. In addition to this, review sites and social networks currently play the largest role in decision making about holidays.

So, it would be fair to say that consumers use social media a lot, and base (at least for some part) their choice on it. That is why tourism companies which have the latest online booking facilities and use social media, have an advantage over colleagues that do not.

Currently, companies in the tourism sector want to join the social media hype. A right choice it seems, because social media could be a positive thing for the companies.

Why using social media in the tourism sector would be a good idea:

- Promotion; social media is a quick and cheap possibility to promote a company.
- Interaction with customers
- Potential guests can read reviews and other information about the company
- Booking online
- Build up a larger clientele

The use of social media can be of high value to the tourism sector. Many social media platforms can be applied to run a successful marketing campaign with limited resources. Benefits of using social media are: traceable and reachable target group, cost efficient, personalization, interaction, knowing customer needs. However, many SME's do not understand how to use social media effectively. Barriers to adopting social media into the marketing strategy are: time, danger of reputation damage, interference with privacy, overwhelming number of social media platforms.



8.2 Recommendations

After completing this research, we are able to give our recommendations about the use of web 2.0 tools within training courses for tourism in Friesland. According to Business Development Friesland, the training materials should contain the following aspects.

At first, we would like to indicate that in general, our companies already are active in the field of social media. Only a few companies are beginners. That is why we want to split up our recommendations, because of the differences between already active companies and companies which are not yet active.

Beginners

For this category, the recommendations are quite short. People want to:

- Know how to start
- Know what social media is in general, what is it and what to do with it
- Know to maintain activity and quality
- Learn about the Technical problems
- Know how to choose between the different Social networks (what fits best within the company)

Already active companies

The recommendations for this category are more specialized than the recommendations for the beginners. Companies which already make use of social media do not need a beginners' course. What they do need is an extra training, concentrated on the following subjects:

- Technical aspect
- Interaction with consumers
- Prevention of violation of privacy, and other threats and risks
- How to implement social networks into the policy of the company
- How to use social media to build up a bigger clientele
- How to implement social networks into the policy of the company

Apart from these practical aspects, in our opinion, the training courses should also contain information about virtual communities (review sites, blogs etc.). Because that might be the most important Social Network. As can be found in this report, review sites are important for companies in the tourist sector. Companies are interested in this subject and would like to know how to use virtual communities for their company.

Besides focusing on virtual communities, the training course should also contain information about the safety aspects of social media. A few companies do have concerns about this. Apart from all of the positive aspects, the training material should also contain information about the more negative side of social media. This is very important, because with this information, companies can prevent problems.



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APPENDIX A – QUESTIONNAIRES