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VIV Online
24/7 knowledge networking

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Now I'm left with saying one more thing, which is to wish you much reading pleasure.

Enjoy!

Esmée Habers
Utrecht, 1 June 2017

Executive summary

VIV (Vakbeurs Intensieve Veeteelt) is the Dutch abbreviation for the exhibition for extensive livestock, and is a subsidiary of the Royal Dutch Jaarbeurs. With over a 1.000 international companies exhibiting and visitors from over 140 countries, from which the largest parts are Asian countries, the VIV exhibitions and events are considered a worldwide known brand in the animal production and processing industry, including the sectors of poultry, pig, cattle & calves and aquaculture.

Now digitalization is still increasing, and organizations extend their services online, for VIV it was only logical to expand the physical exhibitions and events to an online knowledge platform for professionals in the industry, enabling them to access information independent of time and location. While having a large database of clients from all past exhibitions and events, the VIV team planned on sending out one mass email to all existing clients including a call to action to encourage registration on VIV its knowledge platform called: VIV Online. Moreover, after consultation with the client the perceived practical problem of VIV is the need of a marketing communication strategy on how to promote the online knowledge platform of VIV.

As the client's knowledge problem is a lack of insight in the motivations and needs of the target group, two audiences were interviewed during field research: professionals within the VIV network were asked to explain their motivations and needs for participation on such a network, as well as which communication channels they are currently using in order to share and receive expert knowledge. As a result, all interviewed professionals mentioned that gaining and sharing knowledge with other professionals within the same field on for instance innovations, regulations and best practices is the major motivation for joining a knowledge network. Most of the interviewees are currently using social media to stay up to date. In addition, by interviewing members of the VIV team it became clear that their goal, to create a high-quality online knowledge platform for a worldwide network of professionals in the animal production and processing industry, runs in line with the motivations of the interviewed professionals.

One major conclusion could be drawn from this research period is that the marketing communication strategy the VIV team uses to promote their online platform is a marketing communication strategy which is already very effective.

The initial research design of identifying criteria for effective promotion campaigns of online platforms by conducting field research and interviews in order to gain insight in information needs and motivations of prospect visitors showed that the VIV team heavily relies on face-to-face meetings in order to motivate (prospect) VIV members not only to participate at the VIV exhibitions and events, but also engage with VIV its online platform. Members of the VIV team are certain that using basic marketing and communication on a personal level works best for the target group and found theory supports their statement. This is why there has been a slight change in the advice given to the VIV team. Which in conclusion resulted in advising the VIV team how to optimize online content and by adding certain services in order to enhance ROI through the online knowledge platform instead of giving advice on a marketing communication strategy to promote their online knowledge platform.

Two other conclusions were drawn from the gathered theory and analyzed interview results:

1   Advising the VIV team on how to optimize their online knowledge platform will have a more long-term effect on the attraction of prospect visitors of VIV Online and members of the VIV network.
2   Adding additional features to VIV Online might facilitate knowledge sharing of the visitors as well as an incentive to revisit the online platform.

Therefore, based on the results and conclusions of the research, the following points of advice were given to the VIV team:

1   Integrating a live stream on VIV Online will add value to the community and should motivate the audience to create a profile.
2   Focusing on improving their content ROI by maximizing marketing content, re-purposing existing content and maximizing curated content.
3   Attracting young professionals to VIV Online by linking social influencers to VIV Online.

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PART 1
RESEARCH REPORT

1   Project Context and Organization

This chapter gives a brief description of the core activities, visions and developments inside and around the organization.

Project context

Currently, the well-established portfolio of all VIV exhibitions and events is being extended with an online knowledge platform. Even though the initial launch of VIV Online was planned in February this year, until today VIV Online has not been launched yet. VIV Online will be a functional platform where professionals in animal production and processing will be able to gather and share knowledge, as well as to start discussions on various topics, participate in webinars and download whitepapers, all independent of time and location. Herewith, the VIV team aims to create a high-quality online knowledge platform where they desire to be the prime facilitator of a worldwide network for professionals in the animal production and processing industry.

Until now there has been not much interaction between the client and professionals on VIV its global website other than practical information about the upcoming VIV exhibitions and events. The only information on the website about VIV Online has been thus far communicated by means of an announcement. The challenge for VIV now is to introduce their online knowledge platform to professionals in order to ensure a profitable start. After consultation with the client, it became clear that they did not have a marketing communication strategy to promote VIV Online, other than a mass email and face-to-face sales meetings. In addition, the VIV team seemed to have a lack of know-how about requirements for effective online platforms as well as which tools to utilize regarding the online platform in order for it to be effective.

Furthermore, after preliminary research and discussions with the client, the perceived practical problem of VIV is the need of a marketing communication strategy on how to promote VIV Online among their worldwide network of professionals in the animal production and processing industry.

Organization

1.1   Internal analysis

VIV was established in 1978, and has its origin in Utrecht, The Netherlands. VIV Europe had initially positioned its exhibition and events as 'World Expos', attended by top-level visitors from Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and Russia and is taking place once every four years (Annual Report, 2015). Some of the segments represented at the exhibitions and events are:

- Animal housing & farm equipment
- Animal health
- Animal feed ingredients & additives
- Egg processing, packaging, handling and refrigeration
- Industrial feed, grain & raw material processing equipment
- Meat processing, packaging, handling & refrigeration
- Milk production and refrigeration
- Slaughter equipment

Herewith, VIV positioned itself as the international networking arena for professionals in the animal production and processing industry, and more specifically, the entire supply chain from primary productions such as the surface animals live on, to finished products for the consumer.

The VIV activities are part of the International Events segment of the Royal Dutch Jaarbeurs in Utrecht, the Netherlands. The VIV team is working closely together with foreign agents and partners in the countries where the VIV exhibitions and events are held, even though the head office remains in Utrecht. There is a joint venture between partners of the VIV events and the VIV team since these partners take care of practical activities in the countries where the exhibitions and events take place. By making use of agents and partners, cultural barriers as well as language barriers will be prevented.

With the launch of VIV Online, the VIV team will take on a different role towards the target group, namely the facilitator role. The VIV team aims to facilitate the communication flow between the visitors.

In this way visitors are able to find and share information, to network, download whitepapers, follow webinars as well as starting discussions on various topics that are set up and monitored by the VIV team. All within the 'walls' of VIV Online.

Vision

During the intake meeting with the International Market Manager of VIV, the following vision was mentioned: "Considering the future, VIV has a clear reason to play if we manage to build on the strong values perceived by our relations in introducing new media-related products. This is the recipe to remain relevant. All sectors of the supply chain (vertical) as well as all species (horizontal) are being recognized. Producers from Feed to Food are searching for relevant sources of information. Sources that are complete, well structured, easy to find, objective and take a global perspective." (Berculo, R., oral interview held on 29 September 2016).

The figure below shows the SWOT analysis of VIV as part of the internal analysis. A more elaborated SWOT can be found in the appendix (see appendix 1).

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Worldwide recognition • Collaboration with foreign agents and partners • Frequent exhibitions • Large secure database	• No interaction with, and between visitors on the VIV website • Cultural differences with foreign agents and partners
Opportunities	Threats
• Using social media channels for promotion • Further international expansion • Attracting new target groups	• International competitors • Negative economic growth

Figure 1: SWOT analysis VIV

1.2   External analysis

The external analysis of VIV has been done by the use of the PESTLE Model where political, economical, social, technological, legal and ecological factors are discussed (Oxford Learning Lab, 2016). Two major factors affecting the VIV activities are ecological and technological factors. Since VIV is globally known, many participants of trade fairs, summits and conferences may have distinct thoughts on visiting an event by plane because of ecological reasons. As for the technological factor, the extension of the physical events of VIV with the online content platform is a game changer for not only the VIV team, but also all visitors both online and offline, for instance the differences in technology and media use in different countries.

Competitors

Two major competitors of VIV have been identified who offer a similar or identical service. Firstly, Global Farmers, founded by Rabobank Netherlands, is an online network for farmers, by farmers. On their website it says that "Global Farmers is really a network – a global farmers' community that will share knowledge, share its network and exchange ideas, exchange dreams, exchange technology, and more." (Global Farmers, 2016). The visitors of Global Farmers live mostly in Australia, New Zealand, the United States of America and Brazil, in opposition to the reach of VIV, which is large parts of Europe, all of Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Argentina. Secondly, the AgChat Foundation, situated in the United States of America, is a non-profit foundation that is aiming to empower farmers and ranchers who produce food, fuel, fiber and feed to connect with communities through various social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest. The reach of AgChat is throughout the United States of America. They currently do not have any international reach (AgChat, 2014).

Target group

The target group of this research project are professionals within the animal production and processing industry. As mentioned in the organizational context, VIV covers the entire supply chain of the industry from Feed to Food. Ultimately the advice aims at promoting VIV Online. For this research project, as can be found in the research framework, several objects such as experts in the field of online communication and marketing, farmers and producers of machinery will be approached in order to gain insight on how to approach the target group for which advice is needed.

The ultimate target group for this research was, as expected, heterogeneous. Visitors may have several different motivations for joining an online platform. Also the level of involvement and commitment of visitors on the platform most likely vary as well. Yet for the moment this research takes an open approach to the issue of further narrowing down: for research interviews the main selection criteria will be 'willingness to respond to interview invitations' and 'willingness of prospect visitors that are already in the VIV database to respond to research questions'.

More details on the PESTLE Model used for the external analysis can be found in the appendix (see appendix 1).

2 Research Design

2.1 Research Objective

The objective of this research project has been formulated as follows;

(a) This research aims to give advice on a marketing communication strategy to the VIV team in order to promote the VIV online content platform among professionals within the global animal production and processing industry.

This advice is formed by

(b) Identifying criteria for effective promotion campaigns of online platforms, and by conducting field research in order to gain insight in information needs and motivations. Prospective platform visitors and members of the VIV team are interviewed. Experts in the field of online communication and marketing will be questioned in order provide to a clearer insight about which type of promotional campaign is most suitable.

2.2   Theoretical Framework

In this section the first central question concerning requirements for an effective online platform or community will be discussed according to the found literature and preliminary research. After working closely with the VIV team, as well as attending several strategic meetings regarding VIV Online, it became clear that they are positioning the online platform as a knowledge-sharing and networking platform.

2.2.1   Success factors for knowledge networks

Vanessa DiMauro (2011) mentions in her article that supporting online business processes and decreasing personal system flaws are two factors of successful knowledge networks. Independent of time and place, people are able to directly find and connect with experts on particular subjects. This service is also the main purpose of the VIV Online platform. DiMauro mentions ten critical success factors for creating an active knowledge network by taking social and technical perspectives into account. These ten factors are as follows:

1   To tie KPIs to outcomes by defining business goals regarding the knowledge network.
2   To invest in research on the needs of the user in order to create the right information.
3   Being sure senior executives will encourage the use the network.
4   Launch the network with beta projects. Start small and grow slowly.
5   Train and educate consultants on using the network.
6   Limit content in order for the professionals to find hands-on and most needed information.
7   Ensuring the online network is secure, usable and engaging for visitors.
8   Integrate the network into a larger organization.
9   Emphasizing on confidentiality and privacy to keep information secure.
10   Measure the outcomes and Return On Investment.

The most applicable factors for VIV are further explained in the results and findings chapters.

2.2.2   Evaluation criteria for online communities

Matthew Lees (2009) mentions that an online platform is a key differentiator that can lead to a competitive advantage. An online platform strengthens the relationship between the customer and the organization. Lees (2009) developed an evaluation framework that reflects on technological advances and criteria for evaluating community platforms, as well as the many changes in online communities such as search engine optimization and viral marketing.

This framework with evaluation criteria includes the following six categories:

1 Capabilities within a community. Which discusses the support of communication channels such as an email newsletter, a forum, message boards or a chat service.

2 Participation. Providing tools to customize the visitors experience and make it enjoyable for them to manage their own personal profile and create content of their own. From the registration process to the point where visitors are able to share information outside the community with friend or family members.

3 Moderation and Administration. For the VIV team this category might be the most important. A platform should make it easy for the VIV team to organize, manage and administrate the systems within the platform that enables communication and participation. In addition, using the reports and statistics of Google Analytics gives insight in the behavior of the platform visitors by measuring and analyzing the traffic and usage, communication and engagement as well as information to use for marketing purposes.

4 Architecture. Concerns the technological factors of a platform such as website hosting, Supporting mobile devices, the ability to function under peak usage and its security. The VIV team works closely together with another company called Freshheads. The above-mentioned technical functions are just a few of the functions that are outsourced to this company, mainly because the VIV team does not have the members to create and monitor the software architecture of VIV Online.

5 Product viability. Developing a competitive advantage among competitors and making it more attractive for visitors to register on the platform, for example by making the platform support multiple languages to enable internationalization for example. The VIV team will be launching VIV Online in the English language first. Although they are planning to enable more languages in a further stage.

6 Company viability. A platform should be supported by a financially strong organization with a strong customer base. Fortunately for the VIV team, their online platform is financially stable and supported by the Royal Dutch Jaarbeurs. As well as a large and secure customer database.

A more elaborated framework of the six categories and the evaluation criteria can be found in the appendix (see appendix 2).

2.2.3   Digital marketing

Promoting brands using all sorts of digital advertising mediums to reach the target group is the general definition of digital marketing (Kar, 2011). A few of these mediums are mobile phones, television, social media and the Internet, as where online marketing is only a sub category of digital marketing. Kar (2011) suggests "The spectrum of digital marketing is now being expanded to support the 'servicing' and 'engagement' of customers, and thus cover not only customer acquisition but also customer retention."

2.2.4   Key trends in business-to-business communities

In another article written by DiMauro (2016), she discusses key trends in the online business-to-business customer communities. One key trend is to create 'gated spaces' to seek greater customer intimacy and a deeper exchange of knowledge on a customer-to-customer and customer-to-business, by changing the community model from open to the public to private or invitation only communities. Another key trend is to shift the focus of the community to member-generated content instead of letting visitors use the community as a marketing tool. As a result the engagement of visitors will be greater. Looking at VIV Online, it is clear this is a member-generated content platform, with a small window for marketing content. Also, VIV Online will be launched as an online platform that is open to the public with the aim of engaging all members into being actively involved in discussions and forums.

2.2.5   Online behavior of professionals in animal husbandry

The animal husbandry sector is extensive. Even within this sector are several other distinct industries. Therefore it is important to understand the social media use in these distinct sectors where organizations are engaged in. Cattle farmers are people who make the most use of social media as mentioned by De Waal (2016). He also discusses that "especially professionals under the age of 40 are active on social media". Therefore it is important to find out what the goals and motivations for farmers are to be active on social media platforms. The main five goals as mentioned by De Waal (2016) are as follows:

1   Following sector related news
2   Private goals
3   Keeping in contact with colleagues
4   Following sector related news on new products and machines
5   Bringing own products or the industry under attention

2.2.6   Trust in online communities

Among the most difficult challenges faced by online communities is encouraging and maintain knowledge sharing (Fang & Chiu, 2010; Prestridge, 2010). Wenger (2009) mentions, "Learning together depends on the quality of relationships of trust and mutual engagement that members develop with each other". Research has showed that trust is among the key facilitating factors for knowledge sharing in online communities (Ardichvili, 2008; Usoro et al., 2007; Young & Tseng, 2008).

Among the most difficult challenges faced by online communities is to foster and sustain knowledge sharing (Prestridge, 2010). Without continuing the exchange, online communities fail to develop (Ardichvili, 2008; Fang & Chiu, 2010). Trust functions as a mechanism to keep member of a community integrated and connected, as well as it builds and maintains relationships which can lead to quality knowledge sharing (Levin & Cross, 2004; Usoro et al., 2007). As growing trust creates a good foundation for knowledge sharing, increased knowledge sharing collectively strengthens this trust (Chiu et al., 2006).

Ardichvili (2008) argues about the motivation and possible barriers to participation in online knowledge-sharing communities, and recommended that moderators must better understand the instrument of trust among community members in order to identify possible barriers and how to overcome those in online knowledge sharing.

2.3 Research Framework

A schematic representation of the research framework can be found in figure 2. Step (a) shows that theories on knowledge networks, online communities and digital marketing will be gathered. In addition, preliminary research is conducted. Step (b), shows the research objects under study. Within this step assessment criteria are derived from step (a). Step (c) consists of the results of the analyses of the confrontations of the research objects. Within step (d), the results of the analyses are combined to give advice on a marketing communication strategy for the VIV team.
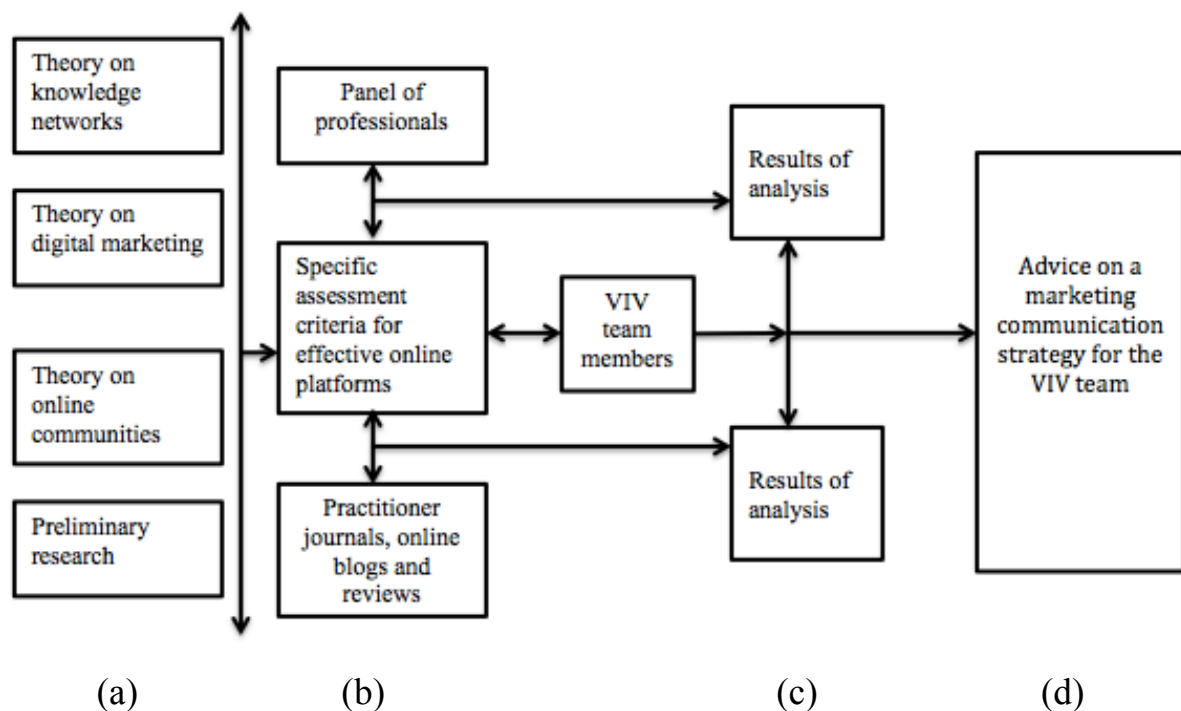

Figure 2: Schematic representation of the research framework

2.4   Research Questions

In order to establish the assessment criteria, the theories, as well as preliminary research are studied. Therefore, the research questions are as follows:

Central question 1: Which requirements for effective online platforms or communities are derived from preliminary research and further literature research?

      Sub 1: What are criteria for success as an online business community?

            SubSub 1: Which information needs of users matter?

            SubSub 2: What can the VIV team do to stiumulate user engagement?

      Sub 2: What are requirements for starting an online business community?

      Sub 3: How important is an online community for business purposes?

Central question 2: Which requirements aiming at knowledge sharing are most important for VIV Online?

      Sub 1: What are the information needs and motivations of users that are relevant for the VIV team to take into consideration when reaching the target group?

      Sub 2: What are the interests and motivations that make visitors go to an online platform and interact?

      Sub 3: Which content strategy and tone and voice is most appropriate to reach this target group?

Central question 3: Which channels are most appropriate to use in order to attract the target group to the online platform?

      Sub 1: Which conclusions can be drawn from the results of the data collection and panel interviews?

      Sub 2: Which conclusions can be drawn from the results of the expert interviews?

      Sub 3: What are the most effective communication channels for creating a promotional marketing communication campaign for an online platform?

A research matrix regarding the questions and methods can be found in the appendix (see appendix 3).

2.5   Research Strategy and Methodology

Strategy

This section clarifies how research was conducted in order to develop valid answers to the aforementioned research questions. Firstly, gathering quantitative data in breadth, and in-depth qualitative data through semi-structured interviews in order to obtain elaborate insights on effective criteria for online communities and the behavior of community members. Despite desk and preliminary research being used as main support, the aim was to conduct research with a panel of professionals in the animal production and processing industry as well as experts in the field of online communication and marketing and members of the VIV team.

The essential goal was to use triangulation by interviewing a panel of professionals within the VIV network next to the VIV team and experts in the field of online communication. By getting into contact with professional from within the VIV network, the aim was to create a panel of professionals to gather qualitative data with different points of view and various motivations in order to give a more specified advice on the desires and needs from the target group. Direct emails with a personal touch were sent to these professionals explaining the research objective as well as the importance of their opinions on content, participation, behavior and motivation. Also by mentioning the gratitude of joining this panel of professionals. However, only five out of thirty professionals responded, and of which two agreed to participate. Therefore creating a panel of professionals was unfortunately not possible.

Methodology

Regarding the diagnostic phase in the intervention cycle, which is applicable to the practice-oriented research project at hand, relevant theories and qualitative field research are applied to develop an effective marketing communication strategy for the VIV team (Verschuren and Doorewaard, 2010).

Therefore, semi-structured interviews with marketing communications experts and a panel of professionals were conducted to retrieve valuable qualitative data. Additionally, desk research formed a large component of this project since secondary literature is reviewed to form the theoretical framework regarding criteria for successful online communities and digital marketing. Conducting in-depth interviews with VIV team members generates a further understanding of the desired plans concerning VIV Online such as the current status of promoting and marketing activities.

Validity

With a pre-determined questionnaire the information and the customer journey had to be mapped. Most respondents told their story, and experiences with other communities. Most information was unnecessary, but that was interesting nonetheless because it gave a better picture of the motivations with regard to obtaining information, and this was useful for the tone of voice in communication.

Reliability

The amount of interviews were too few in order to make statements about the entire VIV network, but it does provide additional information with respect to the results obtained from the interviews with the VIV team. Respondents often told more than just answering the questions. This has showed that the answers mostly were in the same direction. This additional information and the unanimity of answers increase reliability.

2.6   Limitations

An underwhelming response of professionals in the VIV network undermined the breadth of this research. As a result, an active choice was made to gather data enhancing the depth of the research, in order to ensure validity.

The goal of triangulation by interviewing a panel of professionals within the VIV network next to the VIV team and the experts did not work out as desired. While trying go get into contact with professionals from within the VIV network, and from thereon creating a panel of professionals was more difficult than expected. Direct emails with a personal touch were sent to professionals within the VIV network explaining the research as well as the importance of their opinions on content, participation, behavior and motivation. Also by mentioning the gratitude of joining this panel of professionals. However, only five out of thirty professionals responded, and of which two agreed to participate. Therefore creating a panel of professionals was unfortunately not possible.

Team members of VIV mentioned the cold acquisition that was done, which was an important reason why they were hesitant to respond. VIV team members explained the reason of hesitation among these professionals, namely because they believe that trust plays a very important role in communication as well as in the business relationship between the VIV network and the VIV team. Therefore the intention of attaching questionnaires to direct emails concerning the wishes and behavior of the professionals on an online platform would negatively affect the business relationship.

3 Research Results

Results regarding the criteria for an effective online platform or community which were derived from theory and preliminary research and which requirements are necessary for success as an online business community.

As can be read in chapter 2.2, Lees (2009) stated that an online platform strengthens the relationship between the customer and the organization. This statement is supported by the evaluation framework developed by Lees (2009), where he discusses six categories of evaluation criteria. Looking at the goal of the VIV team regarding VIV Online, the two most important categories for the VIV team are Community Participation and Moderation and Administration mainly because both categories include features that are aligned with the goal of the VIV team regarding their online platform, such as Customization, Content Management, Member Content Creation and Engagement Tools. These features are taken into consideration in the advisory report on page 31. The remaining four categories of the evaluation framework were covered by the VIV team, in collaboration with Freshheads, from the beginning of the business plan of VIV Online, which means the two applicable categories and its features belong to a further stage of VIV Online instead of the conceptual stage the remaining four belong to.

Regarding which requirements are important for starting an online business community.

Literature from Lees (2009) showed that there are certain requirements organizations should meet in order to start an online business community by following an evaluation framework that reflects on technological advances and criteria for evaluating community platforms. This framework with evaluation criteria includes six categories organizations should follow through such as the capabilities within a community, which discusses the support of communication channels such as an email newsletter, a forum, message boards or a chat service.

Also, providing tools to customize the visitors experience and make it enjoyable for them to manage their own personal profile and create content of their own. Another important requirement concerns the technological factors of a platform such as website hosting, having the possibility to support various mobile devices, and the ability to function under peak usage and the overall security.

With reference to how important an online community is for business purposes

An online platform is a key differentiator that can lead to a competitive advantage. An online platform strengthens the relationship between the customer and the organization which is the reason why it is important to create an online community, especially for businesses from which the target group is shifting from offline communication and information exchange to online activities (Lees, 2009). The VIV team is looking to realize the above mentioned, by launching VIV Online. Therefore in order for VIV to expand its online activities and business, creating an online platform will differentiate them from competitors.

Concerning the information needs and motivations that might be relevant for the VIV team to take into consideration when reaching the target group.

As can be drawn form the interviews and the conducted desk research, it is safe to say that creating relevant and recent content is the most important incentive for people to join an online community. The interests might be different dependent on the position people of companies stand within the VIV network, however the one factor which shows an overall resemblance is the quality of the content presented as well as a fast and easy access to the information professionals are looking for.

Regarding which content strategy and tone of voice is most appropriate to reach VIV its target group.

There is a large variety of messaging strategies to reach a specific target group. However research showed similarities between the professionals in the way they would like to be addressed, such as the tone of voice. Important for the VIV team considering VIV Online is to communicate in an informal way, because the online community must ensure that the target group will bond with the VIV brand. The community should be the place to go for members to gain and share information as well as getting in contact with peers and experts. Informal communication such as a private Facebook group that professionals are now using to exchange information, should also be the message the VIV team should sent out with VIV Online. Conversation between the VIV team and the audience is important because it makes people feel involved.

The VIV team should encourage the involvement in the first few months after VIV Online is launched. How the VIV team should encourage involvement can be found in the advisory report on page number 31.

Two-way communication is important in this part, because VIV should not only send but also receive information. Which is why, after a certain amount of time, VIV Online should be evaluated by introducing feedback moments between members of the community and the VIV team. When this feedback is implemented, the so-called customer experience will be able to be improved. In addition to the most appropriate message strategy, it is important to take intercultural sensitivity into account. The tone of voice in messages targeted to Asian visitors will have to be more indirect and relationship oriented, whereas the message strategy targeted to European visitors might be more direct and result oriented.

Related to the most appropriate channels to use in order to attract the target group to the online platform based on theory collection and interview data.

Since there is a large variety in communication channels which also might be different per country. Data collection showed that farmers, large organizations with slaughter equipment and also veterinarians use one particular channel to find and share information, namely Facebook. Using Facebook to attract visitors to VIV Online will be appropriate to implement in European countries and China for example. However there is still a large part of Asia that still relies on print media as mentioned by M. Yang during the interview. This means that especially for the Southeast region of Asia it is important to use a printed flyer for instance instead of using online channels to attract and reach the target group.

Regarding the most effective communication channels for creating a promotional marketing communication campaign for an online platform.

"Countries like the US and Europe are pretty accustomed to digital media, while China has the highest concentration of people using social media and e-commerce tools. Southeast Asia is typically a region, which still relies pretty much on print media" as mentioned by M. Yang during the interview. Which means that the VIV team will have to carefully select the communication channels based on the frequency the target group uses in that particular country especially for the promotion of VIV Online.

3.1 Interview results

The following information is gathered from the interviews with members of the VIV team and professionals within the VIV network.

All interviewees from within the VIV network mentioned the same reasons to join such an online platform for animal husbandry, namely to network with professionals in the same field, exchange experience on both national and international level and people attend to share best practices. Another reason to participate on such a platform is to gain knowledge on existing and new methods, innovations as well as new technologies on machinery and the medical side of animal husbandry.

All interviewees mentioned the same preference as to through which communication channels to be informed about the VIV activities. Email is the most preferred along with newsletters. Social media also has a preference however only by the younger interviewees. Facebook functions as an information source for gathering information, as well as the possibility to network with professionals in their own field.

Another interesting remark of two professionals is the demand for labor market information. Just as E. Vasse mentioned "Making it possible for me to meet people with the same profession, finding quick information and knowing what is happening in the labor market" as well as G. Essen who mentioned his interest in being able to find employees or interns through such an online platform.

By interviewing two members of the VIV team, and especially two content managers, the aim was to gather more information on curated content of VIV Online as well as the communication strategies the VIV team is already using to reach and inform (prospect) visitors for VIV Online. One remark from E. de Jong was that she will be running interviews and panel discussions with visitors of VIV events solely to promote VIV Online, which means that the communication and promotion up till now is being done face-to-face. A. de Jong and M. Yang both mentioned not to have a handbook to Google Analytics in order to monitor the behavior and content of VIV Online. However they did show interest in having such a guidebook.

4   Findings

This chapter describes the main arguments for the found results.

As mentioned by DiMauro (2011) in chapter 2.2, there are ten critical success factors to creating a useful and dynamic knowledge community. Form the data gained from the interviews with both content managers of VIV Online, E. de Jong and M. Yang, the four most applicable factors for VIV Online are as follows:

1   Tie KPIs to outcomes. The usage of KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) is to provide VIV with quantitative measurements of factors that are important for long-time success, such as defining the business goals VIV Online should support, for instance the network possibilities between professionals. From the interview with M. Yang in particular can be gathered that as of now VIV has not defined clear KPIs for VIV Online, thus it is obstructing a clearly defined long-term strategy.

2   Launch with beta projects. Start small and learn from experience, let the network grow into an even more engaging community later on. M. Yang also mentioned during the interview that VIV Online would first be launched to a small community in order for the team to target the desired audience of its key content partners by for example focusing on a recent content topic such as bird influenza.

3   Building VIV Online for the users. With VIV Online the VIV team aims at enabling professionals in the industry to access information independent of time and location. By offering hands-on content and ensuring the system is secure, useful and engaging for the members of the community will keep visitors motivated to frequently visit VIV Online. Another reason

4   Focus the content marketing on outcomes and ROI (return On Investment). Not only focus on creating content, but also find out what kind of content will lead to engagement of members and which might eventually contribute to a higher lead generation. As mentioned by E. de Jong during the interview, they do have a set content calendar for VIV Online in order to gradually attract more people to the platform by sharing targeted content on antibiotics for example.

DiMauro (2011) mentioned six other success factors, however these factors do not necessarily apply to VIV mainly because the VIV team already meets these factors, namely: investing in research on user needs.

This factor does not apply to VIV Online since the VIV team invested greatly in researching the target groups and its needs prior to the start of VIV Online. The third success factor mentioned was making sure senior executives will advocate and use the knowledge network. VIV Online will not exist exclusively for senior executives; VIV its online knowledge platform will be a place for all professionals in the animal production and processing industry regardless of the job function.

The fifth factor mentioned was to train and educate consultants on how to use the network. This factor is not necessarily applicable to VIV Online since the only members of the VIV team who will be actively present on VIV Online are both content managers, and since E. de Jong and M. Yang were involved with creating VIV Online from the beginning specific trainings are not necessary. The eighth factor, which DiMauro discussed, was to integrate the network into a larger organization. Even though VIV is part of the Royal Dutch Jaarbeurs, their online knowledge platform will not be integrated into the operations of the entire organization. VIV Online is solely for the International Events part. The last success factor mentioned was to emphasize confidentiality, privilege and privacy. VIV Online will be a platform for professionals to gain and share knowledge on many various topics. Visitors are free to share any kind of information relating to animal production and processing. Companies for example will have to monitor their own content in regard to privacy and confidentiality.

5   Conclusions

This chapter describes the main conclusions and results. These points will be used as a building block with respect to the advisory report.

One major conclusion could be drawn from this research period is that the marketing communication strategy the VIV team uses to promote their online platform is a marketing communication strategy which is already very effective. The initial research design was to identify criteria for effective promotion campaigns of online platforms by conducting field research and interviews showed that the VIV team, who solely promotes VIV Online during exhibitions related to VIV events and by visiting organizations and professionals within the VIV network, relies mostly on face-to-face meetings in order to bring the message across. Members of the VIV team noticed that this approach works best in appealing to prospect VIV Online visitors. This is why there has been a slight change in the advice given to the VIV team. Which in conclusion resulted in advising the VIV team how to optimize online content, as well as by adding certain services in order to enhance ROI through the online knowledge platform instead of giving advice on a marketing communication strategy to promote their online knowledge platform.

From the gathered data and the analysis of the results the following conclusions are drawn:

1   The current marketing communication strategy of VIV is already creating a positive effect, advising on a new strategy does not seem to be necessary.
2   Advising the VIV team on how to optimize their online knowledge platform on the other hand will have a more long-term effect on the attraction of prospect visitors of VIV Online and members of the VIV network.
3   Adding additional features to VIV Online in order to facilitate knowledge sharing of the visitors as well as an incentive to revisit the online platform.

Based on the above-mentioned conclusions, it is recommended to the VIV team to follow the presented points of advice, which are further explained in the next advisory report.

**PART 2
ADVISORY REPORT**

1 Recommendations

Since the VIV team already has a content calendar and a VIV online brochure including the content, which is set up in different areas (species, sectors and special topics) the choice has been made not to focus on this area during this research. Same as for the face-to-face meetings M. Yang described during related exhibitions and event as part of their promotion. However, in order to fully benefit from the existing content it is recommended to focus on the content marketing of the VIV brand. This part is explained in the advisory report, however more research on different strategies is still needed.

A future recommendation is to integrate a business card service with VIV Online. This program will synchronize with mobile phones of visitors of the VIV exhibitions and events. When scanning the business cards of the people they meet, the personal information will be automatically shown in their profile on VIV Online. This will also make it more attractive for people to sign in, which results in a higher conversion rate for VIV.

A second recommendation for the future of VIV Online is a service that allows companies to place vacancies and professionals to offer their services according the vacancies. Since VIV Online is a knowledge sharing community with the aim of bringing people together, a logical step might be to also allow professionals and companies to find new jobs or employees.

2 Advice

The initial research design was to identify criteria for effective promotion campaigns of online platforms by conducting field research and interviews, and showed that the VIV team, who solely promotes VIV Online during exhibitions related to VIV events and by visiting organizations and professionals within the VIV network, which is a marketing communication strategy that is already very effective. Members of the VIV team also noticed that this approach works best in appealing to prospect VIV Online visitors. This is why there has been a change in the advice given to the VIV team. Which in conclusion resulted in advising the VIV team how to optimize online content, as well as by adding certain services in order to enhance ROI through the online knowledge platform instead of giving advice on a marketing communication strategy to promote their online knowledge platform.

After careful analyzing the research results as well as the formulation of recommendations based on these results, three points of advice are set which will contribute to VIV its current internal and external communication and marketing strategy. The points of advice are supported by theoretical and empirical findings of current research, and preliminary research. Moreover, a critical note is discussed regarding each point of advice, which means that they are assessed on possible barriers. The three points of advice are explained below, whereas the next implementation chapter elaborates on the operational steps to be followed.

1. Integrating monthly live streams

Integrating a live stream on VIV Online adds value to the community and should motivate the audience to create a profile. Since the community is in its early stage, which as mentioned by M. Yang will start off small, it is therefore recommended to organize one live stream per month with a specific topic. For the VIV team the live streams are commercially beneficial and it simultaneously ensures a better relationship between the visitors and the VIV brand.

Newsletter subscribers will be reached by direct e-mail. The announcement of the live stream will be included in a regular newsletter, but there will also be a separate email campaign announcing the live streams. The email campaign is further explained in the next chapter. E-mail in this case is not an original channel, however it is realistic and it is the most appropriate since VIV Online will start off small and because previous research showed that

most professionals (42,7% according to previous survey results) within the VIV network are reached via direct mail from the VIV team. This is a strategy the team needs to continue with. There will also be an article regarding the live stream on VIV Online. If after the announcement email and –reminder email statistics show low registration figures, it is advised to use the Facebook account of VIV. The planning, costs and necessary tools to realize the live streams are explained in the implementation chapter on page number 36.

2.   Improving VIV its content ROI

Maximize web traffic

A way for VIV to improve the ROI (Return On Investment) of their strategy is to optimize content for search tools. Search optimization is especially helpful for community members, since they will only find content when the key words they search for are in article titles, subtitles or texts including internal website links in blog posts, which will in turn increase web traffic. The VIV team is able to measure web traffic and member engagement through tools such as Google Analytics. Optimizing the areas of VIV Online who generate low traffic in order to turn the results around and gain the highest ROI on that content area. Furthermore including a call-to-action, inviting people to learn more about the various VIV services is an important factor. This will encourage people to spend more time on VIV Online. If measurements show that certain campaigns are not resulting in sufficient leads, either add value, or focus more on campaigns that are more interesting for the members of the community.

Maximize curated content

Readers want fast and relevant content independent of time and location. Balance the demand for new content with available resources by adjusting the content mix. Curated content for example is content written by other people, which then will be shared by the moderators. Using third-party resources gives the content offering variety and will increase the efficiently credibility of VIV. Curated content maximizes ROI by quickly distributing current and relevant content to member within VIV Online.

Re-purposing existing content

Promoting existing content is a way to increase the content marketing ROI. Re-purposing the quality content by turning existing e-books into webinars, change webinars into infographics, infographics can be turned into blogs, and blogs into social campaign. This will contribute to reaching a wider audience, using the same content however re-purposed into new formats. By measuring the impact of the content, the VIV team will be able to optimize the content strategy for higher engagement and an increase in leads. How VIV is able to realize the improvement of VIV its ROI by using Google Analytics is explained in the implementation chapter on page 36.

3. **Linking social Influencers to the VIV brand**

Social influencers reach people through social media and are used by organizations to increase their reach and captivate the audience (Koppen, 2013). Social influencers are for example used when introducing a new product or service. Especially for the professionals in the VIV network who are of the age of 30 or younger. Social influencers can raise awareness to the community and create relevance for the younger audience within the VIV network. The implementation chapter explains how (social) influencers can be linked to VIV Online and the live streams.

3   Implementation
1.   Live streams on VIV Online

The objective of this advice is to create a relevant and functional knowledge community for professionals in the animal production and processing industry, which in term creates commercial value for VIV and Royal Dutch Jaarbeurs.

1.1   Marketing Communication Mix

Newsletter subscribers will be reached by e-mail. The announcement of the live stream will be included in the regular newsletter, but also receive a separate email campaign. The following table lists the components required to realize the live stream and to make them known among newsletter subscribers to motivate them to create a profile:

Components	Owned media	Paid media	Earned media
Community (part of VIV Online)	X		
Content manager (VIV team)	X		
Live stream realization		X	
Experts/Social Influencers	X*	X*	X***
Email newsletter subscribers	X		
Email campaign live stream	X		
VIV Online	X		
Social media	X**	(X**)	X***

Tabel 1: Components required for realizing the live stream

* Depending on whether costs should be charged for the expert

** Depending on registration results

*** It is possible that after the live stream visitors post comments on the Facebook account of VIV; therefore experts will be asked to direct visitors to their own social media accounts.

1.2   Content

After each live stream a special discussion is started where visitors can express their opinions and ask questions if necessary. At the end of the live stream a link (call to action) to this discussion is shown. Directly stimulating conversation after the live stream is generating activity on the platform. When visitors see that the VIV team takes their recommendations and criticisms seriously, it creates a stronger bond between the VIV team and the visitors, because they feel involved which increases the motivation to play an active role. In addition, the live stream will appear on VIV Online a day after broadcasting to give visitors, who were not able to watch the live stream because of time differences for example, the possibility to watch it. At the end of the live stream a 'Keep track of the live stream.' (call to action) will be shown.

1.3   Location

To reduce costs and being able to directly influence the quality of the live stream it is advice to organize the live streams internally and in one of the colorful meeting rooms of Royal Dutch Jaarbeurs, to prevent having an inspirational speaker surrounded by an uninspired room.

1.4   Revenue model

The advice for the live stream was discussed with the sales manager of VIV and form thereon agreed to establish a new revenue model in addition to the existing guarantee and promotional packages. After the first live stream the sales team will have to decide on the costs for experts and suppliers to offer their products or services. These costs depend on the achieved reach with the first live stream. Approaching experts or suppliers might look like the following:

- Depending on the expert and the topic of the live stream suppliers can be approached with the question: "We organize a live stream on antibiotics for chicken, for an X amount you can show your product or service. "

- A theme newsletter that will be sent two days after the live stream exclusively to viewers of that particular live stream. The newsletter is themed on the topic discussed and is filled with commercial content from experts or suppliers. Suppliers therefore do not pay for their advertisements however they are able to advertise.

One benefit is the relevance, for it is advertised to people who are interested in the topic and thus have watched the live stream.

1.5   Development and Design

VIV Online and the live stream are both developed by the Development and Design team of Royal Dutch Jaarbeurs. The content managers will monitor the platform. A sales manager must approach possible advertisers or rebook previous advertisers to fill the spaces for the second live stream.

1.6   Email campaign

The campaign is focused on the announcement of the live stream as can be seen in table 2. The target group should become curious to create a profile on VIV Online. The campaign briefing for the content and design can be found in de appendix (see appendix 9).

Type of email	Goal	Message	Responsible
1. Announcement live stream	Motivate target group	Announcing expert and topic	Content manager/design
2. Confirmation email, creating profile	Sign in for the live stream	Welcome at VIV Online	Content manager/design
3. Reminding announcement live stream	Motivate to creating profile	Announcing expert and topic	Content manager/design
4. Reminder first live stream – one week in advance	Reminder live stream	Fast registration – only one week to go	Content manager/design
5. Reminder first live stream - one day in advance	Reminder and introduction live stream	Don't forget – live stream is tomorrow	Content manager/design
6. Live stream day	Live stream instructions	Live stream day	Content manager/design
7. Evaluation first live stream	Feedback	Think with us!	Content manager/design
8. Confirmation email, creating profile	Sign in for the live stream	Welcome at VIV Online	Content manager/design

Table 2: Email campaign announcing the VIV Online live stream.

After creating a profile, the new visitor receives email number 2. Followed by email 3, 4, 5 and 6. Newsletter subscribers will also receive email number 3. Whereas emails numbers 4 and 5 will only be send to visitors with an existing profile. Email number 7 will be sent to all visitors who have watched the live stream.

1.7 Planning

The VIV Online platform was expected to be launched in February 2017, however the deadline has been deferred. The advice is to plan the first live stream one month after VIV Online is launched. The means of publication for the first live stream is explained in appendix 8. The planning is discusses in appendix 9.

1.8 Budget

Prior to this research, it was discussed to let the Online team in collaboration with the VIV team organize as many activities concerning VIV Online, concerning limiting the costs. Since the first live stream will not fully exploit the revenue model in the short term (after the first live stream). The ideal situation would be when the expenses and revenues of the first live stream reach equilibrium. However, the investment will be slightly higher, since the advertisements during the live stream will not cover the expenses just yet. Members of the Sales team would need to approach experts or suppliers to motivate them to advertise during the next live stream. See table 3 for the expenses, and appendix 10 for further explanations.

Live stream development and design	€ 1.500
Expert/Social Influencer	€ 1.000
Unforeseen expenses	€ 500
Total investment	**€ 3.000**

Tabel 3: Live stream expenses.

Expert/Social Influencer

An expert or social influencer is able to present the live streams. A general amount of €1.000 is estimated because of personal expenses, travel expenses, lunch and the time required to prepare.

Unforeseen expenses

Unforeseen costs of €500 are also reserved with regard to opposing factors such as replacement of small technical equipment, furniture or other decoration.

Realization of this live stream project requires an investment of approximately €3.000. In order to grow as an online community, investments are inevitable. Since the first live stream will not fully exploit the revenue model just yet, continuing creating interesting live streams and attracting visitors is important.

2.   Improving VIV its content marketing ROI

Keeping a close eye on the community statistics on Google Analytics is especially for VIV Online a way to track the amount of clicks by visitors, the most read articles, conversion rates and visitor demographics including their online behavior. Therefore, it is important to know exactly what and how to track a community. There are four main metrics (a measurement that is used to track and assess the status of a specific processes) that need to be taken into account when it comes to tracking the community:

1. Consumption. Tracks how many people have viewed, listened to or interacted with the content on VIV Online.
2. Sharing. Measures how relevant is the content is and how often visitors share content on their personal or company social media channels for instance.
3. Lead generation. Google Analytics shows how often the content consumption by visitors converts to new business opportunities also known as a lead generation.
4. Sales. Looking at the planning for the live streams for instance, statistics show the gained revenue of the created content regarding the advertisements during the live streams.

These four metrics are part of a standard Google Analytics report. However, there might be a need for more detailed information, that is when the ability to create a custom reports will be more useful for the VIV team. Therefore it is important for the VIV team to set goals that measure their overall business objectives. In order for the goals to translate into useful information, they have to correspond to an action of VIV Online visitors, such as the page views in certain content areas of the platform.

3.1   Tracking visitor conversion goals

If one goal is to create leads, measuring the achievements of newsletter, email or social media campaigns enables the VIV team to find out if visitors of VIV Online are becoming leads, what in turn leads to meeting sales goals. The engagement of visitors with the community is not only measured by page views, but also the time visitors spend on a certain page and the amount of clicks certain articles have.

3.2   Identifying sources

"Driving traffic is always a challenge for new communities" as mentioned by Chowdhury (2016). Having insight on where the traffic originated from allows the VIV team to understand on which channels to focus to increase their ROI. In order to measure these statistics it is advised to especially analyze the following metrics:

1. General and page visits
2. Bounce rate
3. Goal completions
4. Goal conversion rate

For VIV setting goals, such as the number of registrations or people who viewed more than 5 pages, prior to measuring these statistics are useful. In addition adding the source visitors originate from enables the VIV team to obtain a more extensive view of the behavior of their visitors. By using this information adapting the content and channels accordingly will increase their ROI.

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APPENDIX

1   SWOT analysis

Strengths

Worldwide recognition

The most important strength of VIV is its worldwide recognitions. A few reasons why VIV has such a strong recognition is because the events of VIV are organized on five world continents with visitors from all over the world. Take VIV Europe for example, this trade fair took place in in 2014 Utrecht, and 72,7% of the visitors were from outside the Netherlands (see appendix 1.3.1 for more facts). Another reason for the strong recognition is the large network which VIV has build over the years. The cooperation with foreign agencies and partners has put VIV on the worldwide map. VIV still continues to improve the cooperation with partners to maintain a close business relationship.

Collaboration with foreign agents and partners

This aspect is both a strength but also a weakness for VIV. The strength of foreign agents and partners are the networks they have in their home country such as local governments, associations and potential fair visitors. Besides their contacts, the partners speak the local language and understand the culture, which makes communicating easier. The weakness of the collaboration with foreign agents and partners are the cultural and language differences. It takes time to communicate ad-hoc with a partner who lives in a total different time zone; also the way of approaching a certain person has to be taken into consideration.

The language barrier is also a weakness for VIV since it can be difficult to communicate with a person who's English is not of an understandable level.

Large database

The information of the visitors of all past VIV trade fairs, summits and conferences is saved in one large database. Having one database with all this information and makes it easier and faster for the VIV team to reach a large amount of people at the same time by sending out a newsletter for instance.

Weaknesses

No interaction on the VIV website

Since no interaction is taking place on the website of VIV at the moment, VIV only communicates with visitors via foreign agents and partners. With the launch of the new VIV

online content platform in December 2016, a new path will be embarked regarding 24/7 access of relevant information and two-way communication between the VIV team and visitors worldwide.

Opportunities

Social Media channels for promotion

Since social media now a days is being used as a marketing promotion tool by all sorts of business, from small and medium to large enterprises. An opportunity for VIV is to also start using a social media channel to promote VIV its events etc.

Further expansion

Even though VIV its worldwide recognition (strength), researching other markets, target groups and countries and staying up-to-date with law and regulation changes on animal production and processing for instance is very important in order directly react on the matter and thus reaching an even wider audience.

Threats

International competitors

The largest threats for most international companies are competitors in the same industry. VIV also has a certain amount of competitors around the world with whom they compete and it differs from local events to international conferences such as the International Poultry Exposition in the United States, Eurotier in Germany and Victam Asia in Thailand. Due to a possible loss of visitors it is important for the VIV team to stay up-to-date with current affairs, innovations within the industry and to maintain a close relationships with all parties involved.

Negative economic growth

The last aspect mentioned in the SWOT analysis is the threat of a negative economic growth, or an economic crisis. This will mostly affect the number of visitors to the VIV events, and will not directly affect the online content platform of VIV.

PESTLE Model

Political

The VIV events attract a high amount of international visitors. When participating in the VIV Europe trade fair in Utrecht for example, non-European visitors will have to request a visa to enter the Netherlands via the Dutch embassies in their home country. This issue might influence the ability of a person to participate in one of the VIV events due to a denied permission. Not only visa permits are a political issue, also food safety and the different laws and regulations that attached to it are important to stay updated on. Different laws might be of force in a certain country that for instance might not be of any effect in the European Union (EU).

Economic

As mentioned in the elaboration of the SWOT Analysis in appendix 1.3, one major threat that nearly affects every industry worldwide is an economic crisis. Especially for the VIV trade fairs, summits and conferences organizations might decide not to participate due to an economic crisis. Luckily, with the launch of the online VIV content platform this will not be of any threat.

Social

A change in social trends in the demands of the consumers has an influence on the VIV events. One example of a trend is the increasing demand of organic food products, which means that new ways of growing and processing organic food have to be invented. Organizations who participate in one of the VIV events can benefit greatly from these trends by anticipating on the needs of the customer and by showing news productions during the VIV events. Social media as mentioned in appendix 1.3 is another important factor for the VIV team to take into consideration, not only for the online content platform but also for future promotion of the VIV events online.

Technological

The differences in technology around the world vary greatly. New technologies and products such as crossbreeding or new slaughtering machinery within the animal producing and processing industry are invented and created every day. These new products and innovations can be portrayed during the VIV events, but soon also on the online content platform by means of a press release or a product video. Another important part of the technological issue

is the difference in technological progress in a country. VIV is using a fax machine on a frequent basis, mainly to reach organizations that are situated in a less developed country and where the Internet and thus e-mail is not yet fully integrated.

Legal

The animal producing and processing industry is likely to be affected by carbon constrains and animal legislation for example. Sometimes the EU has more stringent food safety standards than the standards adopted worldwide. For instance, the EU banned the use of hormones as a precaution, because of possible health risks. In comparison to countries such as the United States, where the use of certain hormones are allowed. Another law to take into account, especially in the Netherlands, is the law on telecommunications. From October 1, 2009 onwards it is prohibited to send unrequested newsletters to businesses. The OPTA (Independent Mail and Telecommunications Authority) controls the compliance with this law. For VIV this meant that the database with information of all visitors from the Netherlands had to be divided.

Ecological

Major factors that influence the VIV events as well as the online platform are animal disease outbreaks like avian influenza (known as bird flu). This outbreak might cause a positive and a negative reaction. The positive reaction to this outbreak is the amount of participants signing up for VIV events concerning disease research, animal health and vaccines. The VIV team can directly respond to the news by posting articles about the disease on the online content platform of VIV in order to update people on the matters at hand. A negative reaction on the other hand is when visitors of a VIV trade fair, summit or conference have to cancel their participation because their organization was affected by the outbreak of the disease.

2   Evaluation Framework

Online Community Evaluation Framework

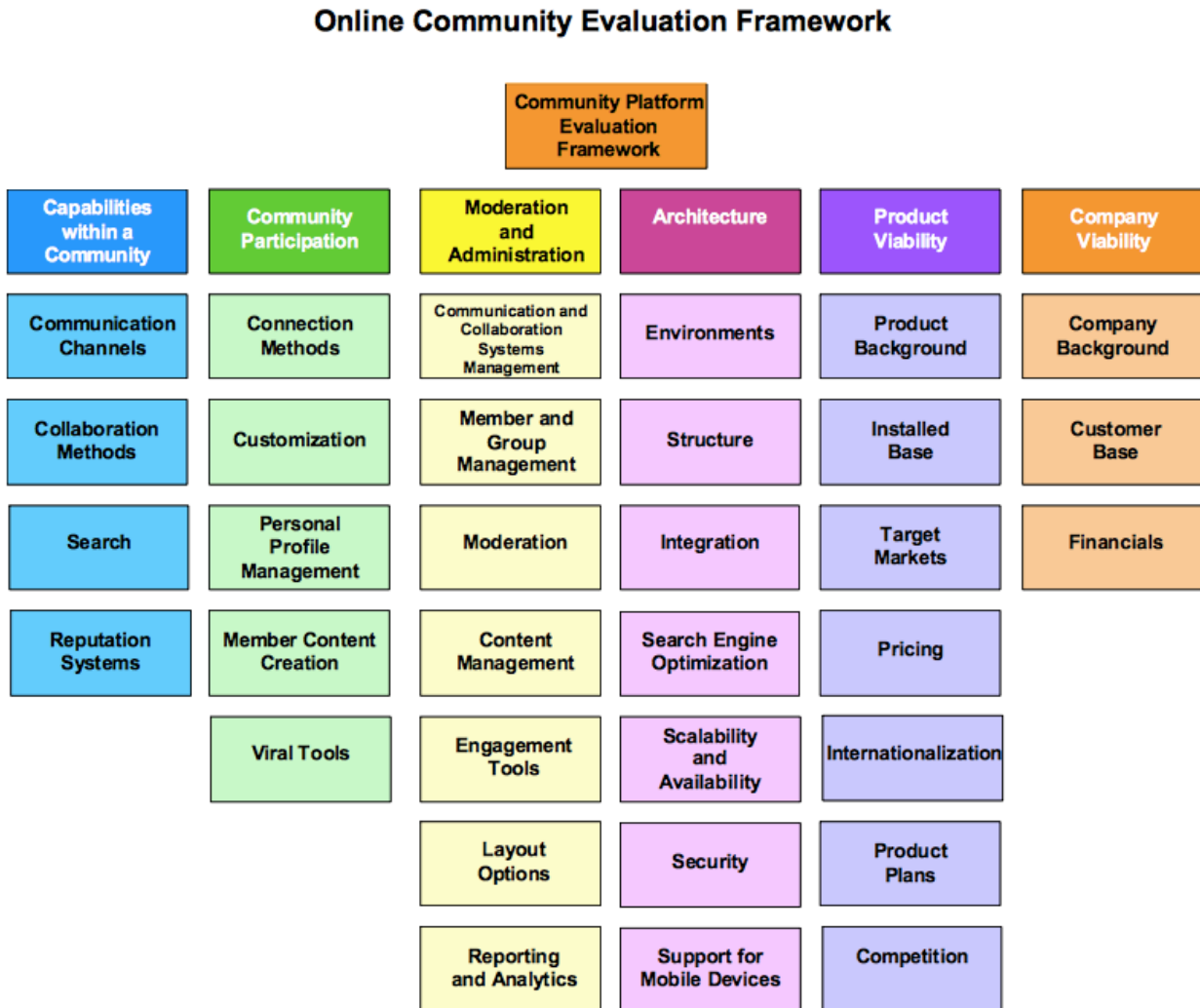| Community Platform Evaluation Framework					
Capabilities within a Community	**Community Participation**	**Moderation and Administration**	**Architecture**	**Product Viability**	**Company Viability**
Communication Channels	Connection Methods	Communication and Collaboration Systems Management	Environments	Product Background	Company Background
Collaboration Methods	Customization	Member and Group Management	Structure	Installed Base	Customer Base
Search	Personal Profile Management	Moderation	Integration	Target Markets	Financials
Reputation Systems	Member Content Creation	Content Management	Search Engine Optimization	Pricing	
	Viral Tools	Engagement Tools	Scalability and Availability	Internationalization	
		Layout Options	Security	Product Plans	
		Reporting and Analytics	Support for Mobile Devices	Competition	

Figure 1: Online Community Evaluation Framework.

3   Research matrix

Research question	Type of knowledge	Research method
Which requirements for an effective online platform aiming at knowledge sharing can be derived from theory and preliminary research?	Descriptive	Major sources: Desk research
What are criteria for success as an online business community?	Descriptive	Major sources: Desk research
What are requirements for starting an online business community?	Descriptive	Major sources: Desk research
How important is an online community for business purposes?	Descriptive	Major sources: Desk research
What are the information needs and motivations that are relevant for the VIV team to take into consideration when reaching the target group?	Explanatory	Major sources: Qualitative (interview method) Secondary sources: desk research
What are, content wise, the interests and motivation that make visitors of an online platform interact?	Explanatory	Major sources: Qualitative (interview method) Secondary sources: desk research
Which promotion strategy is most appropriate for this target group according to experts?	Explanatory	Major sources: Qualitative (interview method) Secondary sources: desk research
What are the most effective communication channels for creating a promotional marketing communication campaign for an online platform?	Descriptive	Major sources: Qualitative (interview method) Secondary sources: desk research
Which conclusions can be drawn from the results of the data collection and panel interviews?	Descriptive	Result analysis
Which conclusions can be drawn from the results of the expert interviews?	Descriptive	Result analysis
Which messages and which channels are most appropriate to use in order to attract the target group to the online platform?	Exploratory & descriptive	Result analysis

4   Interview Nexus 1

With: Yang, M. Content Manager VIV

1. Can you tell me what your role exactly is regarding the VIV Online platform?

I am responsible for communicating the VIV online initiatives with suppliers, buyers, associations and NGOs from the feed to food supply chains, and to ensure regular contribution of content from these partners.

2. What is VIV its brand position?

VIV worldwide is most recognized for its Agrofood trade exhibitions such as VIV Asia, VIV Europe and VIV Abu Dhabi; while VIV online serves as an added dimension to our onsite activities to facilitate the sharing of content and networking within the feed to food community.

3. How do you currently reach new exhibitors/visitors (looking at communication channels, face-to-face, social media, digital or printed)?

Since we are making a closed launch for a start, we will make very exclusive invitations targeted at the desired audience of our key content partners. A good part of it is generated from the visitors of our onsite events.

4. How would you map the differences in media use globally? And how do you adjust your content accordingly?

Countries like the US and Europe are pretty accustomed to digital media, while China has the highest concentration of people using social media and e-commerce tools. Southeast Asia is typically a region, which still relies pretty much on print media like flyers or brochures.

5. How do you currently promote the new VIV Online platform? (Online and offline)

Since it will first be launched to a small community, service would be very customized according to the needs to individual user groups.

6. Do you have any form of promotional material to market the VIV Online platform? (Posters, brochures, advertisements)

We have made a digital brochure for the launch of phase 1.

7. **Are there any promotional campaigns being set up at the moment? If yes, how do the campaigns look like?**

8. **Can you tell me more about the campaign "Join the VIV.net"?**

9. **How would you explain the overall use of communication of the VIV network with regard to social media channels?**

Unfortunately, I can only provide an overview sometime in March concerning these questions.

5   Interview Nexus 2

With: De Jong, E. Content Manager VIV

1.   Can you tell me what your role is in regard to VIV Online?

My role together with the other content managers is to make sure the right people generate content for VIV Online. Since we've divided the platform in information topics on the different species, current topics as well as topics related to one of the many sectors of the Feed to Food chain. We will also show information on the upcoming events and try to stay updated on the developments and innovations happening in the animal production and processing industry. So in short, we bring in the professionals and content writers, they will generate content for the entire community to gain and share with each other.

2.   Can you explain the purpose of VIV Online?

With VIV Online we will facilitate the sharing of content and also networking within the Feed to Food supply chain. Content has two domains; exclusive and general. General content refers to press releases, company reports, pre and post event reports, etc and exclusive content are materials which we work together with suppliers, associations, buyers and NGOs to obtain and are placed on our platform for targeted marketing, over a period of at least 6 months.

3.   You have already drawn up a content calendar; can you explain me how it works?

The first theme for our content upon our launch (prior to VIV Asia) would be "Antibiotics". Following it would be "Trade Africa" and "Feed milling". The period when we launch these topics would depend on the first wave of our campaigns, and may be subjected to changes, depending on market trends. We've created a digital brochure so you can have a feel on the various functionalities, which we are including at different phases of development.

4.   What is the role of content in creating value on the VIV Online platform?

Content serves as the trigger to join, and fuels the community over time by providing contexts for conversations between members. Through the use of our social media channels, but especially the VIV Online community, professionals will have the ability to reach, connect, and learn from other professionals who share an interest or a passion in the topics discussed.

5. How will VIV Online be promoted among the target group? (Online and offline)

At this moment there is a message on the website announcing the online knowledge platform of VIV Online. And since we want to start off with reaching the key partners of VIV first, give them a sneak peek of VIV Online, we will contact them personally. I'll be running a series of content collection activities together with the other content managers, such as interviews or panel discussions with visitors of VIV Asia in March 2017, solely for the purpose of promoting VIV Online. Which means as to now the only promoting activities are the face-to-face meetings.

6. Why is there a large focus on Asia and its surroundings?

We focus strongly on Asia and surroundings because more than half of the visitors of our onsite events come from that region, and it doesn't make a difference it being VIV Europe, VIV MEA or VIV Asia.

7. Are you already, or planning on, using Google Analytics to measure and analyze the statistics of VIV Online

We're not using Google Analytics for our websites at the moment. Only for partner specific newsletters and such. We do want to measure and monitor the forums, articles etc. once VIV Online is up and running. But this has no high priority yet since the launch has a slight delay.

8. Do you already have a Google Analytics handbook specifically for online communities?

Not right now, but it will definitely be useful for us to have one. Just to get us started.

6 Interview 3

With: Vasse, E. Professional, Veterinarian

1. **What are your interests and motivations for visiting an online platform?**

Veterinary assistance, information on new and innovative treatment methods and techniques, Educational video or information on what is happening in the labor market.

2. **What are your interests and motivations to participate on an online platform?**

To see what other professionals advice on treating certain patients. Also new treatment methods and technologies. The possibility to discuss complicated clinical cases and to participate in discussions on practice and theory.

3. **How do you gain and share knowledge about your field of work at the moment?**

Discuss with fellow vets and specialists. Furthermore there is a private Facebook page I visit frequently that provides information, where we can discuss instance difficult patients or cases and watch videos.

4. **What type of content/information tends to grab your attention?**

In which clinical cases are discussed, at least where I'm able to easily and quickly get an answer to my questions.

5. **What kind of resources could VIV provide you to increase your visits to the platform?**

Making it possible for me to meet people with the same profession, finding quick information and knowing what is happening in the labor market.

6. **Through which communication channels would you like to be updated on VIV activities? (Phone, email, social media, news letters, brochures)**

I prefer emails or social media channels, so I can easily involve other people as well. Email is easy because I think it's the easiest way to get informed on actualities and happenings.

7   Interview 4

With: G. Essen. Professional, manufacturer of machinery in the animal production and processing industry.

1.   What are your interests and motivations for visiting an online platform?

Gaining knowledge and information on innovations and new technologies in machinery.

Being able to find the perfect employees or trainees, getting in contact with schools or other education systems.

2.   What are your interests and motivations to participate on an online platform?

To network with professionals and other manufacturers in the same industry. Also to share information on the machinery we offer.

3.   How do you gain and share knowledge about your field of work at the moment?

Through special magazines on animal husbandry, visiting exhibitions and meetings with colleagues.

4.   What type of content/information tends to grab your attention?

Innovation in animal machinery and materials, as well al hygiene regulations.

5.   What kind of resources could VIV provide you to increase your visits to the platform?

An online discussing possibility, forums or an online library.

6.   Through which communication channels would you like to be updated on VIV activities? (Phone, email, social media, news letters, brochures)

Via news letters and email.

8 Interview 5

With: C. Seinen. Professional, young cattle farmer with cattle in The Netherlands and Germany

1. What are your interests and motivations for visiting an online platform?

My interests for visiting an online platform are to gain sector related information and to share experiences and learn from other international farmers.

2. What are your interests and motivations to participate on an online platform?

My motivations to actively participate in an online platform are being able to exchange experience stories, discussing problems and finding solutions to certain situations.

3. How do you gain and share knowledge about your field of work at the moment?

Most of the information I gather comes from my father who is retired but still has a lot of knowledge to help me with small of medium issues. However a while ago I had a situation with my cattle in Germany, and I searched the Internet for a community for German farmers. There I found the solution to my problem.

4. What type of content/information tends to grab your attention?

Information on laws and regulations concerning cattle farmers and farming in general. There are differences in regulations in the Netherlands and in Germany. I would like to keep myself informed on information like that.

5. What kind of resources could VIV provide you to increase your visits to the platform?

Since I was not aware of the VIV brand I will definitely have a look once VIV Online is launched. For other information look at my answers for questions 1 and 2.

6. Through which communication channels would you like to be updated on VIV activities? (Phone, email, social media, news letters, brochures)

I would like to be updated via email or social media (Facebook). Or flyers and newsletters.

9   Briefing e-mail campaign live stream

The emails are the responsibility of the graphic designer and will be processed in a template that is being refined by a developer. This is internally realized by members of the Online team of Royal Dutch Jaarbeurs. Regarding the emails it is important to design the look and feel according to the VIV house style. This creates recognition for newsletter subscribers when they are directed to VIV Online. The VIV logo is also the biggest reference to the brand. All emails must be simply constructed, so that the focus lies on the message and the goals. There are no specific days where VIV will reach the most people, however it is wise to send emails around 10:00 'o clock in the morning or 20:00 'o clock in the evening. Research shows that consumers open most emails during these times (Gierveld, 2014).

Objective email campaign: create interest and motivate the target group to create a profile on VIV Online and sign in for the live streams.

Email 1: Live stream announcement
Sender: VIV
Subject: Curious about the story of [expert]? Sign in now for the free live stream.
Text: Are you curious about the story of [expert]? On [date and time] [expert] gives a free live stream on VIV Online on [topic]. Do you have questions for [expert] or are you interested in his story? Then sign up now by clicking the link. You will receive a private profile on VIV Online with which you can watch the free live stream.

Email 2: Live stream reminder
Sender: VIV
Subject: Forgot to register for the free live stream by [expert]? Sign in now by clicking the following link.
Text: Are you curious about the story of [expert]? On [date and time] [expert] gives a free live stream on VIV Online on [topic]. Do you have questions for [expert] or are you interested in his story? Then sign up now by clicking the link. You will receive a private profile on VIV Online with which you can watch the free live stream.

Email 3: Live stream reminder – one week in advance

Sender: VIV

Subject: Only one more week before the live stream of [expert]. Sign in now and watch the free live stream on [date and time].

Text: One more week before the live stream of [expert] on VIV Online. The only thing you have to do is to click on the link in the email register to VIV Online.

Email 4: Live stream reminder – one day in advance

Sender: VIV

Subject: Live stream by [expert] tomorrow

Text: Tomorrow at [time] the live stream given by [expert] on [topic] will be held. Make sure you sign in by clicking this link. You will also receive an email with the instructions.

Email 5: Live stream day

Sender: VIV

Subject: Live stream day! [expert] [time]

Text: Good morning [name visitor], at [time] the live stream presented by [expert] will begin. Make sure to have a stable Internet connection. If you have any questions for [expert], then you can ask him/her during the forum discussion afterwards. By clicking on this link you will have direct access to the live stream.

Email 6: Evaluation of first live stream

Sender: VIV

Subject: VIV wants your opinion!

Text: Hello [name visitor], thank you for joining the live stream presented by [expert]. Think with us to improve the upcoming live streams by placing your review and give your opinion by clicking this link.

Email 7: Confirmation email after signing in for the live stream

Sender: VIV

Subject: Welcome to VIV Online

Text: Hello [name visitor], welcome to VIV Online! As a member of our VIV network you will have access to exclusive content and many opportunities in this community.

Being member brings several benefits, such as free live streams. Want to register for the live stream by [expert] on [date and time]? Please click here.

10   Elaboration live stream expenses

Prior to this research, it was discussed to realize most activities internally. Therefore it is advised for the VIV team to appoint a member of the team to be responsible. Another option is to hire an intern, such as a media student, who will assist the VIV team member with organizing the live streams. Three offers were requested from a media company that is situated in Royal Dutch Jaarbeurs. The choice of agreeing to the second offer is mainly because it will meet the initial goal of VIV Online, namely to create and offer high quality content, without being overly expensive. All three offers including the expenses can be found below:

Offer 1: basic set	
Equipment	
1 camera + tripod + light + sound	€ 125
1 encoder + laptop	€ 275
1 camera technician	€ 375
Totaal	**€ 775**

Offer 2: medium set	
Equipment	
2 cameras + 2 tripods + light + sound	€ 250
1 basic mixing console	€ 500
1 encoder + laptop	€ 375
1 camera technician	€ 375
Totaal	**€ 1.500**

Offer 3 professional set	
Equipment	
2 cameras + 2 tripods	€ 250
1 extended mixing console	€ 900
1 encoder + laptop	€ 275
1 sound technician	€ 375
1 camera technician	€ 375
Totaal	**€ 2.175**