

The effect of social media marketing, on brand marketing and communication strategy:the case of Visit Denmark.

VisitDenmark 



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**Preface:**

In this preface I would like to take the opportunity to thank several people whose contribution made this thesis possible.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisors, Ada Scupola & Norbert Wildermuth, for their constructive advices and the inspiring discussions during the guidance of this project.

I would also want to thank the interview respondent Agnete Sylvest Head of Digital media, Visit Denmark for her participation in this project.

## **Abstract**

**Objective:** This thesis seeks to provide insight into the integration of social media marketing communications and brand strategy from the perspective of the destination marketing organization.

**Method:** Qualitative case study methodology generated understanding of the approach to DMOs' marketing. Interview allows exploration of how online marketing strategies with the practice of social media used in destination branding processes and content analysis to analyze audience engagement to social media platforms.

**Results:** Audience engagement and two-way communication increase customers interest in the content and can result in positive associations with the brand.

**Conclusion:** Social media plays an important role in communicating with the large number of audiences and provides two- way communication medium for marketing campaigns.

**Key words:** Social media platforms, Social media marketing, Destination marketing organization (DMO), VisitDenmark.

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# 1. Introduction

According to Pike (2004) promoting a destination could be a challenging task where destination marketing organizations (DMOs) have to face challenges, to create concise messages that capture the essence of place and differentiate it from competitors. Since the late 19th century and for most of that time DMOs have played an effective role in the development of tourism worldwide (Pike, 2004). Survey report of world tourism (2010) showed that the implementation of marketing strategies is vital for the success of DMOs. Now online marketing is also incorporated in the marketing strategy of DMOs. As online platforms are cost effective and target a wide range of customers in today's technology driven world (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Visit Denmark is the official Tourism website of Denmark. The organization is marketing Denmark as a tourist destination abroad, with a vision to attract more holiday visitors and conference delegates, who can generate increased revenue for the tourism industry. The marketing activities are carried out in close cooperation with other stakeholders in the tourism industry, for example through partnerships (VisitDenmark.com). This thesis focuses on the case Visit Denmark, which has based its market strategy on the latest technological and digital revolution. As the organization recognizes the fact that being visible on the web is important, in order to communicate effectively with the tourist through social media, mobile and tablets.

According to Mangold & Faulds (2009), social media has allowed brands to communicate better with their consumers and strengthen

their association with them. The advertising world is also not spared from its influence. Social media play a vital role in promotion mix (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Social media facilitates organizations to talk to their consumers and at the same time allowing consumers to communicate with organization and other consumers (Saravanakumar & Lakshmi, 2012).

Podobnik & Ackermann (2013) suggest, that marketing is one of the many areas affected by the dawn of Web 2.0 paradigm. Web 2.0 enabled the global proliferation of social networking, which again is a foundation for social media marketing. They explain that social media marketing represents an unusual and interesting Internet marketing pattern based on spreading brand-related messages directly from one user to another. This could be the reason why social media marketing is also often referred to as viral marketing.

Visit Denmark is present on different social media platforms including: Facebook, blogs, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, Pinterest and Instagram, but in the thesis the focus will be on first three, because these are considered to be very popular among social media due to high number of user profiles and content generation. Another reason is that I would like to analyze the two-way communication that is facilitated by Facebook through allowing your consumers to like or comment on status updates. Twitter allows brand followers to retweet, also defined as two-way communication. Blogs also provide users with opportunity to post comments on blogs, thus promoting two-way communication. YouTube facilitates user to subscribe to content uploaded by DMO, also allowing them to like and comment on the content.



Social media have become an important platform of communication during the 21st century, changing the ways to express our belief and ideas in an absolute new style (Kaplan & Haenlein (2010), Lange-Faria & Elliot (2012). As Podobnik & Ackermann (2013) explain that Web 1.0 era users were passive consumers of read-only web. However, the emergence of web 2.0 redefined the way people use information and communication service. As users now actively participate and collaborate in the ecosystem of a read-write web.

In this thesis, I would like to present a research study about social media marketing from branding and communication perspective of DMO called Visit Denmark. The aim of this study is to analyze how social media marketing support online place branding, the branding of destination for tourism purpose, and communication with consumers through online social platforms.

To establish the relevance of this thesis I believe that the aspect of social media and social networking sites plays an important role in destination marketing (Lange-Faria & Elliot 2012). As social media tools are changing the way people communicate, tourism and hospitality industry is not an exception and hence a growing number of hotel professional, researchers and organizations have acknowledged the importance of Web 2.0 for the sector and potential benefits that it provides (Gretzel et al., 2006; Xiang & Gretzel, 2009).

In this thesis, firstly, I would like to analyze the term social media platforms. According to Lange-Faria & Elliot (2012), social media platforms generally refer to web applications that allow for the user to post and share content. Common social media platforms include

Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and MySpace (Lange-Faria & Elliot, 2012, p.195). However, Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) organize social media into blogs, social networking site, virtual social worlds, collaborative projects, content communities and virtual game world.

## **1.1 Defining the scope of thesis**

The digital revolution has changed the way organizations interact with their customers and tourism has long been the most important component of online commerce world (Milano et al. 2011). The thesis seeks to explore how useful are the social media platforms from the consumer communication perspective and how they facilitate the branding strategy of DMO i.e. Visit Denmark.

Organizations view the social web as a great opportunity to boost their market. As it allows two-way communication, however, it requires a lot of planning and effort to manage it. Consumers might trust the dissatisfied remarks about the experience posted by another consumer, thus damaging the organization's reputation.

Saravanakumar & Lakshmi (2012) guide us about the importance of new technologies by explaining that business that learn to use innovative technologies increase great reimbursement. Some examples include technology-driven companies such as Microsoft, eBay, Amazon and Google. Finally the rapid growth of the smartphone market and mobile computing is affecting the strategy, as social media connectivity is becoming easier and is helping to grow social media even faster.

## **Research Question:**

As explained above this thesis will focus on the Social media marketing and its effect on the communication and business strategy of official destination marketing organization (DMO) of Denmark called “Visit Denmark”. The following question is proposed in order to limit my focus on the effect of social media marketing on the organization's' brand and communication aspect.

**How are social media marketing strategies integrated with the overall business and communication strategy of Visit Denmark?**

## **2. Chapter 2: The Case**

I chose Visit Denmark for this case study, as it will be appropriate to seek insight into Denmark's official tourism organization, and how it promotes the brand through online marketing and social media. The organization is active on social media platforms through Visit Denmark official webpage, Facebook fan page, Twitter, YouTube Channel, blogs and several other platforms.

Organizations are constantly striving to keep up with the changes occurring in the digital world. One of these changes is the adoption of Social media as marketing tool for Destination Marketing Organizations (DMO) (Hays et al. 2012).

According to Agnete Sylvest, the Head of digital media marketing at Visit Denmark, the social media efforts are for general tourists but the primary markets are especially focused, which include Germany, Norway, Sweden, Holland, UK, Italy and the US. As a lot of revenue is generated by tourists visiting Denmark from these countries (Agnete Sylvest, 12-08-2015).

This chapter will present the DMO Visit Denmark. Visit Denmark's headquarters is in Copenhagen, and several marketing offices are located in Norway, Sweden, Germany, United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Italy, the United States, China and Japan. Visit Denmark also has its agencies in Brazil, Russia, India and Australia. The total number of employees is 96, 48 working at Head Office in Denmark and 48 at international Marketing Offices.

Agnete Sylvest Jensen, Head of digital media at Visit Denmark explained that during their latest analysis Visit Denmark mapped the tourist's behavior in the digital media. Thus they developed a model of the visitor Digital Travel, showing the various phases of the tourist's decision-making process right from the beginning where the idea arises to take a holiday, to the choice of destination, booking the holiday and then the actual stay. She proposed that the model below provides a comprehensive overview of the media and messages to be used, to catch the tourist's attention at any given time in the decision making process.

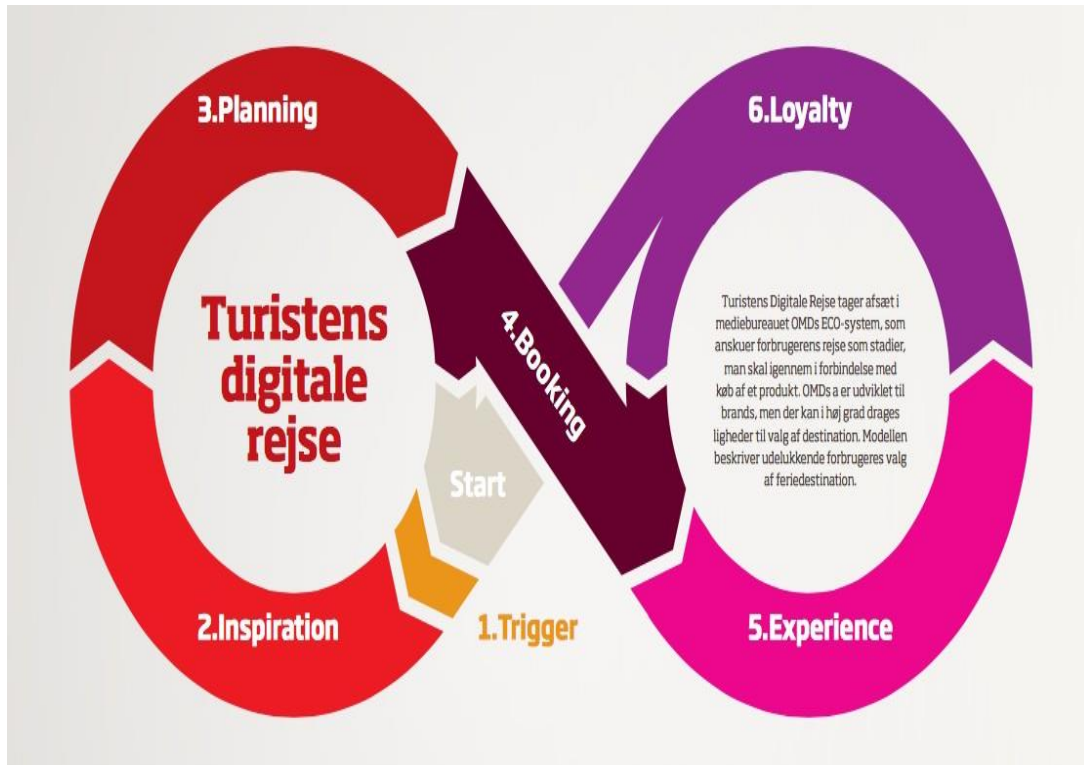


Fig. 1 Source: <http://www.visitdenmark.dk/da/danmark/turistens-digitale-rejse>

To ensure that a campaign is actually influencing the market, all phases of decision-making are important. The model perceives consumer's journey with in different stages in connection with the purchase of the product. The model was developed originally by media agency OMDS for brands, but it has greatly drawn similarities to the choice of DMO. The model provides a comprehensive overview of the media and messages to be used to capture the tourist's attention to a particular stage of decision-making. In order to ensure that a campaign is actually moving market, all stages in the decision-making are important. The marketing strategic model of Visit Denmark, as shown earlier in this paper is explained in detail below.

### 2.1.1 Trigger

At the very first stage of the model the focus is on the “Trigger”. The tourist is not necessarily in the market to go on vacation yet. But an editorial article, a video, updates and photos on social media is often the cause that acts as a trigger for tourist begin to dream of going on vacation. 52 per cent tourists have been inspired to a holiday by watching other people's pictures on Facebook. (Source: Facebook / Phocus Wright 2013). Visit Denmark's focus at this point on branding and destination marketing, to bring Denmark “top of mind” from tourist perspective. The economic review by Visit Denmark for year 2014 explained that the technique used at this point was “Push marketing” in the form of visual effects that display photos and videos on social media.

### **2.1.2 Inspiration**

In this phase the tourist goes from the dream, to have a definite desire for vacation. Friends and acquaintances are the main source of inspiration for the choice of destination, then the Internet. The Digital Traveller (2013) present that 75 per cent. tourists start decision making online. (Source: Google, The Digital Traveller 2013)

At this stage VisitDenmark continue to focus on push marketing in the form of display, video and social media, visibility in the travel media and search engines.

### **2.1.3 Planning**

The tourist is now considering her destinations and begins to gather information about the destination. The range of experiences, prices and own experiences are strong parameters in this phase. It takes an average of 2-3 weeks; the decision is made for the tourist to book holiday in Denmark. (Source: Visit Denmark's tourist survey)

VisitDenmark visibility and a good position in search engines is crucial in this phase, where the viewer begins collecting information. The organization also uses remarketing to expose users who have previously visited VisitDenmark.com or been exposed to a Denmark message.

## **2.1.4 Booking**

The tourist is now reviewing its booking and it happens largely through OTA (Online Travel Agents). Most use five or more sites in the booking phase. 68 per cent of all Internet bookings are done through Expedia or booking.com (Source: Yahoo's Summer Travel Study 2013)

At this stage Visit Denmark focus on a consistent branding of Denmark, also in collaboration with major international brands such as Expedia and DFDS. Users should be directed to the booking phase and given more opportunities to go beyond the individual product or price.

## **2.1.5 Experience**

Tourists have come to Denmark, but has not necessarily prepared for the stay in detail. Using WiFi and smartphones planned on-site activities and experiences shared on social media. 88 per cent tourists bring smartphones or Ipads on vacation and 61 per cent. use them daily. (Source: Text100)

VisitDenmark together with partners we give the tourist the best possible experiences, also digitally, using mobile optimized and language versioned tools. Furthermore, the organization encourages the tourist to share the good experiences in their own network, where experience is vital.

## 2.1.6 Loyalty

At this point the tourists have gone home, and reflect at their experiences and share memories on the social media. Tourists from neighboring markets often visit Denmark several times and are open to dialogue with Visit Denmark after returning home. 80 per cent of the tourists, who have visited Denmark, would recommend others to go. (Source: Visit Denmark's tourist survey)

Visit Denmark's motivation behind social media marketing is to influence potential tourists right from the phase where they are exposed to tourist's pictures on social media, which acts as a trigger to attract tourists to Denmark. "The chances of the tourist booking a trip to Denmark are greater if we influence the tourist in the early stages, where the tourist has not yet chosen destination - and later follow up with more specific product messages using remarketing", says Agnete Sylvest Jensen, Head of digital media in VisitDenmark.

According to official Visit Denmark website the organization has therefore focused on optimizing the flow of the promotions and rewards investment, so these both are used to create awareness of Denmark, for example, using the TrueView (Video messages for YouTube advertising), and used more tactically to provide space for product messages using remarketing to users who already show interest in Denmark.



This creates synergy between the various stages of decision-making for tourists to travel to Denmark, so the effect of the campaigns is even bigger. The tourist Digital Travel is based on the media agency OMDS eco-system, which perceive consumer's journey as stages to be passed in connection with the purchase of a product. OMDS eco-system is developed for brands, but which can greatly drawn similarities to the choice of destination ([www.visitdenmark.com](http://www.visitdenmark.com)).

Marketing campaign of Visit Denmark is targeted to four main target groups because their destination preferences match Denmark's strong destination selling points and their large growth potential.

### **Fun, Play and Learning**

Aimed at families with young children who want to travel to child-friendly environments for family time being close to nature and attractions at the same time.

### **The Good Life**

Adults, who prefer the quiet life with relaxation, experience nature, enjoy good food, walking in the city, and enjoy culture and events.

### **City breaks**

People who like the metropolis atmosphere and being close to culture, sightseeing, restaurants and shopping areas.

### **Business tourism**

Aimed at international meeting organizers, to arrange large meetings, congresses and conferences.

*“More tourists should be curious to find out what Denmark is a destination and more people to have a better understanding of why they need to travel here. This is the primary mission of VisitDenmark. Yes, one can say that it is the reason why we are here in the world”*

(Marketing Director, Janne Grønkjær Henriksen, Source: [www.visitdenmark.com](http://www.visitdenmark.com)).

## **2.2 Defining Social Media and Marketing**

The evolution of online marketing is closely related to the evolution of the first generation of Internet Web 1.0, which was characterized by hierarchical structure. Traditionally a handful of sites controlled by big corporations produced the content for all users (O'Reilly, 2005). However, new online technologies developed and initiated two-way communication formats such as blogs, social networking sites and Wikis.

According to O'Reilly (2005) the process started around 2004 and referred to as Web 2.0, is based on principal of user generated content (UGC). Which means the ability of users to produce their own content or consume content that other users have generated (O'Reilly, 2005; Cormode and Krishnamurthy, 2008). This resulted in converting passive content users into active content producers, as users can now upload photos on flickr, videos on YouTube and have their own blogs, Facebook and Twitter accounts. One major aspect of Web 2.0 is the use of online social networks, commonly referred to as Social Media. As explained by O'Connor et al. (2011), social networks are online platforms where people gather and form relationships within a virtual space. For example, Facebook is a platform that supports social networks, where users not only connect with friends, but also join groups and pages with similar interests.

Xiang & Gretzel (2010) conclude that, social media is a very broad term and therefore, no universal definition exists among scholars and

researchers. Lange-Faria & Elliot (2012) explain that, social media engenders a number of different terms, many of which are used interchangeably, leading authors to elude in attaining the concrete definition. Terms include *social media*, *user-generated-content*, *consumer generated media*, *online social networks*, *social networking sites*, *web 2.0* and *travel 2.0* (Lange-Faria & Elliot 2012, p.194).

As Ketter and Avraham (2012) explain, in Web 1.0 the goal of marketing was linear and to deliver the campaign messages, as a one-way communication. In contrast, the Web 2.0 marketing communication process is much more interaction oriented, based on two-way communication format (Ketter & Avraham 2012, p.287). They further add that the leading principles of Web 2.0 marketing are interaction based and recognize the consumers' active position as "prosumers" - a contraction of words producers and consumers. " 'Prosumers' are active web users who create active online content and consume content created by other users" (Van Dijck, 2009. as cit in Ketter and Avraham 2012, p.287). It is also interesting to analyze the interaction aspect of online consumers of Visit Denmark. I will explore the active role of users in social media place marketing based on Ketter & Avraham (2012).

Visit Denmark has incorporated the social media marketing into its marketing strategy, to attract more tourists to Denmark. According to Milano and Piattelli 2011, tourism has long been one of the most important components of the online commerce, whose impact has changed the structure of the industry. When considered to collect information about a tourism destination, User generated content had the highest importance on the Web 2.0 (country brand Index 2013-

14). As stated by the Cluetrain Manifesto (Locke et al., 2009): “*people in networked markets have figured out that they get far better information and support from one another than from vendors*”. Thus, one cannot deny the importance of social networking sites where brand reputation and perception is created by communities, as in the case of Visit Denmark where social media plays an important role, where word of mouth is considered more trustworthy than the organizations marketing messages.

## 2.2 Project Outline

This paper is structured as follows. Firstly, the topic of Social media and Social media marketing are introduced. Secondly, I will discuss the different concepts and theories used to analyze the case study. Thirdly, I would like to present the methodology chosen and research methods applied to collect necessary data, which would help me, answer the research questions. In the fourth section, the analysis and discussion part describes the case study’s situation and aims at demonstrating how the relation between Social media and place branding and customer communication is reflected in the processes of social media marketing.

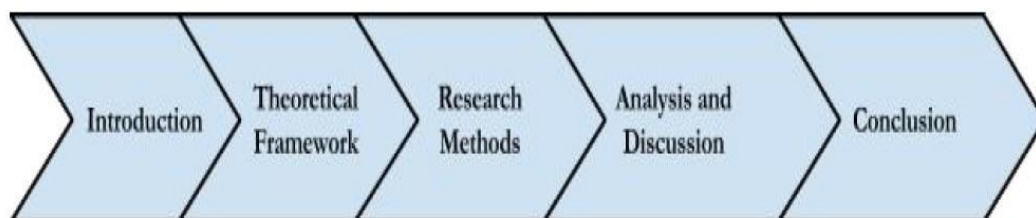


Fig. 2 Project outline.

### 3. Chapter 3: Introduction to Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I will introduce the different theories and concepts used to understand and analyze our case study in the coming sections. The main theories applied in the analysis are Social Media marketing and its influence on destination marketing organizations' (DMOs) Branding and communication strategy.

In the **first** part of this chapter I will present several definitions of the Social media marketing that I believe to be suitable in analyzing my case study and answering the research question.

In the **second** part I introduce the notion of "Two way communication" as marketing strategy by analysing the media and its effect on social communication using "Media Convergence" as main theory, proposed by Jenkins (2006). Following Jenkins (2006) argumentation that media convergence and social media platforms needs to be taken into consideration for branding purpose.

Furthermore, I will consider, "media richness theory" proposed by Daft and Lengel (1986), as a supportive theory explaining different Social Media Platforms and their ability to engage users. The concepts derived from Web 2.0 are highly important, which are based on new ways in which end-users and developers produce content and applications also known as "consumer Generated Content".

To analyse, how Web 2.0 effect the business perspective of "Place Branding" strategy, through the concept of "brand participation" by consumers, using "Improv theater" as a metaphor for branding on social media, introduced by Singh & Sonnenberg (2012). The theory of

“Rumor transmission” by Taylor Buckner (1965) is used to support and analyze “word-of-mouth” and the credibility of “user-generated content” from the aspect of Visit Denmark’s social media communication.

Later, in the discussion and analysis section, I will discuss how these concepts are related to social media marketing and how DMOs in particular the branding and communication strategy of Visit Denmark is affected by using different social media platforms for their marketing strategy.

### **3.1 Defining Social Media**

As Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), describe that the era of social media as we understand it today probably started about 20 years ago, when Bruce and Susan Abelson founded “Open Diary” an early social networking site that brought together online diary writers into one community. The access of high speed internet has increased the popularity of social networking sites. This has led to the term “social media” and contributed to the importance that it has today (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p.60).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), further explain that although Web 2.0 does not reflect any technical updates from Web 1.0 but still it is considered as the platform for the evolution of social media and user generated content (UGC) can be seen as the sum of all the ways in which people use Social media. The Organization for Economic Operations and Development (OECD, 2007) (as cited in Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, p.61) defines that the user generated content needs to fulfill three basic requirements in order to be considered as such;

First of all, it needs to be published either on a publicly accessible website or on a social networking site accessible to a selected group of people; second, the content must show a certain amount of creative effort; and finally, it must be created outside of professional routines and practices.

Based on the knowledge about Web 2.0 and User Generated Content a more clearer and precise definition of Social Media was derived by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) stating that "*Social media is a group of Internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the exchange and creation of User Generated Content*" (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p.61).

The principle of social media branding relies on the word of mouth idea, where online media users speak about e.g. brands. These conversations could help to differentiate and understand the brand. The affordance of social media includes features and the themes of the content, which is "shared and spoke about" by the audience (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p.61)

Now that I have defined the term social media, I would like to explore its attributes and components to develop an understanding of branding and communication in social media channels.

## **3.2 Media Convergence**

In today's digital world, simple modes of communication like written text are simply not enough to fulfill the need for organizations to communicate with wider audience (Lauer, 2009). Instead, a complex use of semiotics is a better option, which is provided by advanced technological media (Jenkins, 2006). Communication is no longer

limited to one medium or channel (Lauer, 2009). On the contrary, the affordance of online media technology or new media merges into different forms of channels, that is complex and multilayered (Dwyer, 2010, p.2). This is changing the social media landscape. Communities now reside online, mainly in social media, providing an excellent platform for branding (Chan & Olmsted, 2011).

However, as Yan (2011) suggests, social media branding cannot be done the same way as traditional marketing. A sense of membership and acceptance of audience is required when using social media for branding purpose (Yan, 2011).

### **3.3 Media Richness Theory**

As discussed above, there are different kinds of Social Media that needs to be recognized at a greater extent. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), explain that the higher the degree of social presence, the larger the social influence that the communication partners have on each other's behavior. The concept of social presence is closely related to the idea of Media richness theory proposed by Daft and Lengel (1986), which is related to social presence in the online environment, gained through media richness.

Media richness theory by Daft and Lengel (1986) is based on the assumption that the goal of any communication is the resolution of ambiguity and the reduction of uncertainty. It states that media differ in the degree of richness they possess, which is the amount of information they allow to be transmitted in a given time interval and



that, therefore some media are more effective than others in resolving ambiguity and uncertainty (Daft & Lengel, 1986). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010,) created a classification scheme based on the theories of media richness, social presence and social processes (self-presentation and self disclosure), as the foundation of social media (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p.61).

### **3.4 Credibility of User Generated Content**

Lange-Faria & Elliot (2012) presented the definition that social media encompasses the idea of allowing many users of internet to access sharing, collaborating, and updating web content. This definition is rooted in community; users may engage, collaborate and share with others in real time (in the case of virtual and mobile technologies) without constraint of time or geography (p.195). They further add that user generated content is quickly becoming *the* source for credible travel information with social media becoming the primary medium by which travel information is shared (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Search engine results particularly show social media sites and opinions of people in the form of UGC is primary vehicle by which the consumers judge the travel products (O'Connor, P., Wang, Y., & Li, X. (2011).

As Lange-Faria & Elliot (2012) explain that with social media, geography is no longer a communication barrier and anonymity is possible making self-disclosure easier than ever before. In the context of the online world, this concept of community has changed to become

one where people can meet others around the globe without meeting face-to-face, and interact in new ways.

Pan, B., & Crotts (2012) suggest that complex interactions exist between informational artifacts and actors in social networks, as they share and recommend a piece of text, picture, or video to friends, and other people may discover through shared information artifacts and add each other as friend. They further explain that theory on rumor transmission indicates the accuracy and speed of rumor passing will be based on the structure of the network and the mental sets of individual actors in the network.

*“Buckner’s (1965) theory on rumor transmission indicates the accuracy and speed of rumor passing were affected by the structure of the network and the mental sets of individual actors in the network. Connecting this line of research with social network analysis of those online social network sites could inform businesses of the methods on promoting themselves through organic word-of-mouth” (Pan & Crotts 2012, p.11).*

McLuhan (1995), on the other hand, argued that the media itself, rather the content of the media, would transform people and society. The content of messages people are communicating won't be any different on the new media; the interactivity and frequency of new communication pattern will change our behavior forever. Thus, the media's effects on society are much greater than the content of the media. McLuhan’s (1995), arguments that social media will transform the users not due to the content it contains, but due to the mode of communication it entails. For example, Twitter is only a microblogging

tool with a limitation of 140 characters. Theoretically one can perform all the functions of Twitter through a blog service. However, it is exactly its limiting factor which made Twitter more agile fast and real-time (Pan & Crofts 2012, p.12).

Pan & Crofts (2012), explain that instead of studying the demographic or geographic profiles of your customers, businesses also need to develop social strategy termed “Socialgraphics”. Where marketers need to ask the following questions; which websites are my customers on? What are my customers' social behaviors online? What social information or people do my customers rely on? What is my customers' social influence? The answers to these questions could separate your customers into layers of engagements: from curating, producing, commenting, sharing, to watching. The businesses then need to separate their customers into these layers and provide tools and platforms to facilitate their social interaction (Pan & Crofts, 2012, p.12).

### **3.5 Two Way Communication**

The concepts derived from Web 2.0 are highly important, which are based on new ways in which end-users and developers produce content and applications also known as “consumer Generated content” and how Web 2.0 effect the “place branding” strategy using theory of “Rumor transmission” developed by Taylor Buckner (1965).

The unique characteristics of social media have empowered users with active role and participation on the online platforms, changing the process of market communication. As Ketter and Avraham (2012),

explain that before the advent of social media's innovative marketing techniques the place marketing campaigns and models were based on the linear model of communication. As linear model of communication have a top-down flow of information, in which the source (the place marketers) delivers a well-chosen message (the place selling concept) to rather passive audience, using selective channels and aiming for a specific consequence (Ketter and Avraham 2012, p.286).

However, the role of the user has shifted as active producer of content after the digital shift of Web 2.0, where a new approach began, consumer also act as active sources that can create and distribute campaign messages.

On one hand, Web 1.0 could be referred as traditional communication model with the goal of delivering the message, as a one-way communication. Whereas, on the other hand, the Web 2.0 is much more interaction oriented, based on two-way communication format, resulting in high impact on place marketing (Ketter and Avraham 2012, p.287).

### **3.6 Place Branding**

Govers & Go (2008) talk about the topic of place branding, that it is moving from its early stage of development into its maturity. In application it is receiving widespread attention as many regions, cities and nations have established their place brand, whereas others are working on it, or have at least already given it some thought. According to Govers and Go (2008) when using the term branding for

'destination' it implies a tourism perspective, place branding provides a wider perspective that would include all interactions of a place with its environment, including political, outside investment, trade, immigration and media issues. Both destination branding and place branding could include country, region or city branding (Govers and Go, 2008, p.29).

As the World Wide Web offers entertainment, games, social activities and information free of charge, to sell goods and services on the side. It attracts over a billion users, with exponential growth, and it is therefore the obvious medium to observe in an attempt to understand how the experience economy operates and unfolds. Since travel is experiential in nature, and the largest and fastest growing online industry it has been greatly impacted by the social media (Govers & Go, 2008, p.51).

The online social media has directly influenced the various elements that affect place branding, such as, advertising, personal selling, public relations, publicity, sales promotions, direct marketing and sales promotion. As Mangold & Faulds (2009) explain, that tools and strategies for communicating with customers have changed significantly with the emergence of the phenomenon known as social media or consumer generated media. Online information about brand, product or services is created, circulated and used by consumers with the purpose of informing others about it.

Through online involvement, brands communicate directly with their customers, which result in strengthening the brand through participation and bridging the gap between organization and the audience (Yan 2011). According to Engeseth (2005), the brand is

strengthened through participation, allowing external audiences to identify with it and integrate in it.

According to Singh & Sonnenberg (2012), organizations have recognized the power of storytelling to provide meaning to the brand and practitioners have used storytelling to enhance consumers' connections with brands (Singh & Sonnenberg, 2012, p.190). They further add that Social media provide different platforms that facilitate networks, relations and interactions, which are key ingredients for co-creation of content.

Singh & Sonnenberg (2012) used the metaphor of Improv theater to explain the phenomenon of Brands in Social media. As they further explain that the improv theater serves as an insightful metaphor for understanding brands in the social media arena because brand owners and users in social media interact with one another in the same uninformed and uncontrolled fashion that describes the features of improv theater. The social media branding strategy of Visit Denmark will be discussed and analyzed from the perspective of Singh & Sonnenberg (2012), as how the user involvement on social media platforms affects the branding of DMO Visit Denmark.

As the terminology of improv Theater proposed by Singh & Sonnenberg, (2012) best describes the brands in the era of Social media, where the social media environment is closer to the unpredictable nature of an improvisational performance. The performance emerges from the collaboration between actor (in case of Visit Denmark the marketing management) and the audience (the consumer that follow the brand on different social media platforms)

may be passive (view content) or active (comment on brand performance) (Singh & Sonnenberg, 2012, p.190). Therefore, I believe that the concept of “Improv theater” has positive potential to analyze and explain the aspect of consumer participation in co-creating the brand content on social media.

## **4. Chapter 4: Methodology**

### **4.1 Introduction to Methodology**

In this project I am doing a qualitative content analysis of how the social media platforms are integrated in social media marketing strategy of Visit Denmark. In this chapter of my thesis, I will present how I conducted the research, which approaches were adopted and the methods applied. First I will start by discussing my epistemological viewpoint that has led the choice of the research design. Afterwards, I will explain the use of case study and the different methods I have chosen for data collection, analysis and discussion.

### **4.2 Epistemology And Theoretical Perspective**

Qualitative research is characterized by its aims, which relate to understanding some aspect of social life, and its methods which (in general) generate words, rather than numbers, as data for analysis. According to Bogdan & Taylor (1975), there are two major theoretical perspectives that have dominated the field of social science study: positivist and phenomenological perspectives. The positivist perspective seeks the facts or causes of social phenomena with little regard for the subjective states of individuals, on the other hand, the phenomenologist is concerned with understanding human behavior and examines how the world is experienced, based on the assumption that reality is what people imagine it to be.



I would adapt the latter perspective, which as many studies have explained, adopts an interpretivist approach to research where phenomena can be interpreted from the actor's own frame of reference (Flyvbjerg, 2013). As Crotty (1998) explained, “ *the interpretivist approach...looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world*” (p.67). Interpretivism, as a theoretical perspective is rooted back from constructivist epistemological view, where it is mainly concerned with understanding, “Verstehen ” idea that how humans construct meaning out of their interaction with the realities in the world (Crotty, 1998).

*“The verstehen tradition stresses understanding that focus on the meaning of human behaviour, the context of social interaction, an empathetic understanding based on subjective experience, and the connections between subjective states and behaviour”.* (Patton 1980:45 as cit. in Flyvbjerg, 1988).

According to Crotty (1998), the idea is based on the fact that “ all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (p.42). Social constructivism therefore, in opposition to positivism, believes that there is no objective truth to be discovered. This point of view influences my project and research as I am aware of the fact that I need to collect data from different sources that would enable me to have an overview of what is going on with the case I am analyzing.

According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), the social constructivist standpoint essentially means that the reality is perceived as unique social structures and they look at social reality as phenomena that are socially constructed. In this view, my research focuses on understanding how social media marketing is perceived by DMO i.e. Visit Denmark through content analysis from different perspectives. Therefore, I observed Visit Denmark's Website as well as different Social Media Platforms in order to gain insight about these platforms specifically, in relation to my research questions, it is important to understand the effects of social media on their marketing and communication strategy.

A comparative approach is adopted to understand Social media use and its effect on two different business perspectives i.e. the Marketing strategy and Communication strategy of a destination marketing organization. Comparative studies is chosen not only to draw out similarities and differences, but also to go beyond description towards the goal of analysis and interpretation from analysis and a Semi-structured interview with the Chef for Digital Media at Visit Denmark.

### **4.3 Research Strategy**

There are many different methods that can be used when collecting data, and these are based mostly on the researcher's way of interpreting or testing the phenomena, based on his viewpoint of reality (Crotty, 1998). According to Howell (2013), methodology is the research strategy or design that frames the way one goes about pursuing a research project, the methods determine the means or course of data collection.

In this thesis I chose to perform a feature and content analysis as it was the most preferred research method that allowed me to “use a set of procedures to make valid inferences about the text” (Weber, 1990). The empirical foundation for this paper draws exclusively on this single case study: the implementation of Social media as a marketing tool at Visit Denmark and its effect on branding and communication strategy. I chose to do a case study because from a social constructivist point of view, study cases provide a full range of data that can be used to understand the knowledge of organization and different interpretations it make of a specific context (Benbasat et al., 1987).

According to Becker (1968), the term case study can include interview data, observational data, the documentary data and many other information the researcher is able to accumulate about the particular case in question. The criticism has mainly problematized the use of case studies as a scientific method, and whether to classify the case studies as good or bad, as there are no clear method instructions. However, Benbasat et al. (1987) believe that case studies are particularly important and “*appropriate to certain types of problems: those in which research and theory are at their early formative stages, and sticky, practice-based problems where the experiences of the actors are important and the context of action is critical*” (p.369).

When choosing which social media platforms to analyze for this study, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube were selected because of large number of users and strong participation of Visit Denmark on these platforms. However, when initial study was conducted, it became clear that the most common social media platforms Visit Denmark used were Twitter

and YouTube with higher number of followers and subscribers respectively.

### **4.3.1 Interview**

An interview is conducted with chef for Digital Media at Visit Denmark Agnete Sylvest Jensen. The choice of the interviewee is done through the process of purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is the process of selecting participants in qualitative research based on functional variety that can provide different point of views upon the studied phenomena (Bauer and Aarts, 2000; Flick, 2014).

The interviewee was contacted through email and asked for the interview, which she replied that, she could give a written interview through email. Therefore, semi-structured interview questions were sent to her through email. The interview questions were inspired by semi-structured interview questions proposed by Hays et al. (2012) regarding the Social Media marketing strategy and how has it affected Visit Denmark's communication and brand perspective as well as the DMO as a whole. This is done to get an insight on the changes and effects social media marketing has brought in the organization. Furthermore, the interest was to gain information about how much focus Visit Denmark puts on the social media when it comes to marketing and branding.

### **4.3.2 Content/Text Analysis**

As Weber (1990), described the content/text analysis can code words, word sense, sentences or themes (Weber, 1990, p.22). In this

context the content is understood as any practice or text that can be “read”, analyzing the content in a qualitative manner (Fursich, 2009). The method of Content analysis is also referred as textual analysis, since this method is also used for studying communication with methodological approach of constructivism (Fursich, 2009 and Carvalho, 2008). For this study the data was analyzed includes written text, images and videos from Visit Denmark official website, its Facebook page, Twitter account and YouTube Account. The approach taken is purely qualitative which allows identifying the patterns of the content and there is no intention of quantitative analysis as such, however the nature of the social media urges for an approach that looks into the size of communities, number of likes and subscribers on the chosen platforms.

Social media has characteristics rooted from the technological aspects of Web 2.0, for example its ability to incorporate different medium of communication and interaction within extremely changing environment (Kautsky, R. et al, 2008). This adds a degree of complexity when studying social media content because both, users and producers generate content that is often interlinked to other platforms.

Data collection was also conducted through relevant documents concerning the project’s overall goal. Several documents were collected from internet that provide useful information regarding Visit Denmark as a destination marketing organization and specifically aimed at social media marketing. The documents available at Visit Denmark website were mostly in Danish language, which were translated to English. As the approach taken is interpretivist approach towards data collection, coding is also a process of how I, as the researchers, am

able to make sense of the case in relation to what data shows. This coding process was done manually so I could better compare the findings and interpretations of the data. I have to admit, however, that the coding process is also based on the subjective interpretations, as the researchers I have given to the data, and might influence the way the case is analyzed. Table 1. Further illustrates and describes all the data collected.

Source (Primary & Secondary)	Description
Interview	Digital media Manager 12.08.2015
Company Documents	Online Documents, Digital media strategy, Visit Denmark Brand Survey, Facebook page, Twitter account & YouTube content.
Secondary Data	“Effectmål” produced by Midtjysk Turisme.
Literature on Social Media, Branding and Communication	Jenkins (2006), Hays et al.(2012), Daft & lengel (1986), Ketter & Avraham (2012), Kaplan & Haenlein (2010), (S. Singh & S. Sonnenburg (2012).
Disciplines applied	Social Media marketing, Branding, Communication

Table 1. Source and description of data collection.

The content and text analysis increased the interest to find more about Visit Denmark’s business strategy and its focus on social media to expand and generate Tourism in Denmark. Therefore, the intent is to analyze these social media platforms from two different angles: Branding and Communication; in two stages.

In the first stage, the features and effects of chosen social media platforms are analyzed for branding perspective, followed by the communication perspective of the DMO Visit Denmark.

## **4.4 Research Limitation**

The research approach generates few limitations. First of all, the fact that disposes of wide range of functions and platforms. For purpose of this research not all the functions and platforms were observed. Moreover, the access to the platforms was from the user's point of view and the administration point of view, which could limit my ability to access all the content. The analysis conducted, was based on content observed at social media platforms which could limit the in depth overview of organization's strategy, as the social media platforms analyzed for this thesis only represent consumer interaction and content generated to promote Denmark as tourist destination. Another, limitation that I would like to point out is that due to peak season for tourism (summer) in Denmark the employees' schedule were very busy and I got chance to conduct only one interview. The interview was conduct through e-mail, which was very precise and I believe that it could have generated different results in a face-to-face setting. The company documents analyzed were mostly written in Danish, however I believe that the data collected through the interview and document and content analysis gave a clear insight into the case social media marketing perspective.

## **5. Chapter 5: Analysis**

This thesis analyzes how social media affects on destination-marketing organization Visit Denmark through branding and communication mediated by different social media platforms. Simultaneously, I will look at three social media platforms to analyze the impact of User-generated-content and the notion of “community” discussed by Lange-Faria & Elliot (2012) from the aspect of Visit Denmark’s social media branding. I will address the aspect of Branding on social media, through “Brand participation” by consumers and metaphor of “Improv Theater” discussed by Singh & Sonnenberg (2012).

Furthermore, I will identify the effects of social media on the communication strategy of Visit Denmark, mediated by social media platforms, which according to Ketter & Avraham (2012) is a “two-way communication process”. In addition, I address how the aspect of social media, enable consumers to participate and produce content, and bridge the communication gap between business to consumer, but also from consumer to consumer.

### **5.1 Social media Platforms for Innovative Marketing Channels**

Branding a place or country in today’s age is far more complex, with fierce competition with other countries and everyone having more or less same marketing policy. Visit Denmark similar to other DMOs recognize the need of reaching potential tourists on large scale by



integrating online marketing strategy along with traditional marketing activities. It started off by the official website, where customers could find information about the destination and offers that were designed for specific target market. Later different social media platforms were integrated as part of online marketing strategy.

Visit Denmark's website is user friendly and easy to navigate due to availability of icon like "things to do", "destinations", "accommodation" and "plan your trip". Thus, it provides the visitor on website with the necessary information including to attractions and sightseeing to booking hotels and travel tools. Another important feature of the website is the display of photos of Denmark famous sights to elicit customer response to plan their trip to Denmark.

The marketing director Janne Grønkjær Henriksen says on the webpage of Visit Denmark that "it requires a clear, focused and well thought out marketing of our country, so we create the knowledge that is a prerequisite for the tourists at all platforms, considering when the next holiday should be planned. This is the primary mission of VisitDenmark. Yes, one can say that it is the reason why we are here in the world. (source: Visitdenmark.com)

According to Kaplan and Haenlein 2009, social media platforms are applications that enable users to connect by creating personal information profiles, inviting friends and colleagues to have access to those profiles, and sending e-mails and instant messages between each other (p.63). These personal profiles can include any type of information, including photos, video, audio files and blogs. Some highly popular social networking sites are Facebook, Twitter and Myspace. There are also content communities like YouTube and Flickr where the main objective is sharing media content between users. Users on

content community are usually not required to create a personal profile page; if they do, these pages usually contain basic information (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2009. p.63).

As Kaplan and Haenlein (2009) guide us that social media allow organizations to engage in timely manner and direct end-consumer contact at relatively low cost and higher level of efficiency that can be achieved with traditional communication tools such as television and print media. This will make social media not only relevant for large organizations, but also for small and medium businesses and even for non-profit and government agencies (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009, p.67). Zeng (2013) explains that leveraging of social media to market tourism products has proven to be an excellent strategy as often its the users themselves who create the content, allowing it a community aspect that no other form of advertising and promotion can match.

As Gretzel 2009 described that the trends of traditional promotion and marketing are slimming down. Now consumers prefer to collect information online from various interactive web pages and networks according to their needs, as well as take advantage of other people experience, rather than going to a tour agents. However, every Social networking site has its own difference from the social media marketing perspective. These differences are elaborated further below.

### **5.1.1 Visit Denmark Facebook**

Figures show that there are 262,884 users who have liked the Visit Denmark official Facebook page. Whereas, there are 3,534 people are talking about the “Go Visit Denmark” (official Facebook page). The

social networking site Facebook was launched in 2004 (Meikle and Young, 2012, p.63).

Kavada (2012) describes Facebook as a platform that makes distinction between profiles, groups and pages. Profiles represent individuals, while pages, are created by organizations, bands, and public figures to communicate with their fans. Profiles can also be set to private, where only friends can see its content (Kavada 2012, p. 39). He further explains that Facebook pages make a clear distinction between the official voice and the voice of fans, by separating the “wall” into two tabs, one with posts from the organization, the other include comments by fans. When it comes to Social Media Marketing, Facebook is considered to be one of the important element for brand promotion, due to large number of Facebook users. Facebook is the largest social network with over 1 billion active users; out of these are 3 million Danish Facebook profiles. According to “Effectmål” (Handbook for measuring effect of social media in Danish tourism industry, 2013) 2 million Danes use Facebook on their mobile telephones.

Presently (i.e. 2015) there are two types of Facebook brand pages, the traditional Facebook page and new timeline-based Facebook page. Pages allow real organizations, businesses, celebrities and brands to communicate broadly with people who like them. Pages may only be created and managed by official representatives. However, groups provide a space for people to communicate about shared interests. Groups can be created by anyone (Facebook.com/desk top help). A Facebook user can “like” as an expression, a certain brand’s Facebook page and by doing so he/she can follow that brand. Administrator of the page has ability to post updates, thereafter; these updates are not

only visible on the brand page but also visible on Facebook page of users following that brand.

According to Podobnik et al. (2013), the Facebook marketing strategy should be easily-recognizable and original Facebook page – it is important to make Facebook page according to the brand's existing visual identity, but with rich content for Facebook users. It is important to get as much followers (i.e., users connected to that brand) on the brand's Facebook page as possible. Larger user base enables the brand to communicate with a broader audience. Last but not the least, it is very important to communicate with brand followers in appropriate way. It is also important to achieve a lot of interaction and feedback from users because of the EdgeRank mechanism. The EdgeRank is an index that evaluates the quality of posts, content is of high quality if it gets a lot of users interaction. Thus, Facebook pushes that content to users.

Other characteristic of Facebook is that users can post comments or content without having the need for permission of the owner of the site (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, p.65). Facebook also has the ability to upload multimedia files, press release, or summaries of campaigns, including the latest feature called timeline. Timeline enables organizations to tell their historical story more effectively (Ledford, 2012, p.180).

During the interview Head of Digital media for Visit Denmark, Agnete Sylvest wrote that, the biggest success on social media platform is the international Facebook page of VIsitDenamrk, which is very engaged and continuously growing. She further said that, it is success in itself that the organization has managed to get social media to play an

important role in the marketing. The Visit Denmark's international Facebook page has more than 264,000 followers and the number is continuously growing, the users are able to post comments or content on the fan's wall. Further more, users that like the Visit Denmark Facebook page can share it or post it on their timeline.

According to the handbook issued to measure efficiency of Danish tourist organizations "Effektmål", Facebook is one of the tourism industry's most used social media platforms, where organizations aim to reach target user groups faster than, through traditional media (Effektmål 2013, p.15). Moreover, Facebook claims "each month users spend more than 20 billion links, pictures, videos and other items of content" (Meikle and Young, 2012, p.63). This shows the popularity of Facebook and how integrated it is in people's daily lives. Facebook includes multiple convergence and offer different modes of interaction (Meikle and Young, 2012, p.59).

I would like to argue that through this high usage of Facebook, DMO Visit Denmark can not only interact with users, moreover, users can share content with their friends in their Facebook network. Due to large number of active users of Facebook, Visit Denmark can potentially attract large number of people to spread its marketing campaign. This supports the idea of spread-ability and engagement with trans-media branding (Lipsman, 2012, p.2). For example, if a friend is a fan of Visit Denmark page on Facebook, other people in his or her network can see if that friend shared or "liked" through the "like Expression" content on Visit Denmark Facebook page. The like button is "an image displaying a thumbs-up symbol accompanied by the word 'like'" (Rosendaal, 2011).

According to the Effektmål (the handbook for measuring efficiency of social media) (2013), Facebook rewards creative content because it keeps the users in the platform for a long time. The more active users, the more content is spread beyond the organizations page (p.15).

Lipsman (2012), states that with Facebook, consumers and brands have the opportunity to have a “two-way” relationship. He further adds that when a brand focuses on engaging fans, it can benefit from significant secondary effects, such as exposure among friends. It is an opportunity for Visit Denmark to spread and support the brand to a wide public by gaining “likes” on its Facebook page.

From observing the Facebook page of Visit Denmark, it is obvious that the DMO Visit Denmark is benefiting from content sharing in form of visual material in the album called “Friday Fan Photo”, where fans are motivated to upload their photos from the trip to Denmark. Thus, the shared content not only get likes from other fans of Visit Denmark page, but also friends and colleagues who have access to the profile of the fan, who uploaded the photo.

## **5.1.2 Visit Denmark on Twitter**

Within a few years, Twitter has become one of the world's largest social network. Twitter has about 500 Million profiles; with 175.000.00 tweets every day and 1000.000 new profiles are created every day. Today there are more than 140 million active users, of which it is estimated that more than 100,000 are Danish. Meanwhile, Twitter's

popularity in Denmark is steadily increasing. Therefore, the media's impact on the Danish tourist industry is also increasing.

Twitter is a social media platform serving the function of a micro-blog, it also works as a social networking site where users can connect and share information. It was launched in October 2006. It allows users to broadcast or post real-time messages of 140 characters or less. The messages are known as "Tweets" (Lovejoy et al. 2012; Kwon & Sung, 2011).

According to Lovejoy (2012), tweets can be viewed by others (subscribers), which are commonly referred as followers; using Twitter terminology, if one user follow another, he/she is considered "follower", and if both users follow each other then they are considered "friends". By following other users, tweets are automatically received on user's Twitter pages, sent by those whom they follow (Kwon & Sung, 2011).

While Twitter is leading social media outlet for organized campaigns, research by Lovejoy (2012) indicates that strategic communicators still remain puzzled over how to best use Twitter. There is no formula for communicating through Twitter and connecting with the audience. (Lovejoy, 2012). Yan (2011) mention that Senator Barack Obama used Twitter for his Presidential election campaign in 2008. Though later it emerged that the "Tweets" were those of his campaign team. In terms of Obama campaign, the Tweets pertained to the senator's political speeches and campaign ideals. It also enabled the followers to ask questions and engage with him (Yan, 2011, p.690).

The handbook for measuring social media efficiency in Danish tourism industry called “Effektmål” also describes that the power of Twitter is its ability to create a dialogue between companies and customers. Dialogue, where both parties have equal power and interest to follow, reply to and forward the “Tweets”. The 140 character limit requires that both parties give their opinion straight to the point and without any explanation (Effectmål 2013, p.44).

Twitter profile can be branded through customizable backgrounds. The administrator is capable of posting Tweets (similar to status updates on Facebook). Tweets are short text messages up to 140 characters. Users can reply to tweets coming from a certain brand, which develops a two-way communication, as well as provide feedback to Brands. Hays et al. (2012) explained that each message posted on Facebook is replicated on Twitter through applications used to integrate multiple social media platforms.

Visit Denmark has 25.400 followers on Twitter, with total number of 7,500 tweets (source: <https://twitter.com/GoVisitDenmark>). Its Twitter profile mainly consists of short text about past or upcoming events in Denmark and photos regarding the events. The posts include hashtags before the word indicating the topic of the Tweet, which can be useful in the context of announcing or promoting an event, product or news. Hashtags are represented by the pound sign (#), indicating that the message is relevant to a particular topic. Hashtags makes the search for information about the topic easier (Lovejoy, 2012; Kwon & Sung, 2011). For example, when looking at Tweets by Visit Denmark, it has “#Copenhagen” in a lot of tweets, making it relevant for people who are interested in information about Copenhagen.



In case of Visit Denmark as DMO, this means that the organization can benefit from targeting the Twitter efforts toward a different audience than the one aiming at for example, on Facebook. Facebook audience for Visit Denmark is more interested in visual content like photographs and visitors comments about the experience of visiting Denmark. Whereas, the target audience at “Twitter” is considered to be, people who prefer short and direct message. The Twitter Followers are more interested in what brand wants to communicate, rather than what followers of the brand have to say (Kwon & Sung, 2011). Unlike, Facebook the tweets are short lived, and quickly disappear in the constant news flow (Yan, 2011). Therefore, to increase the message visibility, Visit Denmark broadcast the Tweets on its website, to keep the customers updated. Heaps (2009) explains that distributing information through Twitter can increase traffic to company’s website, which eventually allows the companies to “tell their story” better and connect at deep level through detailed content (Yan, 2011; Kwon & Sung, 2011).

### **5.1.3 Visit Denmark on Blogs**

According to Kaplan & Haenlein (2010), the term “weblog” was first used at the same time when around 1979 when world wide discussion system was created that allowed users to post public messages. It was reduced from Weblog and replaced as “blog” when one blogger jokingly transformed the noun “weblog” into the sentence “we blog”.

According to Lange-Faria & Elliot (2012), blogs and micro blogs serve a variety of functions in the destination marketing organizations. They further explain that for DMO, blogs function as eWOM (electronic word of mouth), providing information to the traveller but also providing the channel by which visitors can identify with the experience of the blog character (Lange-Faria & Elliot, 2012, p.199).

According to the handbook called Effektmål (2013), blog is one of the oldest social media. It is a kind of website where one can write personal texts in the form of online diary. Similar to all the other social media platforms, it is important to formulate the purpose of the blogs, so that readers know what to expect. Typically, a blog combine text, images, ideas and perhaps links to other content that helps in achieving the objective of the story (Effektmål, 2013, p.110).

Pan & Crofts (2012), explain that advice from friends and relatives is the most frequently obtained and influential source of information used by consumers in their travel decision-making. The friends and relatives are considered more credible, and trustworthy than that generated from marketers, since they are not compensated for referral. The advent of Web 2.0 now allow consumers to access meaningful critiques not only from friends and relatives but from strangers for example, travel blogs and posts from tourist experience.

According to Lange-Faria & Elliot (2012) blogs continue to be one of the most popular forms of user-generated content used by destination marketing organizations. Blogs can be described as “the social media equivalent of personal web pages and can come in multitude of different variations, from personal diaries describing the author's life to

summaries of all the relevant information in one specific content area” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p.63)

According to the Head of Communication, Mikkel Thrane, Visit Denmark asks individuals and often personalities who are not necessarily journalists, but who has managed to draw attention to it and the themes they write about, to write travel blogs for the organization. The travel bloggers of Visit Denmark are often active on many different platforms and have their own blogs, and have many followers, for example on Facebook and Instagram.

The Visit Denmark webpage display links for travel blogs written by famous bloggers about Denmark as DMO. Mikkel Thrane explains that the blogger chosen by Visit Denmark have a very personal style and often have strong opinions. And of course, they say it even when there is something they are not so crazy about. Precisely because bloggers have built a relationship with the many who follow them, because they put texts, pictures and the various links to add the character of personal recommendations, and thus they are given a greater weight than the more classic articles (Head of Communication, Mikkel Thrane, Source, [www.visitdenmark.com](http://www.visitdenmark.com)).

However, it is also clear that a blog has no relevance if it does not have readers. Therefore, bloggers need to use other platforms to promote the blog, such as website and other social platforms to refer to blog, thereby attracting the users towards it (Effektmål, 2013, p.111).

Lange-Faria & Elliot (2012) explain that blogs are equally useful in monitoring visitors attitude towards a destination by look at visitor

stories and collecting valuable information for DMOs concerning the emotional connection visitors make with the destination.

Blogs have the unique ability to evoke the desire to live out the same experience narrated by the visitor (Lange-Faria & Elliot, 2012, p.200). Similar, is the case with Visit Denmark blogs. After studying several blogs and the comments given by followers, it is easy to conclude that these blogs play a vital role in the “trigger” and “inspiration” phase of marketing strategy of Visit Denmark. For example, a Feminine blogger “A Lady in London” wrote a travel blog about exploring city of Copenhagen. The link to this blog is present on the official website of Visit Denmark. The blog has fourteen comments. The comments were about praising the photos, moreover the blog succeeded in eliciting the desire in readers to visit Copenhagen and experience the story.

Other most popular social media marketing tools include;

**YouTube:** created in 2005, it is a video sharing website where users can upload videos and audio files;

**Instagram:** is an online mobile photo-sharing, video-sharing and social networking service that enables its users to take pictures and videos, and share them on a variety of social networking platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and Flickr. User can #(hashtag) a picture or video to connect with certain brand or topic;

**Pinterest:** where users can upload, save, sort, and manage images—known as pins—and other media content (e.g., videos and images) through collections known as pinboards. Pinterest acts as a personalized media platform. Users can browse the content of others on the main page.

## **5.2 Destination/Place branding and social media**

Branding a place or country in today's age is far more complex, with fierce competition with other countries and everyone having more or less same marketing policy. Visit Denmark similar to other DMOs recognize the need of reaching potential tourists on large scale by integrating online marketing strategy along with traditional marketing activities. It started off by the official website, where customers could find information about the destination and offers that were designed for specific target market. Later different social media platforms were integrated as part of online marketing strategy.

As mentioned above, social media platforms are most crucial tools for online branding of destination marketing or place marketing (Ketter & Avraham 2012). Chan-Olmsted (2011) explains that through Web 2.0 the success of branding depends to a greater extent on an organization's ability to manage its brands in a continuously changing environment, which is drastically different from a decade or two ago. He further adds that social media platforms provide more point of contact and faster response to consumer needs due to availability of multiple channels and mobile devices that help consumers connect to their networks anywhere and at any time (Chan-Olmsted 2011, p.4). Visit Denmark as an official website for Denmark's tourism brand's has its marketing strategy planned one values that makes the country stand out as a travel destination.

As seen from the Visit Denmark website the organization aims at branding Denmark as "the happiest place on earth" and Danes "the

happiest people”. As the organization describe that on facebook description about the organization “We want to inspire people from all over the world to visit Denmark. See and exchange Danish photos, travel tips and experiences here at Go VisitDenmark” ([https://www.facebook.com/denmark/info?tab=page\\_info](https://www.facebook.com/denmark/info?tab=page_info)).

According to Jens Wittrup Willumsen, Chairman of VisitDenmark it is our goal to make Denmark “top of mind” tourist destination. Otherwise we risk that the good intentions of Danish tourism remains a well-preserved Danish secret. The problem is that there are so many others who know nothing about Denmark. And certainly the potential foreign tourists doesn’t know enough, which we would like to travel on vacation here to Denmark” **(Online Source: [www.visitdenmark.com](http://www.visitdenmark.com)).**

Visit Denmark’s management is interested in promoting Denmark as a Tourist destination and the management is aware of the fact that they need to make extra effort to promote Denmark among Tourists. According to Govers and Go (2008), the importance of place branding cannot be denied, but if DMO like Visit Denmark want to maintain their image, communication will become increasingly important as well. They further explain that with technology the information space is increasing at what appears to be the speed of light. The delivery of message across the right consumer at the right time is essential.

Visit Denmark’s website is user friendly and easy to navigate due to availability of icon like “things to do”, “destinations”, “accommodation” and “plan your trip”. Thus, it provides the visitor on website with the necessary information including to attractions and sightseeing to

booking hotels and travel tools. Another important feature of the website is the display of photos of Denmark famous sights to elicit customer response to plan their trip to Denmark.

The marketing director Janne Grønkjær Henriksen says on the webpage of Visit Denmark that “it requires a clear, focused and well thought out marketing of our country, so we create the knowledge that is a prerequisite for the tourists at all platforms, considering when the next holiday should be planned. This is the primary mission of VisitDenmark. Yes, one can say that it is the reason why we are here in the world. (source: Visitdenmark.com)

As Gretzel (2010) explain that social media platforms are the most influential in online travel information search in that they occur everywhere, no matter what key words a traveler uses. He further adds that, research confirms that tourism marketers can no longer ignore the role of social media in distributing travel-related information without risking becoming irrelevant (Gretzel, 2010, p.186). Same is the case with Visit Denmark, the organization is putting a lot of effort in maintaining the presence on social media platforms and promoting tourists to post comments and picture from their visit to Denmark on social media platforms like Facebook.

According to the Handbook of effectiveness of social media, to get the most out of social media, organization need to measure their efforts, as simple as that. The travel industry today uses the new social channel for both marketing, customer service, sales and product development. This means that there are a lot of resources on various

social platforms. These resources must be able to document and make the impact of social media visible for marketing activities (Handbook: Effektmål på social media, p.6). As head of digital media Agnete Sylvest mentioned in her interview that Visit Denmark uses 80 percent of its marketing budget on Social media marketing (Agnete Sylvest 12-08-2015).

Fortunately, there's a wide range of tools from different parameters to measure the effort of organizations on social media. These are tools and methods that can help an organization get a visual and statistical overview of, for example, who the users are, how many they are, how they interact with the content, and when do they do it (Handbook: Effektmål på social media, p.6). However, my aim of the thesis is only to get a qualitative overview of the social media efforts on organization marketing and communications efforts. Thus, I will analyze number of users, likes, retweets and comments only to develop an understanding of use of resource and its effectiveness on social media platforms.

### **5.3 Brand participation as “Improv Theater”**

Consumers are involved during every step of Branding process. The idea of telling a single brand story on different Social media platforms has emerged in response to media convergence - one that places new demand on consumers and depends on the active participation of knowledge communities (Jenkins, 2006, p.29). In order to better analyze the concept of Branding across social media, I used the metaphor of “Improv Theater” developed by Singh & Sonnenberg (2012). This concept contributes toward building an understanding of



brand stories, and in past the content, production and distribution have been dominated by the brand owners, but this is changing due to emergence of social media. The social media enable the user-generated brand content that include discussions forum, blogs, video and photo sharing and news sharing sites that provide networks, relations and interactions; The three key ingredients for co-creation of content (Singh & Sonnenberg, 2012, p.190).

Singh & Sonnenberg (2012), further explain that consumer participation in creating brand stories result in consumer-generated brand stories, which are spread as fast as those created by the organization. The idea of “Improv theater” better describes brands in the era of Social media as the social media environment is closer to the uncontrolled and unpredictable nature of an improvisational performance than to a classical theater performance (Singh & Sonnenberg, 2012, p.190).

The content on social media at social media platforms of Visit Denmark is generated by organization, but it is the users who co-create the brand image by commenting, posting photos, sharing their experience and constant feedback. Consumers not only connect with zillions of people but also transform the way they interact with brands.

*“ Consumers can read or provide reviews and information of brands, watch or upload their favorite advertisement of the brand, make an advertisement of their own, ‘ Tweet’ or blog about the brand in social media. Technology, Internet, and social media have made it possible to share consumer-generated brand content with friends, other users, or a virtual community”* (Singh & Sonnenberg, 2012, p.190).

Visit Denmark focus on creating loyal tourists who comes back. Through newsletters is Denmark kept top-of-mind with inspiration and offers from partners. Visit Denmark take digital and social initiatives to ensure that “The ambassadors” share their good experiences and spread the message about Denmark. The phenomenon of involving tourists in the process of marketing through participation on social media platforms is used by Singh & Sonnenberg (2012) as a metaphor called “Improv theater” which I will explain below.

In a social media setting the participation is encouraged by brands (Singh & Sonnenburg 2012). As discussed above in the social media marketing strategy of Visit Denmark that it promotes its customers to share its experience on social media platforms. The customer participation is closely linked with the range of the content. Only if the users actively interact with organizations content, it will be spread in their personal networks - and thus reach an even wider audience.

Several of measuring tools for social media can give you figures of how to engage users and get them talking - they tell you all how good you are to create participation with your content - measured in numbers, for example, number of comments, number of divisions and the number of "Likes" expressions. For example, the brand image of Denmark as “happiest people on earth” is co-created by stories and experiences shared by tourists who participate in creating the brand stories. As participants and their stories unfold and shape the performance in an improv theater performance, similar to social media users, some are more active in generating content, while others are mere spectators (Singh & Sonnenberg, 2012, p.191).

*“ Since brand owners in social media do not tell stories alone, but co-create with the consumers, the brand content is the interrelated stories told by both the brand owner and the consumer. The brand owner and the consumers take multiple roles in social media, with both playing the director, actor, and spectator roles at various points”* (Singh & Sonnenburg 2012, p.190).

## **5.4 Communication strategy and social media platforms**

The Internet and especially social media have changed the way consumers and organizations communicate (Wang et al., 2012). This change was caused by the emergence of platforms that gave individual consumers their own voice, as well as access to product information that facilitates their purchase decisions (Wang et al, 2012, p.198). Wang et al. further explain that the user generated content in form of online product reviews have proliferated through social media, with great impact on the marketing strategy and campaigns. In particular, the communication of consumers on social media is a new form of consumer socialization. They explain the term consumer socialization as the process individual consumers learn skills, knowledge and attitudes from others through online communication on social media platforms (Wang et al, 2012, p.198).

Ketter & Avraham (2012) explain that in the most basic form, marketing and communication are a process of exchanging messages between participants. The basic communication model deigned by

Lasswell (1948) was to develop effective communication between sender and receiver (cited in Ketter & Avraham, 2012, p.286). One of the main advantage of this model was that it was straightforward.

However, I would like to argue here that communication is not a one-way process; therefore, it must have the dimension of feedback, in order to understand that the message is fully transmitted and ambiguity is eliminated. Ketter & Avraham (2012) mentioned that like many communication processes, marketing communication is focused on the delivering and acceptance of messages, from a source to receiver (p.286).

As mentioned before, the evolution of online marketing is closely linked with the evolution of digital world. The Web 1.0 structure was similar in characteristics to that of radio, television and print media, because of its linear nature of information flow (Ketter and Avraham, 2012). However, the dawn of Web 2.0 provided two-way communication platforms such as blogs, social networking sites, for example Facebook and Twitter, and content sharing sites such as YouTube.

The two-way communication process enabled passive content consumers to become active producers; for example, by posting updates on Facebook or uploading video on YouTube, these users are active on the Internet (Ketter & Avraham, 2012, p.287).

The destination marketing organizations are also affected by the shift of consumer roles. According to Ketter & Avraham (2012), before the destination marketing campaigns were based on the linear model of communication. They further explain that the campaigns based on the

linear model have a top-down flow of information, in which the source (the destination marketers) delivers a well-chosen message (the place's marketing statement) to a rather passive audience, using selected channels and aiming for a specific effect (Ketter & Avraham, 2012, p.286). They explained that the marketing communication process on social media is much more interaction-oriented, based on two-way communication format. Ketter & Avraham (2012), defined the leading principle of marketing to facilitate user-generated content and maximize interaction with customers, using two-way communication for feedback.

## **5.5 Visit Denmark's two-way Communication**

The technological advancement has affected how travellers gather information and make travel decisions. Visit Denmark is aware of the market trends about digitalized travel behavior, that the customers not only receive but also spread the campaign message. Therefore, it is focusing on optimized flow of promotions and campaigns. Agnete Sylvest says in her interview that the best way to engage to consumers is connect with them on social media by "questions or competitions", as it always help (Agnete Sylvest, 12-08-2015).

Visit Denmark has also adopted the two-way communication model for marketing communication strategy. As the organization is active on social media platforms, where it promotes the user-generated content by posting photos sent by users on these platforms as well as providing them with the medium to express their opinions about the products and experience. For example, Visit Denmark Facebook page

provides users to post comments on the Facebook “wall” and to retweet on Visit Denmark Tweets on Twitter.

According to head of communications of Visit Denmark Mikkel Thrane, it is very hard to communicate with customers because of competition from other countries’ tourism organizations is massive. And it is overwhelming to see the creativity and great amount of offers these DMOs come up with, to attract the potential tourists. He further says that the organization needs to communicate with new customers through the tourists who have already travelled to Denmark. These tourists who already have been to Denmark will spread their stories through word-of-mouth to those who have not yet considered coming to Denmark (Mikkel Thrane, Source: <http://www.visitdenmark.dk/da/danmark/paa-print-paa-blog-og-pinterest>).

According to Lange-Faria & Elliot (2012), social networking depends on the concept of word-of-mouth (WOM), or in this case, electronic word of mouth (eWOM), which involves consumer comments about products and services posted on the Internet. Authors further explain the difference between WOM and eWOM, that eWOM recommendations are typically from unknown individuals with whom strong ties are lacking, so on one hand, it could be difficult to establish credibility of the ‘online’ consumers and the information. But on the other hand, eWOM may in fact be more influential than WOM, due to the global reach, the speed with which it travels, ease of use, anonymity and absence of face-to-face pressure (Bronner & Hoog, 2011, p.15).

DMO Visit Denmark understands that to gain advantage of eWOM it is important to understand what motivates customers to participate in online communities. Agnete Sylvest, the head of digital media at Visit Denmark, says in her interview “the most effective manner to connect on social media seems to be photos; we ask fans/followers for photos, and upload the best of them as user generated photos” (Agnete Sylvest, 12-08-2015).

In case of Visit Denmark, the organization uses different medias to communicate with the audience at different platforms, to avail different opportunities the platforms offer. As described above, the blogs are a way of eWOM, with higher degree of self-presentation, where travel bloggers share their experiences and stories about travel destinations. It gives the reader a more personalized opinion about the destination even though the bloggers are typically hired by the organization. For example Visit Denmark usually hire the bloggers on the basis of their publicity, strong opinions and number of followers to write travel blogs for the DMO.

Facebook and Twitter are considered successful platforms by the DMO Visit Denmark, to communicate through social media. As Visit Denmark’s head of digital media said in her interview that Facebook is the most successful medium, due to large number of fans. These platforms not only use text-based communication but also facilitate users with rich content sharing of pictures, videos and other forms of media (Kaplan & Heanlein, 2010, p.62). Moreover, these platforms provide an interaction oriented two-way communication process (Ketter & Avraham, 2012, p.287).

## 5.6 Combining social media marketing with traditional marketing

Since changes in the media landscape, such as digitalization, has become a main subject; today media is used within other media. *“The proliferation of channels and the portability of new computing and telecommunication technologies, we are entering an era when media will be everywhere. Convergence isn’t something that is going to happen one day when we have enough bandwidth or figure out the correct configuration of appliances. Ready or not, we are already living within a convergence culture”* (Jenkins, 2006, p.27).

The transition process of confrontation of old and new technologies is complex, but old media is not replaced by the new technologies. Rather, their functions and status are shifted. (Jenkins, 2006, p.24) Jenkins (2006), also explain the concept of “Transmedia Communication”, that it is about telling a story across media. *“Transmedia storytelling refers to a new aesthetic that has emerged in response to media convergence; one that places new demands on consumers and depends on active participation of knowledge communities. Transmedia storytelling is the art of world making”* (Jenkins, 2006, p.29).

The term transmedia communication can help me to build an understanding of how DMO Visit Denmark perform branding activities in a multilayered communication channel and within various medias. *“Learning how to accelerate the flow of media content across delivery channels to expand revenue opportunities, broaden markets, and reinforce viewer commitments”* (Jenkins, 2006, p.29).



Individual participate and collaborate through social media platforms and share content. However, I want to argue for this approach using Jenkins (2006) theory about media convergence that *“convergence does not occur through media appliances, however sophisticated they may become. Convergence occurs within the brains of individual consumers and through their social interaction with others”* (Jenkins, 2006, p. 9).

For social media platforms, Jenkins (2006) theory also point out an important argument, the interaction of users among themselves is a key practice in social media. Thus, I would to analyze the case of Visit Denmark from media convergence perspective, to understand the mix of different medias and to gain insight about active participation of consumers while communicating the brand story.

## **5.7 Employee’s perspective on social media strategy**

According to the Head of Digital media Visit Denmark, Agnete Sylvest Jensen the social media strategy was implemented in Visit Denmark during 2010. The management and the development of social media are part of the department of social media and part of marketing department as a whole. The content manager for social media at Visit Denmark also writes and manages content for web and newsletters.

Thus the transfer of content from one social media platform to another is channel is reinforced to accelerate the message flow. It is

also visible at the Visit Denmark website that the Tweets are constantly broadcasted to increase the ways of accessing media content due to interaction possibilities of different platforms. The marketing activities take place in the organization; however, the advertising is outsourced to Google Adwords. Where the organization work in close collaboration with the Google adwords team. (Agnete Sylvest Jensen, 12-08-2015)

When asked about the budget dedicated to social media, Agnete Sylvest replied that it depends on the campaigns but in general 80 % of the marketing campaign budget goes to the digital campaigns. She further added, “social media both earned and paid is a vital part of how we do our digital campaigns, but it is different from campaign to campaign, how much social is part of it. Around 80 per cent of our budget goes to the digital campaigns” (Interview, Agnete Aylvest, 12-08-2015).

## 6. Chapter 6: Discussion

In this chapter, the empirical findings collected mainly from the interview with head of digital marketing at Visit Denmark, Agnete Sylvest and reports from official Visit Denmark web site, press release, management blogs, which focus on the subject of online social marketing will be discussed.

Even though the Social media channels have advantage of being cost efficient and convenient than traditional marketing channels, due to the advent of mobile technology. It allows the audience to engage and provide instant feedback, this has empowered consumers more than before. Before the role of consumer was merely, passive audience, whereas, now they are key active participant. Making social media marketing a communication process.

Social media is not a one-way advertising medium but an open platform for two-way dialog, through which visitors can initiate an interaction. They can follow the destination's social media marketing platforms such as Twitter, interact in social networking site Facebook, create and comment on the blog or articles, share information, stories, photos or video, ask for information in real-time conversations quickly. Those actions could establish the opportunity for visitor to have personal online interaction and a virtual social relation.

These platforms play an active role on many social media strategy, to promote the brand Visit Denmark. However having several types of social media platforms, however, does not necessarily mean that the organization is using it properly. Yan (2011) explain this phenomenon

that the organizations must consider their contact with the audience, just like an operator answers the telephone or the flight attendant seeing to the passengers. He further adds that only through continuous dialogue with the users, the brand awareness would increase, also improving the brand engagement.

Organizations like Visit Denmark can promote their objectives and the brand through boundaries and low cost by using social media i.e. YouTube or posting pictures on social networks like Instagram. However, the fact that social media is integrated with UGC and interaction, which makes managing and monitoring the content and user response quite a challenge.

Visit Denmark made a video in 2010, called “Danish Mother Seeking” to brand Denmark through YouTube. The Video is about a young mother trying to find father of her baby through YouTube or social media. In the video the lady is searching for the guy who came to Denmark as a tourist about two years ago; In the video the lady mentions that she didn’t know where he was from and doesn’t remember his name, but when they met she wanted to show him what Danish word “hygg” meant, so she took him to her apartment and next morning he was gone. After wards she new that she got pregnant and the baby was his. The video went viral online within 24 hours. But it created a lot of controversy about Danish culture. According to Agnete Sylvest the Head of digital media, in her interview she mentioned the video as an example of failure of marketing campaign on social media.

To provide answer to my research question, it is obvious from the study of Visit Denmark as a case company that the social media

marketing strategy is highly integrated with communication and branding strategies of Visit Denmark. It is obvious through the fact that 80% of its marketing budget is spent on online social media marketing activities and also the active presence of the DMO on several social media platforms is visible through different online campaigns and participation. However as Yan (2011) explain that the presence on these platforms does not mean successful marketing and communication strategy. Thus, making it hard to measure the return on investment (ROI).

In case of social media marketing campaigns the effect of measuring the efficiency is different from measuring the impact of ROI in traditional marketing (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010). Hoffman & Fodor (2010), explain that in well-designed social media campaign it is important for the organizations to measure the bottom line impact of the social media efforts. This could be measured through consumer's additional brand-related content such as, post about their experience on Facebook, viral spread of the video or tweet about the brand. The authors suggest that although the effectiveness of the social media integration into business strategy cannot be accurately measured, but the effects can be traced to some extent through indicators like purchase of the product, positive eWOM through UGC and customer loyalty.

The research has helped me to conclude my findings that, although, the integration of social media in the business and communication strategy is inevitable in the digitized world, due to its cost efficiency and easier brand recognition on a large scale, DMO Visit Denmark need to put a lot of effort into communicating with the customers and

updating the relevant content. Also considering the fact that the advent of social media has shifted the control from organization to consumer, the users have the ability to generate negative content in case of complaint or bad experience, which can effect the organizations reputation.

I believe my research would provide a helpful insight in the area of social media marketing with respect to DMOs branding and communication strategy. Furthermore, the thesis provides insight to the aspect of effectiveness of the social media platforms and how the ROI is different from the traditional marketing campaigns.

Further research could be done in the area of finding the way to evaluate the return of investment in online marketing and social media in DMOs and how to measure the success of the online marketing and social media activities.

## **6. Chapter 6: Conclusion**

In this thesis, I have presented a research study about social media marketing from branding and communication perspective of Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) called Visit Denmark. The aim of this study was to analyze how social media marketing support online place branding, the branding of destination for tourism purpose, and communication with consumers through online social platforms.

The thesis firstly analyzed the topic of social media and social media marketing was introduced and defined. Then I discussed the different concepts and theories that I used to analyze the case study. Afterwards, I presented the methodology chosen and research methods applied to collect necessary data, which help me, answer the research questions. In the last section, the analysis and discussion part, I described the case study's situation and demonstrated the relation between social media, place branding and customer communication process in the social media marketing.

From the analysis I concluded that features of social media such as two-way communication and user-generated content facilitate the branding and communication through social media marketing strategy. However, each channel or platform has its own purpose of communication. Therefore, the communication should fulfill the requirements of users of the platforms. For example, Visit Denmark should provide visual content as well as engage users through questions and competitions on Facebook to keep the conversation interesting and enjoyable.

The research gave an important insight to the aspect of measuring the efficiency of social media platforms through product sales and positive user generated content and consumer loyalty. However, the analysis indicate that the investment in social media marketing itself does not promise any success for brand marketing and consumer communication but the continuous effort of user engagement on these platforms and interesting campaigns that generate positive feedback and ultimately eWOM. Organizations need to consider the fact that success of social media marketing strategy is measured by consumer's satisfaction and participation on the social media platforms. Therefore, organizations need to make these platforms attractive for their consumers, so that they spend more time by interacting and exploring about the tourist destination.



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<http://www.futurebrand.com/cbi/2014>

<https://www.facebook.com/help/281592001947683/>

## **Interview With Agnete Sylves (Head of Digital media):**

1. When did Visit Denmark begin implementing a social media strategy?

Agnete Sylvest: A social media strategy was implemented in 2010.

2. Is the management and development of social media a separate role from other marketing employees at Visit Denmark?

Agnete Sylvest: Management and development of social media is in the department Digital Media – we're part of the marketing department. Our content manager for social media, also writes content for web and newsletters. Advertising on social media is run by the same people that run Google Adwords for instance, we sit together and work closely together.

3. How many people are responsible for maintaining a social media presence, developing strategies/ campaigns, etc.?

Agnete Sylvest: We are 3 people that are looking at social media at the head office, but every online manager in the local market also have local social media as part of their responsibility. With regards to campaigns, this is done in close collaboration with the marketing employees, but we make sure it fits in the strategy, and it is also executed by digital media here in Cph or by local online managers.

4. What is the total budget dedicated towards social media? What percentage of the total marketing budget is this? How much is spent on, for example, TV or magazines (and how does that compare to what was spent in previous years)?

Agnete Sylvest: It depends whether we run social media campaigns or not, that depends on the campaign objective and idea. In general 80% of the marketing campaign budget goes to digital campaigns.

5. How much of the visit Denmark budget is allocated to marketing?

Agnete Sylvest: I don't know exactly, but our Analysis department can maybe answer this. Try Jakob Slej ([jsm@visitdenmark.com](mailto:jsm@visitdenmark.com)). He's in our analysis department.

6. How do social media and traditional media reinforce each other at Visit Denmark? Which is valued more?

Agnete Sylvest: Social media (both paid and earned) is a vital part of how we do our digital campaigns, but it is different from campaign to campaign, how much social is part of it. Around 80% of our marketing budget goes to digital.

7. What have been the biggest struggles related to incorporating social media into Visit Denmark marketing strategy?

Agnete Sylvest: It has naturally evolved and is now an integrated part of our marketing mix. The most important things has been to come to this stage.

9. What has been the biggest social media success/failure?

Agnete Sylvest: There was a viral video in 2010 "Danish mother seeking "which must have been the biggest failure".

The biggest success is our international Facebook page which is very engaged and continuesly growing and the fact that we have managed to get social to play an integral role in what we do.

10. How does Visit Denmark plan to develop social media in the future?

Agnete Sylvest: We will be working on our strategy for 2016 in the Autumn. We never plan too far ahead as no one knows what the social landscape will look like 5 years ahead.

11. How do you measure successful social media efforts? ROI?

Agnete Sylvest: It is part of our general effectiveness model that we use for marketing, some things are very cost effective, and others not so much.

12. To whom are most of the social media efforts directed (particular markets)? Are you using social media for particular markets?

Agnete Sylvest: Yes for all of our primary markets, which are: Germany, Norway, Sweden, Holland, UK, Italy, France and the US

13. What sorts of posts (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) do you think are the most effective? (e.g. do you think it helps to have a contest, ask a question, request photos, something general, advertising an event, etc.)

Agnete Sylvest: Yes questions and competitions always help – but in general the most effective things seems to be photos – we ask fans/followers for photos, and send out the best of them as user generated posts.

14. Do you have any particular strategies to gain followers on Twitter, 'likes' on Facebook?

Agnete Sylvest: Yes, we make sure to follow influencers and engage with the community. Also, on Facebook we use money to boost our posts and on Instagram we have monthly takeovers from popular Instagrammers.