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Digital Learning within an Organization: the case of MARKETERs Club

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Table of Contents

Acronyms …… 3

Abstract ……..... 4

1. Introduction …….. 6

1.1 Impact of Social Networks, Digital Platforms and IM Apps on our society …… 6
1.1.1 Definition of Social Networks, Digital Platforms and IM Apps ……6
1.1.2 The importance of Communities ……8
1.1.3 How Social Networks, Digital Platforms and IM Apps could improve our life ….. 10

1.2 Social Learning in Literature …….. 14
1.2.1 Definitions of Social and Experiential Learning Theories …….. 14
1.2.2 Social Learning and Digital Tools: Digital Learning …….. 15

1.3 Structure, goal and thread of my thesis ……. 18

2. Learning Theories and Social Learning in Business Literature …… 19

2.1 Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura …… 22

2.2 Experiential Learning Theory by David A. Kolb …… 25

2.3 Social Learning in other literatures …… 28

2.4 Social Networks, Digital Platforms and IM Apps as tools to develop Social Learning: Digital learning …… 32

3. Case Study ……..... 37

3.1 Story of MARKETERs Club ……..... 37

3.2 Culture and Motivation …….. 40
3.2.1 Payoff ……. 42

3.3 Learning mechanism ……... 45
3.3.1 Communication and Organization ……... 52
3.3.2 Development of Talent, Vision and Mission ……... 52

3.4 MARKETERs Events ……. 54
3.4.1 Structure of events …… 56
3.4.2 Experience of Task Force as real impact of Digital Learning ……. 56
3.4.3 Surveys …… 57
3.4.4 Methodology …… 59
3.4.5 Findings and graphs ……. 61

4. Concluding Remarks ……. 102

References ……... 106
References from the Web …… 109

Appendix……. 110

Acknowledgements……. 114

Acronyms

Digital PR – Digital People Relations

IM Apps - Instant Messaging Apps

PM – Project Manager

SEO - Search Engine Optimization

SMM - Social Media Management

Abstract

This thesis focuses on impact of digital tools, such as social networks, digital platforms and instant messaging apps, on learning process and competences of individuals. People can really improve their skills through collaborative work and stimulating environment by exploiting digital instruments.

In the first part of my research, I study the theory of social learning developed by Albert Bandura and experiential learning by David A. Kolb; they explain how unconventional learning could influence the competences of individuals through observational behavior. These theories have been developed during the Seventies, therefore they need to be adapted to our digital era in order to survive. Social learning became digital learning, but it must answer to this question "Are digital tools just additional instruments or are they necessary variables?"

The second part of my thesis consists of a case study based on MARKETERs Club, an Italian association about marketing and management founded in 2012 by Francesco Favaro. I present a study to illustrate how people, in this case a *task force*, improve their skills through the organization of four events that created a stimulating and collaborative environment in which students can achieve marketing and management competences in order to become ready for their future jobs.

Competences of MARKETERs have been developed and shaped mostly thanks to support of digital tools. In order to sustain this thesis, an analysis has been conducted through a survey collecting 58 answers. Respondents are members of MARKETERs Club who participated to task forces of four events during a year.

The sample size of this study is relatively small and further research with larger samples is required to determine whether these findings will hold up in different settings of collaborative work as associations, organizations or firms.

Digital learning is definitely an opportunity, it contributes to competitiveness and efficiency of internal communication and coordination of organizations, it improves working environment and learning readiness of members or employees. In this thesis I tried to explain the originality of this new and unconventional approach.

Keywords: social networks, digital platforms, social learning, collaborative work, digital learning

1. Introduction

1.1 Impact of Social Networks, Digital Platforms and IM Apps on our society

The Web definitely changed our behavior, attitude, communication, interaction with others, thinking process, opinions, decision-making process, teaching and learning. Internet became a fundamental and omnipresent part of our life, since it is becoming one of the main sources where we could shape our knowledge and sometimes our personality. Just because the web is available to anyone as a huge open source environment, it has positive, but also negative effects on our society. Internet gives the possibility to deliberately express our opinions, but they are not always correct and well founded; they can damage, hurt, distract and wrongly influence others behavior. Nowadays ideas and information could be spread before verifying reliability of sources; without a critical thinking it is difficult to separate what is truthful and what is misleading. It would be necessary to operate a continuous comparison or to maintain a certain skepticism until a demonstration. Before analyzing the main impact of these digital tools on human beings' behavior, we need to focus on definitions of social networks, digital platforms and Instant Messaging Apps.

1.1.1 Definition of Social Networks, Digital Platforms and IM Apps

"Social Networks are social structures consisting of individuals or groups who are connected to each other, for example through friendships. These groups are better called communities since individuals commonly share the same ideas, passions or goals. When these connections are represented in a database and with a web interface, it is usually referred to as a *social network service* or simply *social networking*. Social Networks drastically reduced the barriers of entry and became extremely popular in the second half of the first decade of this century, as more people started considering the web as the perfect place to keep in touch with their family, friends or acquaintances. Despite criticism, generally social networks are not substituting "normal" life, but complementing it."[1]

[1] Financial Times, http://lexicon.ft.com/Term?term=social-network, last access on 20/01/2016.

Actually the main Social Networks known in Italy are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Google+, Pinterest. Facebook alone involves around 300 millions of individuals, for this reason sometimes it is called the sixth state of the world. (Vinella. A., 2009).

"If you can program it, then it's a platform. If you can't, then it's not."[2]
As digital platforms, people mean not just Social Networks, but also blogs, intranet platforms, online programs, apps, software for email etc. Examples could be Google Drive, Podio, Asana, Gmail, Hotmail, Eventbrite and so on; anything where you can save any type of document or just thoughts, comments, reviews, ideas. These platforms often are public or available to anyone who has the link. This incredible method is revolutionizing how people share knowledge and receive learning; now documents are immediately available, public and easily found. They can simultaneously be modified by many people, and they have become a place where to develop a brainstorming or just to work on a project without being physically together. The intermediate barriers do not exist anymore, people can access knowledge without experts, permissions nor limits. If we need an information, we just *google* it and we get it. There is one problem: the right interpretation of this treasure.

"Instant messaging, often shortened to simply IM or IMing is the exchange of text messages through a software application in real time. Generally included in the IM software is the ability to easily see whether a chosen friend, co-worker or buddy is on line and connected through the selected service."

The most famous examples of IM Apps are WhatsApp, Telegram, Apple's iChat, Facebook Messenger, AOL, MSN Messenger, Yahoo! Messenger etc. They are not just platforms to text messages, people can generally share photos, videos, locations, contacts, vocal notes and files. These tools can be used from smartphone, but also from personal computer. IM Apps contribute to communication since people can work on shared documents and at the same time chat with colleagues. IM Apps give the

[2] Programmable Web, programmableweb.com/news/what-platform/2007/09/19, last access on 05/01/2016

possibility to create groups, so communication is not just one to one, but also one to many.

1.1.2 The importance of Communities

It is really easy to create new social networks or digital platforms, but it is really hard to keep them alive; it is necessary to create a community that uses these social tools. A community is a group of people who keep in touch with each other; they share an idea, a passion, a mission. Internet destroyed barriers to time, space and costs; blogs and social networks make communication easy and fast. Nowadays, a group of people, who share a passion, can easily become a community. Human beings always want to belong to a group, sharing their opinions and interests. But it is not sufficient.

A strong community exists if everyone has understood the common mission, if knowledge is supported everyday, if each of us believe and is convinced in what we are doing. Before internet, people had to find time to spend together, now we have many tools and ways to share everything we want with others. Community found itself in social networks. A strong community is possible if the digital platform is used every day and if users interact continuously with each other. For this reason, after success of main social networks as Facebook or Twitter, it is almost impossible for new entrants to compete with them, because they cannot sustain a community.

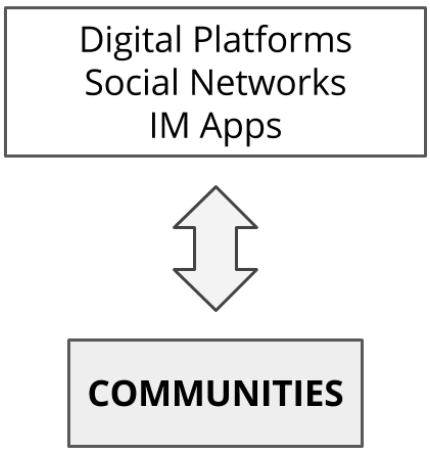

Image 1. The relationship between communities and digital instruments.

A community is a movement that is waiting to be shaped, a group of people that want to be motivated and transformed. A movement is exciting if it is achieved through the work of many individuals, they communicate with each other, and everyone looks for a better proposal. New tools of the web are really influential, they simplify creation of communities and projects. Nowadays IM Apps make everything concentrated, not dispersive. Twitter, blogs, online videos and other technologies amplify meaning of concept of belonging to a community. New technologies link communities and enrich their efforts. The Web is just a tool needed to create and realize strategies. By the way the real strength of a community are not only the Internet and digital tools, but people. A community arises when members communicate among each other, when ideas propagate within the group.

In order to be a strong community, two characteristics are needed: a common goal and a communication medium. But any community has to be guided by a leader. According to the book “Tribes” by Seth Godin, there are four typologies of communication: from leader to community, from community to leader, from a member of a community to another member of the same community and from a member of a community to external individuals. A leader can contribute by improving the efficiency of his community and his members through the following ways: transforming a common interest into a stimulating goal and into a desire for change; giving instruments to members in order to improve their communication medium; influencing the community in order to develop itself and to acquire new members. Leader has not to find new members, but members have to involve other people simply by motivating, communicating and influencing.

1.1.3 How Social Networks, Digital Platforms and IM Apps could improve our life

"Evolution of internet and web shows an original approach to the exchange of knowledge, learning and promotion of creativity". (Pireddu M., 2014)

Social networks, digital platforms and IM Apps have affected, not only our society, culture, business and relationships, but also the way anyone can interact, communicate, learn, teach and express himself. People usually think about the positive and negative consequences of these digital tools, but it would be better to focus on the advantages of using them to improve our life.

Generally speaking, social networks are considered a sort of distraction from our responsibilities, a waste of time and productivity. Since people may make inappropriate statements on the web, it would be necessary to limit the use of social networks or to put some filters. This is the consequence of this new world, where everything is available and allowed, in what we could call a huge open source environment.

Everyone is able to express opinions, can comment anything, bad stories may circulate and go viral quickly. But rather than blaming collaborative systems, we should educate people to use them effectively for work. Social tools are the future of collaboration and learning at work, so the more you prepare people for how to use the tools respectfully, and how to apply good social practices, the better. (Bingham T., Conner M., 2015)

Another issue about social networks could be: people post incorrect information. We are in the era of opinions, if I have a dinner in a particular restaurant, I will inform on Internet about its reputation. I have to trust other people and understand the circumstances of some negative reviews. It is better to find a lot of comments, negative and positive, rather than a simple description of restaurants. Restaurant is, in this way, forced to work at its best in order to satisfy its clients and receive good comments. This is another example of how important the community is.

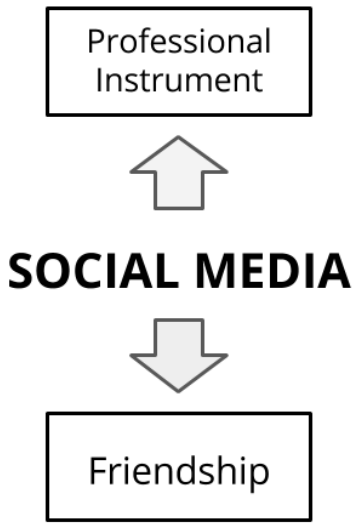

Image 2. Social Media contribute to our private relationships and our professional life.

Social networks are criticized also because social practices cannot be governed, mainly in working environments. Rather than starting with a large, heavy-handed policy condemning the use of social media, put in place simple rules stating when people should use which tool to communicate, create, or share specific types of information. Make it easier for people to classify information they create. The fact that people can see what others share provides a reason to self-monitor and for people to monitor each other. (Bingham T., Conner M., 2015)

Despite this initial criticism, social networks in several cases can positively contribute to our life. In these years, organizations and firms start using social networks both for strategies of promotion, and internal organization or communication.

As a matter of fact, social networks make communication among people easy and immediate; services are more efficient and flexible. Nowadays many companies, as Airbnb and PostePay, use Twitter to provide support for clients, and this kind of service has proved to be better than telephone exchanges or e-mails as customers can solve their problems in a couple of minutes. Twitter not only improves the efficiency of customer assistance, but also eliminates huge costs. This is an example to illustrate the change of mentality of firms to social networks. If someone has a problem they can easily type a

tweet on the Airbnb account and immediately receive a solution. This method avoids the infinite waiting lists on telephone.

Social networks have always been considered just an informal way for chatting and keeping in touch with friends, therefore initially nobody thought about them as a way for improving the strategic view of firms and companies. But now everything has changed, and social media are a fundamental and professional instrument.
It is not necessary to work in a famous company to use social networks in a smart way. They contribute first of all to marketing, communication, product placement, interaction with customers, but also to internal organization and communication. Digital tools, in this way, affect not only the external market, but also the internal dimension of firms.

Social networks and digital tools could be an awesome method also in the academic environment both for students and professors, they have an enduring impact on learning and teaching. Nowadays professors have understood that these digital tools, as Facebook or simply extranet, are important almost as much as university books and research papers. Traditional teaching and support of digital platform can be complementary. Teachers can push students' talent through discussions on Facebook groups or tweets. Twitter can be used for a live tweeting during a seminar or class, students can interact and take notes using official hashtag.

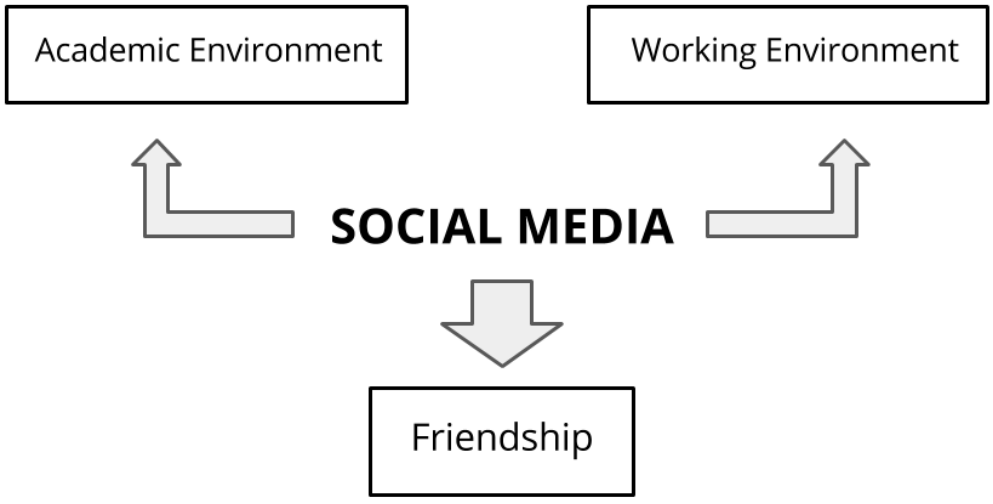

Image 3. Social Media can influence working, but also academic environment.

Generally speaking, social networks, IM Apps and digital platforms are mainly used for internal coordination among students when they have to work in teams in order to develop papers and presentations. For example, another fundamental tool could be Google Drive, a program developed by Google. It allows working for a project at once drafting on line documents. People can see directly others typing and updating documents. Google Drive revolutionized the approach of team working: students can share documents and upload them on a common platform, but the most important function is the possibility to work together on drafting, developing and modifying this document live.

Recently, people who have understood the incredible strength of social networks and digital platforms have started to use them as a tool for personal branding. Instead of using Facebook as a showcase to make fun of friends, people use it as a dynamic curriculum vitae. As a matter of fact, if someone signs in on Facebook, he has to declare his real name and surname, otherwise his profile is blocked.
The evolution of Facebook is the perfect example to demonstrate how designers of social networks understood their incredible potentiality, turning them from virtual spaces for interaction among friends into a useful and necessary business instrument.

1.2 Social Learning in Literature

1.2.1 Definitions of Social and Experiential Learning Theories

Definition of Social Learning

Social Learning refers to the fact that social tools can enhance the continuous learning that takes place naturally in the workplace through knowledge sharing and collaboration. Social Learning is about people connecting, conversing, collaborating and learning from, and with, one another on a daily basis at work. (Pireddu M., 2014)

The most famous and important contributor of Social Learning Theory is Albert Bandura, a psychologist and professor at Stanford University. In developing his Social Learning Theory, he affirmed that an important source, for learning new behaviors and for achieving behavioral change in institutionalized settings, is the process of observational learning. Bandura used many times the term "model" meaning "individuals observed by others". For example, children usually observe and imitate their parents at home and teachers at school. In this case influential models are parents and teachers.

In 1970, professor Bandura established the most well known theory of modern social learning, which states that people can learn in a social context through observational behavior from models.

This is the structure:

- Learning can occur by observing others' behaviors and the resulting outcomes;
- Learning can occur cognitively without a corresponding change in behavior;
- Modeled behavior is reinforced by producing desirable outcomes (for both the observed party and the learner);
- Three variables in the social learning context, the learner, the behavior, and the environment, can influence each other.

Definition of Experiential Learning

Experiential Learning is a theory developed by David Kolb, Professor of Organizational Behavior in the Weatheread School of Management.

David Kolb's interest lay in exploring the processes associated with making sense of concrete experiences, and the different styles of learning that may be involved. David A. Kolb created his famous model out of four elements: concrete experience, observation and reflection, the formation of abstract concepts and testing in new situations. He represented these in the famous experiential learning circle that involves:

- Concrete experience followed by
- Observation and experience followed by
- Forming abstract concepts followed by
- Testing in new situations

(Smith M. K., 2010)

1.2.2 Social Learning and Social Networks: Digital Learning

Even if social learning theory was initially developed in 70s, it can apply nowadays, but it necessarily has to be adapted to our society. Social Learning could give an incredible contribute to our life, if cleverly used, with social networks and other digital tools as platforms and IM Apps. These digital instruments make communication and coordination among people easy and immediate, they are affecting the way people learn and teach. They could be the instruments to acquire more knowledge about particular arguments since you can reach people and find content as never before without any limits and within 5 seconds.

Learning is a never-ending process. It always has been and always will be. The Internet and new social tools provide nearly unlimited access to knowledge and people around the clock, across the world. (Bingham T., Conner M., 2015)

Social learning mixed itself with social tools becoming the new social learning that we are going to call digital learning.

The digital learning reframes social media and digital platforms from a mere marketing strategy to an approach that encourages and facilitates knowledge capture, transfer, and

use, connecting people in a way consistent with how we naturally interact. (Bingham T., Conner M., 2015).

The contribution that digital tools could give to social learning is the possibility to access to several sources of knowledge and to get immediately whatever you need. You can observe others' behavior not only *off line,* but also online.
In these years, it is impossible to "don't know" something, since you can "google", find, whatever you want. Until now it has been harder to know or learn from others behavior, but this gap could be overcome thanks to social networks and digital platforms. So in this way, the mix of these social and digital tools could just improve social learning offering more platforms where knowledge could be shared and found.

Social networks could improve knowledge about people. If someone has to work in a team-work, not only colleagues could share information and tasks, they could also to keep in touch and get familiar among them. This could seem to be a secondary aspect of social learning, but the emotional intelligence and informal learning are fundamental aspects of effectiveness of social learning. Communication among individuals achieves across the board dimensions and aspects.
The value we contribute comes not from how smart or talented we are, but rather from the ideas that we share, the quality connections that we make, the emotions we touch, and the conversations we start. Each of us can become an expert curator of interesting stories and facilitator of important ideas. (Bingham T., Conner M., 2015)

The digital learning combines social media tools with a shift in organizational culture, a shift that encourages ongoing knowledge transfer and connects people in ways that make learning enjoyable. Social learning is augmented with social media tools that bridge distance and time, enabling people to easily interact across workplace, passion, curiosity, skill, or need. Most often social learning is intrinsically motivated and happens as naturally as breathing. It benefits from a diversity in types of intelligence and in the experiences of those learning. Social media is a set of technologies used to engage two, three, or more people; social business is connecting people to people, information, and insights within an organization; and social learning is working with others to make sense

of new ideas. What's new is how powerfully they work together. (Bingham T., Conner M., 2015).

The emotional aspect taken into consideration by the digital learning is fundamental in the educational context: when people are involved they learn in a better way. They don't need to repeat, because learning is internalized. People remember emotions and memories during the process of learning and acquire knowledge in a different way. For this reason sometimes the experiential learning with the observational behavior is more engaging rather than traditional learning.

1.3 The structure, the goal and the thread of my thesis

In the following thesis, I am going to present the real impact of digital learning in marketing and management competences through the organization of four events. MARKETERs events are developed and managed by MARKETERs Club, a national association about marketing and management founded in 2012 by Francesco Favaro. I hereby illustrate how people improve their skills through collaborative work and learning environment thanks to social media tools and instruments as digital platforms and IM Apps.

In the first part, I analyze the theory of social and experiential learning developed by Bandura, Kolb and other literatures. Then, I introduce the opportunity that can be given by the mix of social learning and digital tools within an organization during the process of learning. There are a lot of variables that could influence people's learning such as culture, behavior, environment, technology, leadership. What about social media and digital tools? Can digital platforms impact in an significant manner the process of learning? Are they just an additional tool or are they a necessary variable?

The second part of my research consists of a case study: how members of MARKETERs Club improve their competences through the organization and marketing campaign of events thanks to a new view of social learning, called digital learning. The goal is to provide a case study that could demonstrate the process of digital learning about management and marketing skills and improve the internal organization within associations and team works. I present a study on four events, entirely organized by MARKETERs Club, that creates a stimulating learning environment in which members of the association can achieve marketing and management competences in order to become ready for collaborative work in social media marketing, analytics, strategic thinking and so on in their future working environment. The experience of the task force could be the action-learning approach to enhance students' knowledge and skills in social media, logistics, management and strategic thinking thanks to digital learning.

This thesis describes the structure, process and tools that support this practical experience through the activities of MARKETERs Club.

2. Learning Theories and Social Learning in Business Literature

Social networks and digital platforms influence quantity and quality of our experiences and they contribute to re-configuration of ways for archiving, reproduction and creation of knowledge. (Pireddu M., 2014)

Social learning refers to the fact that social tools can enhance the continuous learning that takes place naturally in the workplace through knowledge sharing and collaboration. Social Learning is about people connecting, conversing, collaborating and learning from, and with, one another on a daily basis at work. (Pireddu M., 2014)

Working together has been part of the educational process since ancient Greece, if not before. But in today's increasingly collaborative world, where answers to information are available to anyone, this approach is being reinvented by active learners, for active learners. So, learning is deeply influenced by technology and Internet. Ongoing improvements in personal technology and online communities have redefined what it means to be social. And this will, in turn, redefine what it means to teach and learn.[3]

Nowadays a huge percentage of our learning comes from a personal education, that is, what we choose to learn. If we are passionate about marketing, we can look for books or newspapers on the Internet, buy them and learn from them. Often learning comes from sharing experiences and knowledge with other people who share the same interests. In this way, our learning and our competences are not shaped just by academic books and schools, but mostly by observing others' behavior and by our interests.

The advantages of social learning, including learning by examples and reinforcement of knowledge that comes with the "human connection", are as valid today. However, the advent of social networking technologies has helped create a new breed of social learning. On line social tools provide learners with "connections across boundaries and over time" and facilitate informal discussion and collaboration, key elements of social learning.

Social learning can exploit social media for specific goals, directions, guidelines or how to reach them. Social learning and social media exist separately, but social media can be used in support of social learning. Social media is a tool; social learning is an action. And on

[3] Blackboard, Debunking 4 Myths of Social Learning, http://www.blackboard.com/social/thought-leadership/myths.html, last access on 01/02/2016

line social technologies have enabled frictionless social learning opportunities. (Bingham T., Conner M., 2015).

Social learning has real benefits for both individuals and institutions. The interconnected, interactive nature of social learning exponentially amplifies the rate at which critical content can be shared and questions can be answered. There are a lot of examples that demonstrate how the social aspect could improve people's life. If someone knows something and puts it on the Internet, other people can receive knowledge from there. We can say that is what usually happens in the modern age. This amount of knowledge available to anyone is also criticized. If our learning was based mostly on what we decide to learn on shared platforms, we could not know if our knowledge is valid. This is a real and big problem, and the worst scenario is when someone cannot distinguish from what is a good information and instead what is just an opinion without any value.

To overcome this problem, we can just keep on sharing knowledge, keeping it available as an open source, trusting people and giving them the possibility to choose what to learn thanks to continuous benchmarking. As Jeanette Campos wrote "Keep it open, searchable, accessible. There is no evolution in an echo chamber. There is no oxygen there."
In order to solve problems about negative contents and comments through social networks, organizations and community could establish social media policies. Organizations often draft complicated and long policy in order to control the activities of employees on social networks. It would be better to establish simple rules: which tool to use for communication, and share only specific types of information. Few and easy rules is an important point for people to understand which contents are appropriate. Be less prescriptive in order to be more creative. The most important aspect is observation of others people's behavior: when individuals can see others' activities on social networks, they start self monitoring and monitoring others. For example, one of the best ways to educate individuals to avoid bad content and assume a good policy on social networks, is showing them behavior of leaders.

Social learning may be hyped, but that does not mean it is a passing trend. Modern social learning is a reflection of the educational environment today's students have helped create for themselves (and future students) to perform at their best.

According to comScore, the time spent using social tools increased by more than 62% (from 1 out of 13 minutes to 1 out of 8) between 2011 and 2012. This means use of the more traditional web, what Ben Elowitz, founder and CEO of Wetpaint, calls “the searchable web” fell by more than 500 million hours during the same period. He attributes this to the fact that the connected social web is alive, moving, proactive and personal, while the document web is just an artifact, suited as universal reference, but hardly a personal experience. And those experiences build relationships, which increase engagement, which stimulate learning.

2.1 Social learning theory by Albert Bandura

Albert Bandura was born December 4, 1925. He received his bachelor degree in Psychology from the University of British Columbia in 1949. He went on to the University of Iowa, where he received his Ph.D. in 1952. It was there that he came under the influence of the behaviorist tradition and learning theory. [4]

Many theories have been developed over the years to explain why people behave in a certain way. These theories have been criticized from both conceptual and empirical point of view. It is hard to explain the complexity of human behavior, because of different situations, toward different people, at different times and in different social roles. To overcome this problem, developments in learning theory shifted the focus of analysis from internal drivers to examination of external influences. Human behavior was analyzed in terms of the stimulus events that evoke it and the consequences that alter it. (Albert Bandura, 1971)

In the late 1970s, Albert Bandura established the most well known theory of modern social learning, which proposes that people can learn in a social context.

- Learning can occur by observing others' behaviors and the resulting outcomes;
- Learning can occur cognitively without a corresponding change in behavior;
- Modeled behavior is reinforced by producing desirable outcomes (for both the observed party and the learner);
- Three variables in the social learning context, the learner, the behavior, and the environment, can influence each other.[5]

[4] Boeree George, Personality Theories, http://webspace.ship.edu/cgboer/bandura.html, last access on 01/02/2016

[5] Blackboard, Debunking 4 Myths of Social Learning, http://www.blackboard.com/sites/social/thought-leadership/myths.html, last access on 01/02/2016

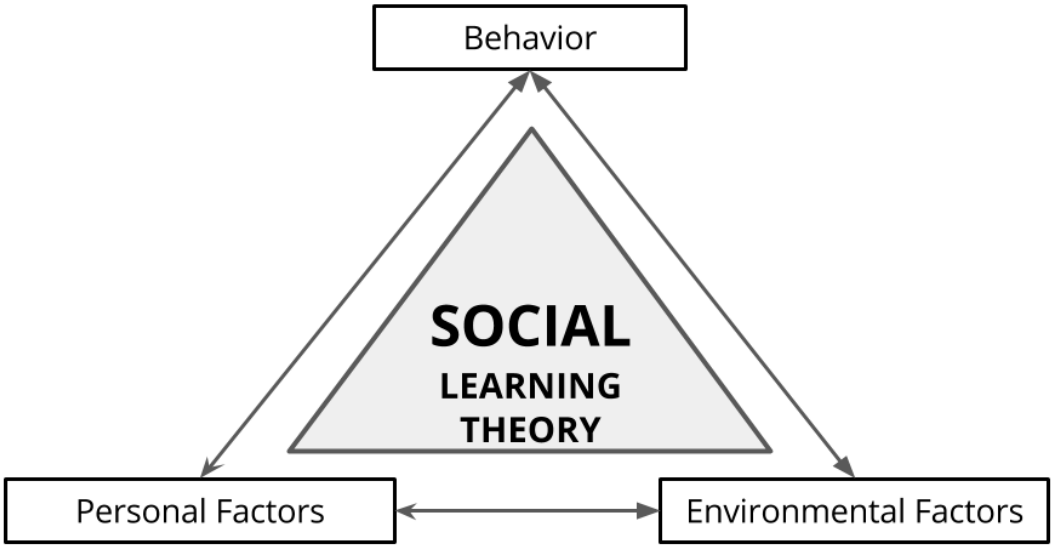

Image 4. Social Learning Theory developed by Albert Bandura.

In the social learning system, new patterns of behavior can be acquired through direct experience or by observing the behavior of others. (Albert Bandura, 1971)

Man's capacity to learn by observation enables him to acquire large, integrated units of behavior by example without having to build up the patterns gradually by tedious trial and errors. (Albert Bandura, 1971)

Bandura's theory states that the most relevant variable to improve and shape our learning and to achieve new behaviors is the process of observational learning. Bandura introduced the term "models" meaning "individual observed by others".

When we learn by observing someone's behavior, we are taking as a referent point a model that we want to imitate. We want to catch the best part of someone in order to improve our behavior, often a leader. There are many kinds of leaders depending on learning contexts. For example during children's life the observed individuals could be parents at home and teachers at school. In this case children are shaping their behavior observing the most relevant adults in their life.

The imitation of behavior is done regardless of the gender, but there are a number of processes that demonstrates children usually reproduce behavior that seems to be appropriated for their sex just because we are supposed to imitate behavior perceived as similar to ourselves. It would be better to use the term "identification" with respect to

"imitation", since they both involve internalizing people's behavior, they are different; identification happens when someone adopts several behaviors, on the other hand imitation gets a single behavior.
Children need to understand if behavior observed and identified produces negative or positive consequences. For this reason, adults respond with reinforcement or punishment, so if children are rewarded they keep on performing that behavior, otherwise they change behavior due to a punishment. [6]

Observation of other people's outcomes can have a continuing influence on the effectiveness of direct reinforcement by providing a standard for judging whether the reinforcements which one customarily receives are equitable, beneficent or unfair.

[6] McLeod Saul, Simply Psychology, Bandura Social Learning Theory, http://www.simplypsychology.org/bandura.html, last access on 01/02/2016

2.2 Experiential Learning theory by David A. Kolb

David A. Kolb is Professor of Oganizational Behavior in the Weatheread School of Management. He joined the School in 1976. Born in 1939, Kolb received his Bachelor of Arts from Knox College in 1961, his MA from Harvard in 1964 and his PhD from Harvard in 1967. He has also been awarded four honorary degrees recognizing his contribution to experiential learning. In 2008 David A. Kolb received the Educational Pioneers of the Year award from the National Society of Experiential Education. He has also an interest in the nature of individual and social change, experiential learning, career development and executive and professional education. He is also the founder and chairman of Experience Based Learning Systems Inc.

Experiential learning has been analyzed many times in literature; Stephen Bookfield used the term "experiential learning" by meaning learning undertaken by students who are given a chance to acquire and apply knowledge, skills and feeling in an immediate and relevant setting. Another aspect of experiential learning is education which occurs as a direct participation in the events of life. Here learning is not sponsored by some formal educational institution, but by people themselves. It is learning that is achieved through reflection upon everyday experience and the way that most of us complete our learning.

David Kolb's interest focuses in exploring the processes associated with making sense of concrete experiences, and the different styles of learning that may be involved. David A. Kolb created his famous model out of four elements: concrete experience, observation and reflection, the formation of abstract concepts and testing is new situations. He represented these in the famous experiential learning circle that involves:

- Concrete experience followed by
- Observation and reflection followed by
- Forming abstract concepts followed by
- Testing in new situations

The learning process often begins with a person carrying out a particular action and then viewing the effect of that action in this situation. Following this, the second step is to understand these effects in the particular instance so that if the same action was taken in

the same circumstances it would be possible to anticipate what would follow from the action. In this pattern the third step would be understanding the general principle under which the particular instance falls.

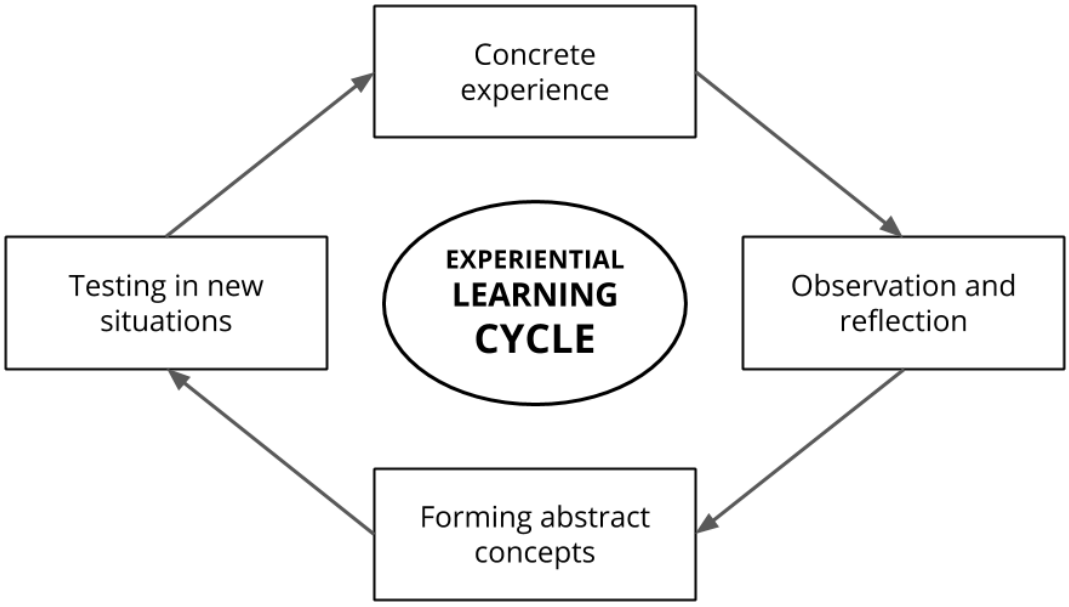

Image 5. Experiential Learning Cycle developed by David A. Kolb.

When the general principle is understood, the last step is its application through action in a new circumstance within the range of generalization. In some representations of experiential learning these steps are sometime represented as a circular movement. In reality, if learning has taken place the process could be seen as a spiral. The action is taking place in a different set of circumstances and the learner is now able to anticipate the possible effects of the action. Two aspects can be seen as especially noteworthy: the use of concrete, "here and now" experience to test ideas; and the use of feedback to change practices and theories.

David Kolb and Roger Fry argue that effective learning entails the possession of four different abilities:

- Concrete experience abilities;
- Reflective observation abilities;
- Abstract conceptualization abilities;
- Active experimentation abilities.

Anyway there are six key issues that arise out the Kolb model:

- It pays insufficient attention to the process of reflection;
- The claims made for the four different learning styles are extravagant, because experiential learning model does not apply to all situations;
- The model takes very little account of different cultural experiences/conditions. There is a need to take account of differences in cognitive and communication styles that are culturally-based;
- The idea of stages or steps does not sit well with the reality of thinking;
- Empirical support for the model is weak. The initial research base was small, and there have only been a limited number of studies that have sought to test or explore the model. Furthermore, the learning style inventory "has no capacity to measure the degree of integration of learning styles;
- The relationship of learning processes to knowledge is problematic, they are intimately related. David Kolb does not really explode the nature of knowledge in any depth.

In a rapidly evolving field such as digital marketing, Kolb's experiential learning skills will be valuable for maintaining professional competency. These skills include the ability to iteratively refine knowledge from new experiences, progressively test ideas in new situations, and continually use feedback to change practices and theories. (Kolb, 1984)

2.3 Social Learning in other literatures

Social learning has been analyzed in several studies across business literature. In the following papers, the variables, that are going to influence learning and knowledge, have been studied. Papers don't focus specifically on social learning, but on the possibility to improve unconventional learning of people who work or study together. Sessa and London in their paper "Adaptive, generative and transformative learning in project teams" put an incredible weight on team working. The variables that usually influence learning of teams are shared knowledge and collaboration. Authors illustrate how working in a group can really influence the process of learning of each member. The aim of this paper is to analyze a framework of team learning that includes three learning processes (adaptive, generative and transformative), factors that stimulate these processes, and their consequences.

The study has been applied on 69 project teams composed of 3 to 11 students, and their instructors responded to surveys. Working in team is considered an important soft skill to acquire, for this reason universities prepare their students during the academic path to be confident in working with others. Other important variables are the organizational surrounding and technology, they are external factors that affect learning and competences, but there are also internal variables such as social interactions among people, individual members' behavior and learning readiness. These variables are hard to measure, they usually can be managed thanks to a good leadership. As a matter of fact, this variable is deeply taken into consideration in another paper "Managerial support for Learning at Work: a qualitative study of first line managers in elder care" written by Ellstrom. Leadership has to be supported by a good managerial support and the ability to communicate by leaders or someone who has to take decision for the whole group. Environment is one of the most important variables for the process of learning, and we often find this variable in literature.

In "Learning now: Five Digital Strategies to Bring Learning into 2011", authors Susan Varnadoe and Noah Rabinowitz focus on a virtual learning environment where people can find an action learning, that is guidelines, to perform something in a better way thanks to simulations and collaboration. Development of leaders could be accelerated so that they can more quickly gain the acumen to drive business results. The same concept is analyzed

by Atwong in his paper “A social media practicum: an action-learning approach to social media marketing and analytics”; the most important variables are simulation and guidelines (in this specific case guidelines are expressed by a social media practicum). A social media practicum is designed to achieve the objective of gaining full experience of teamwork in social media planning, strategy implementation, tools and analytics management.

Taking on roles as a social media specialist or campaign manager, participants acquire skills, knowledge, and abilities in order to gain an immersion in the work experience. The learning process is structured using an action learning model of planning, taking action, reflecting on a real life challenge. In this social media practicum, participants would repeat going through the process of planning, action and reflection in adapting their campaigns to Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Youtube. Students refine their knowledge and skills after reflecting on the outcomes of their plan and action. A team work is an important aspect of social media management, students explore their social style and leadership style in the process.

They are offered tools to facilitate teamwork:

- A self assessment of four social styles;
- A self assessment of seven leadership styles.

Students may identify their personal work style, the strengths of that style, the area where they can improve, and how to work at their best with others who have different work styles. The practicum provides the context and opportunities for participants to acquire Kolb’s experiential learning skills and achieve professional competency. The practicum ’s success depends on social networks that are enduring, accessible, and engaging; it creates a learning environment and a social media virtual laboratory for their testing of creative ideas. In the process of building engaging, and serving a community, educators may adapt media types, time and number of tasks, scope of responsibility, and roles of participants, to achieve the learning objectives of different courses in a marketing curriculum. (Atwong C.T., 2015)

In “From e-learning to ‘we’ learning” by Kevin Young collaboration is a very influent variable for learning, but we find a new entry: social networks. So, technology and virtual environment are taken into consideration, but authors start talking about social networks as a tool for improving people’s competencies. Social tools in learning workplace is helping to create communities of knowledge that empower individuals and the corporations they work for. A social learning platform creates and share knowledge assets with colleagues in a way they’re already doing in their personal lives. Building a social networking user community in the workplace of a large organization effectively connects thousands of employees in a forum where they can talk and support one another, solve problems, share ideas, archive solutions and build a whole interconnected culture. (Young K., 2011)

Also Powell in his “Unleashing the Power of Social Media to Improve Employee Productivity” introduces the variable of social media, but also social technology, mentorship and culture. Organizations are realizing there is a lot more to social media than employees bantering with their friends. In order to create a competitive advantage in recruiting, developing, and engaging employees, more organizations are experimenting with how to use the power of social media. Using social media inside the enterprise is now seen as a way to retain and develop employees’ efficiency. In fact, to improve employee productivity and the speed of innovation, organizations are moving toward collaborative learning using social technology that also helps companies collaborate with their customers and suppliers. (Powell T., 2012)

We can sum up declaring that the most important variables that influence the process of learning are:

- Team working and collaboration;
- Organizational surroundings and environment;
- Technology support;
- Social interaction;
- Individual member behavior;
- Learning readiness;
- Leadership;
- Guidelines;

- Simulation;
- Culture and climate.

Social media as a variable needed to improve competencies of people are a new entry. This thesis aims to understand if social media, IM Apps and digital platforms, are simply an additional tool to improve the process of learning or if it going to become a necessary instrument.

2.4 Social Networks, Digital Platforms and IM Apps as tools to develop Social learning: Digital Learning

Social learning is not a replacement for training and other forms of talent development. But it can accomplish what traditional approaches often cannot. It can leave a "digital audit trail" that reveals the path of a learning journey and allows others to retrace it. It can re-energize your conferences and classes by providing a backchannel of feedback and questions. (Bingham T., Conner M., 2015)

The process of observational behavior and unconventional learning helps knowledge becoming competences, but it is not sufficient. People need to learn first of all through a traditional approach. University is what we mean by "traditional approach", an academic learning that helps us to have a solid educational background and a method to shape our mental process.

In the last years universities have understood the incredible strength of team working and observational behavior applied to an unconventional learning, so professors push students to enjoy projects as presentations in class within groups. Students can work with their peers improving skills as leadership, team-work, problem solving and coordination within a group. Skills increasingly required by firms.

So preparing students for soft skills and teamwork should take priority in curriculum improvement. These competences are not sufficiently developed in the ordinary academic environment, so students have to find a way to improve their capabilities to work in team and use digital platforms.

Teamwork skills are important because, for example, most social media positions require collaboration with a media team or cross-functional team. Instead of a collection of assignments, students should gain insight into the marketing process, for example, through purposeful participation in a meaningful campaign from beginning to end or through team to develop a project or solve a problem for a real company. These competences are essential to face work environment after university.

In today's Internet-driven world, more and more knowledge workers prefer to have a say in how the company facilitates their learning. With so much of the world's workforce

connected to social media, that's where most workers are turning to informally seek their knowledge. Generally speaking, companies invest a lot in delivering workers the knowledge they require to do their job successfully. The more knowledge a worker assimilates, and the quicker he absorbs it, the more competitive and profitable will he become for the company. The companies spend a huge part of their personnel development budget on formal learning, such as training courses and workshops, a surprising number of students that come out of those sessions are unprepared to put that learning into practice.

However, once people are in the workforce, they use informal learning techniques, including:

- Observing other colleagues;
- Asking senior employees;
- Experimenting on their own;
- Doing their own additional research to fill in the gaps to perfect the skills they need in the real world.

With the proliferation of the Internet, learners are turning to social connections and tools to learn informally. The following are some ways that companies can leverage Social Media platforms in informal learning setting:

- LinkedIn
- Chat/Messaging
- Google Drive
- Facebook Groups/Pages
- Twitter/Instagram
- Blogs

While some of these Social Media tools can be used to achieve multiple learning objectives, most are excellent at delivering specific informal learning experiences. Recognizing which tools to use, and that type of learning content to deploy using them is vital to successful use of Social Media in informal learning. When it comes to ensuring effective informal learning, there are certain strategies that should be embraced by all organizations.

- Standardization: recognize that not all learners will embrace the same set of Social Media tools as learning aids. Companies will need to introduce standards for their tools;
- Expertise: realize that "expertise" offered via Social Media learning tools is often difficult to verify;
- Security: if public domain Social Media learning tools are being made available to company employees, then security must be a concern that should be addressed;
- Oversight: should there be oversight of an employee's access to such tools? Or, will the company go by the "honor system" and trust that employees won't abuse the use of these tools?

Digital learning, as the mix between the use of social networks, digital platforms and IM Apps and social learning, could be the competitive advantage for companies. Within 2020, clients will manage 85% of their economic relations with the companies without human interactions.

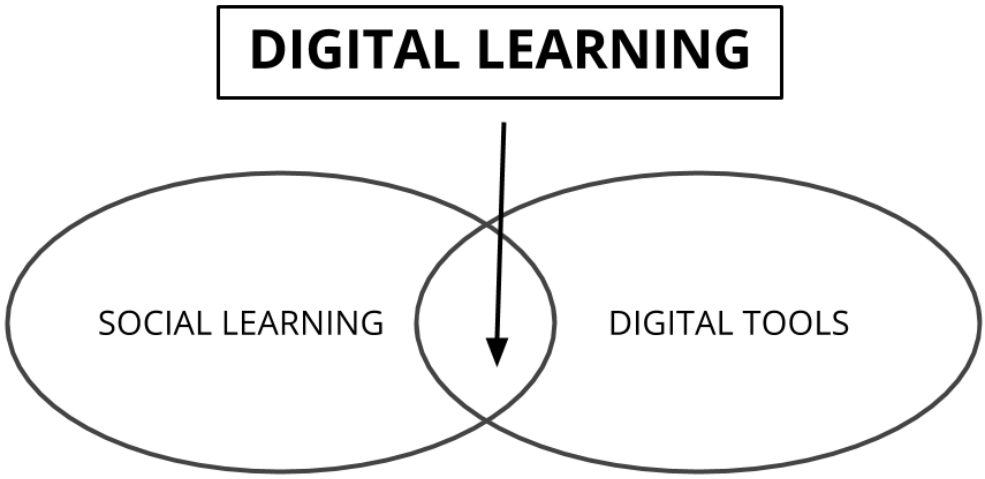

Image 6. Digital Learning as the mix between Social Learning and Digital Tools.

Learning on digital issues is fundamental for companies because of:

- Integration of news about social media marketing and digital marketing with the management strategies;
- Understanding better proposals by consultants, freelancers, agencies;
- Possibility of introduction new points of view.

Continuous learning becomes fundamental also for freelancers because:

- They have to be always informed and prepared about daily news;
- They need to collect generic knowledge, but also specialized one in order to distinguish from competitors.

Nowadays the key term is evolution and a never stop learning. New jobs, as SEO Specialist, Web Developer, Web Designer, Web Project Manager, Community Specialist, Web Analyst and so on; need several and always new courses, not the normal institutional and academic courses, but low cost ones available at home through web. There is a necessity to keep on our competences, we cannot permit to develop our knowledge every two years, but every weeks. The world is continuously changing and we have to change with it. It really hard to keep on learning and working at the same time, but people who can link experience, job, learning, month by month achieve new competences and authority, and also innovation, ideas and business.

Finally, digital learning is the new integrated social learning thanks to technological tools. It is the key for companies and personal competitive advantage. It could be the turning point for innovation and progress. Digital learning is revolutionizing the critical-thinking of people, it has an incredible impact of people's education. The incredible aspect is that it influences everyone at every stage of our life, we can keep on learning also at the age of 80, because it is accessible, easy and immediate.

The fundamental characteristics of Digital Learning are:

- Presence of digital platforms containing accessible documents to anyone;
- A community that share the same passion, goal and culture;
- A strong leadership that guide and help community to avoid "negative" knowledge;

- Never-ending learning environment;
- Guidelines or vademecum to make everyone understand digital tools.

The following case study shows how digital learning can be pursued and acquired in an unconventional environment. MARKETERs Club, an Italian association composed by students, is presented as the perfect situation where students can always learn through digital tools and social media and be prepared better for a future working environment. Social media is not just an added instrument anymore, they become a fundamental tools to acquire real competences. Social learning does not lose its main characteristics, social learning emerges because there is a community, a passion, leaders, mentors, models. Social learning has been updated, it had to adapt itself to this modern age, and for this reason digital tools completed it.

People have just to discover this incredible opportunity and internalize it. Digital learning will make the difference.

3. Case study

3.1 Story of MARKETERs Club

MARKETERs Club was founded on May 11th, 2012 by Francesco Favaro, a marketing student at Ca' Foscari University. MARKETERs Club is nowadays an Italian no profit association which involves more than 400 regularly enrolled members.
At the beginning, the club was composed by 20 marketing and management enthusiasts, who redacted the statute and manifesto and started developing the structure of the association beginning with the board of directors.
Initially MARKETERs Club was a group intended for a limited number of members, as an elite. Successfully a network began to take form and members understood that the most important resource should be shared knowledge and experiences of various people.

During the years, MARKETERs Club attracted the attention of many students:

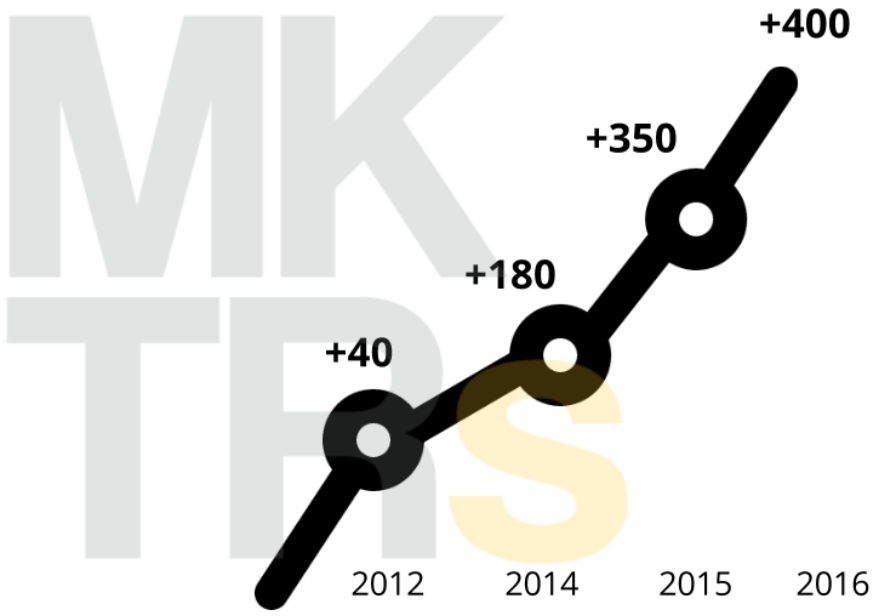

Image 7. The growth of MARKETERs Club.

In 2014 MARKETERs Club became an officially recognized Italian no-profit association. The current headquarter is in Venice, where MARKETERs Club scouts all of its human resources.

In order to become a member you are required to be

- Regularly enrolled in Ca' Foscari University of Venice's courses;
- An honorary member after a cospicuous donation to the Club.

MARKETERs club is composed by two important boards:

1. The directive board that coordinates and manages the strategic view, partnerships, MARKETERs Academy, network of Alumni, editorial projects and the student committee.

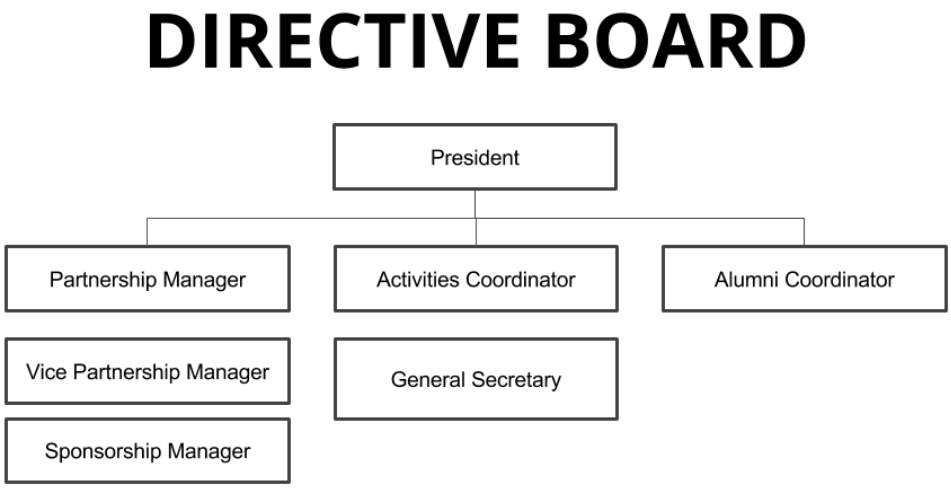

Image 8. The structure of the Directive Board of MARKETERs Club.

2. The student committee that coordinates and manages all principal activities of MARKETERs Club as company visits, workshop, events, team building and collaborations of media partnership or consultancy for companies.

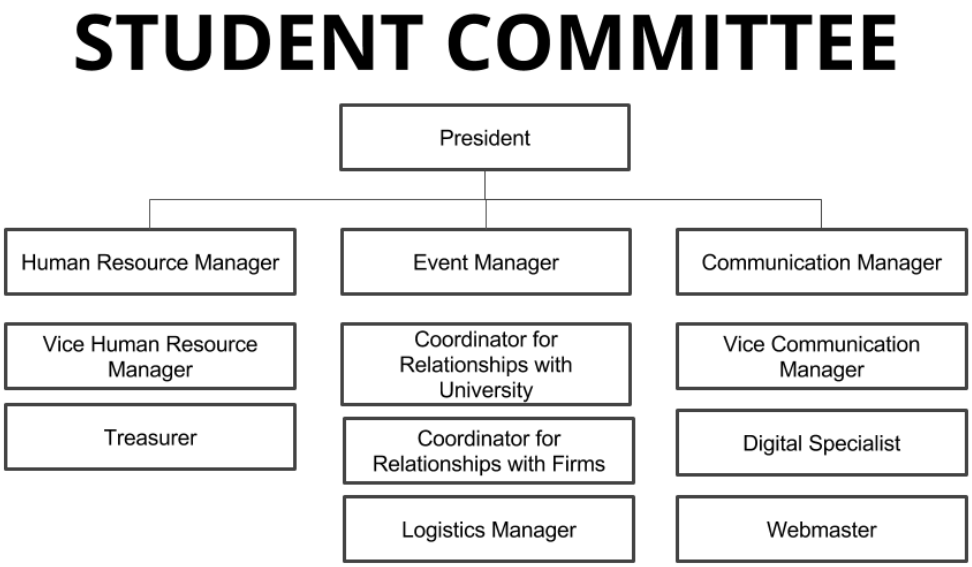

Image 9. The structure of the Student Committee in Venice of MARKETERs Club.

There are four main projects within MARKETERs Club:

1. MARKETERs Club as the student association in Venice;
2. MARKETERs Academy;
3. This MARKETERs Life, our digital magazine;
4. MARKETERs Alumni.

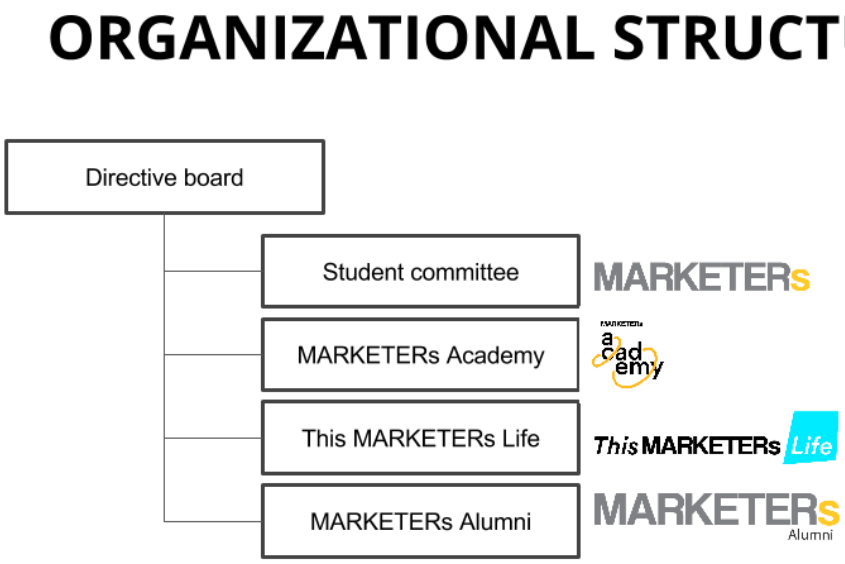

Image 10. Projects of MARKETERs Club.

3.2 Culture and Motivation

MARKETERs Club creates a culture around a goal and involves people in this culture. The association is guided by leaders who use charisma to attract and motivate members. They do their best to defend a project and take decisions based upon it. The project is shaped around the concept of learning by doing, a never-ending personal development. This culture has been created around a few principles: easy and unconventional communication among members, freedom to develop own talent through learning by doing, creation of a huge network composed by marketing and business lovers, endless learning. This is not what MARKETERs Club does, but why it very exists.

The idea was born thanks to a common need to increase knowledge and passion. Knowledge within a group is developed through personal interests generally achieved thanks to personal readings. For example, members of MARKETERs Club are deeply passionate about books, and this knowledge was in need of some practical endeavours, so people started planning some little workshops for other students. In this way, Marketers could improve their skills for organizing events and at the same time acquire knowledge about specific issues related to marketing, personal branding, project management, public speaking, design programs and so on. Successfully, knowledge evolved into competences and skills.

Members started improving their abilities and teaching other members the philosophy of learning by doing, and Activities included organization of company visits, MARKETERs Talks (conferences), workshops. The vision involved many other students and MARKETERs Club became a network of about 200 people. Events became the main tool to increase competences studied though university, so MARKETERs Club decided to change its direction and focus on organization of events.
Events started making contact with even more brands and professionals in the field, broadening MARKETERs Club's horizons, and its network of students became a network involving students and firms. In this way knowledge was enhanced and members acquired new points of view.

Despite the focus on organization of events, the main purpose of MARKETERs Club is nonetheless learning by doing, so two students of the board of directors decided to found MARKETERs Academy, a project of permanent education for near-graduate and graduate students involving several courses; for example, the first edition focused on personal branding, emotive competences, time management and public speaking. MARKETERs Academy was born for a need to improve even better necessary competences for the working environment and to make the network of MARKETERs Alumni more exciting.

Passion about reading and learning springed the idea to create a blog, and so in 2014 an editorial staff was formed. After one year the idea took the shape of an online magazine and a group of five members started working on a logo and a mission.

On November 2015, This MARKETERs Life was launched. This ambitious project collects an editorial staff of more than twenty people working together every day on articles, digital PR and social media strategies.

Image 11. The structure of the Editorial Staff of This MARKETERs Life.

Articles are divided in four main categories which include:

- Digital;
- Lifehack;
- Marketing;
- Stories.

The process of article publication is highly structured and coordinated, entirely managed by the Editor in Chief and Executive Editors who control drafts of articles of editors and contributors on a daily basis and at the same time supervise social media strategy.

In these projects the common mission is learning. People who attend courses, people who read articles, people who participate in events. But most of all, people who work behind the scenes.

3.2.1 Payoff

In this era of web marketing, viral information and buzzing, the creation of a logo is not sufficient. Now the goal of companies is to be inspired: as the success stories of brands such as Nike, CocaCola, Adidas, McDonald, Nespresso and many others clearly testify.
Brands want to distinguish themselves from the others, so they need to improve their distinctive power of logos in order to become more recognizable to consumers.
A payoff is a sentence, usually an emotional sentence, that accompanies the logo of a brand. The translation is closing sentence and the goal is to sum up the essence and culture of the firm.

The fundamental rules for a perfect payoff is:

- A clear and concise message;
- Being easy to understand;
- Being daily memorable;
- Highlighting the quality of service and product;
- Giving distinctive relevance to consumers.

The following examples are the most famous payoffs:

- “Impossible is nothing” by Adidas emphasizes performance of athlete through a message that translates into a life goal;
- “Dove c’è Barilla, c’è casa.” by Barilla Group states that does not really matter where you are, if you are far away from your family, if you can cook pasta Barilla you will think about your country and tradition. As if pasta Barilla can remind you the essence of your Italian culture.

Payoff and logo are what express the essence of your firm or your organization; besides the first things that customers can see.
The first payoff of MARKETERs Club was "knowledge meeting ideas", as initially there was a small group of passionate people sharing their ideas through meetings and brainstormings.

Image 12. The first payoff of MARKETERs Club.

The concept that the club wanted to express was the attitude of this group of friends with common interests to share their passions, competences, values and dreams. Even if MARKETERs Club was just born, members started organizing events, company visits and workshops. They were passionate about the marketing side of the most famous brands, so they tried to contact large companies such as The North Face and Vodafone in order to visit their headquarters and to speak with brand or marketing managers. The board of directors understood that they had to involve all members in the activities, so they established task forces devoted to organizing events.

A task force is a group of 15 or 20 people who together manage all the different aspects of an event. the task force is composed by two main areas: logistics and sponsor area, and communication area. Initially events were organized just to invite managers that could share their experiences with students; MARKETERs Club gave the possibility to hold a debate face to face with a possible employer. Workshops had similar goal, as members had the possibility to attend different courses not available at the university like presentation design, personal branding, illustrator, photoshop and so on.

Later, the board of directors began to understand that in order to organize all these activities in a even better way they had to improve their competences. The more activities they were able to plan, the more they learnt. The more they learnt, the more they shared with other members and the more they taught. Immediately MARKETERs recognized that the first payoff was not appropriate anymore since the club was not just an environment for debating over some arguments, but an active and stimulating learning context.

Image 13. Payoff of MARKETERs Club.

From that moment on, the new payoff became “learning by doing”, a really famous sentence already used for emphasizing that situation when in order to learn you have to try and do it yourself. This new payoff perfectly describes the message and the goal of MARKETERs Club: if someone wants to try something different from the academic setting, they can find a perfect learning environment inside MARKETERs Club, since a member can improve skills and competences through organization of events, management of marketing campaigns, simply writing a professional e-mail, mastering several apps, programs for project management and social media.

Members are not alone, they are supported by mentors who are alumni or members of the board of directors. In this way, knowledge and competences are naturally passed on. People learn, MARKETERs stays alive. The most important advantage in this club is that if a member wants to manage a project, or just has an idea, he can develop it together with others. The structure of this club is not already standardized and fixed, so these are transition years, and the system is flexible. Flexibility is the main strength of the club.

3.3 Learning mechanism

MARKETERs Club is composed by students and alumni, each member is or was a student of Ca' Foscari University of Venice. This is a really important information to highlight that there are no "adults" who directly teach to MARKETERs. At the beginning competences were acquired through past and personal experiences, and eventually shaped together. In the follow up, members developed a passion for what they were doing, so a fundamental turning point was represented by personal readings. MARKETERs love reading, so they started sharing ideas, opinions and knowledge through secret Facebook groups.

Knowledge turned into competences and there was a need to make them accessible to anyone, so each time someone wrote a job description or a modus operandi, he uploaded them to Google Drive. Google Drive is like a bible for MARKETERs Club: in this digital platform developed by Google, they share everything needed for coordination and communication among each areas.

Google Drive was not enough to transform and transfer know how, so MARKETERs needed to coordinate themselves according to a better system, because tasks and members increased more and more. An app dedicated to project management was needed, so MARKETERs started using Podio during the organization of events.

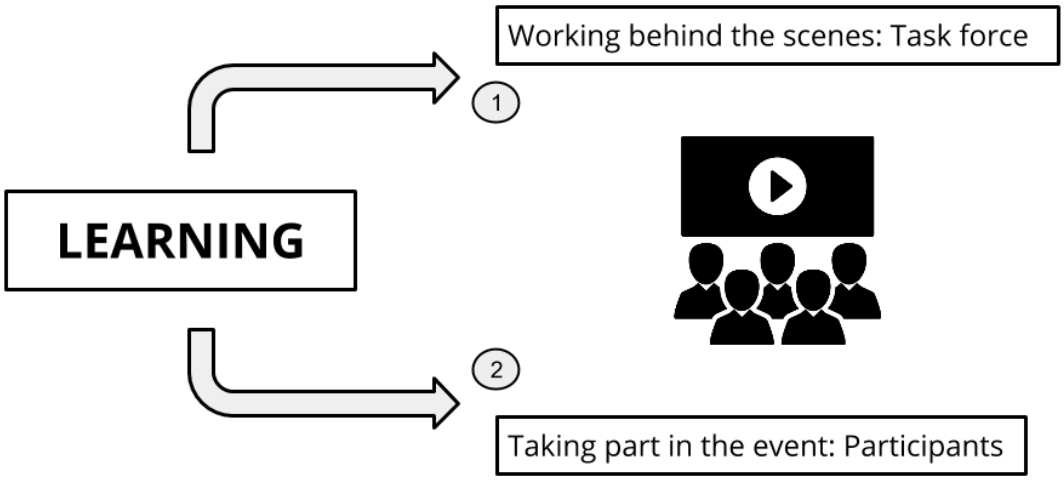

Image 14. The process of learning within MARKETERs Club.

The engagement and fame of Club increased year by year thanks to even better use of social media. Senior members started teaching new MARKETERs to use each aspect of social networks, improving their strategies for different purposes, creating monitoring, drafting social media reports. A teaching – learning environment was born. After several events with really important guests, MARKETERs Club attracted the attentions of firms, agencies and they started asking collaborations for drafting marketing strategies, marketing campaigns, management of social networks and general strategic brainstorming. Members had the opportunity to speak and interact with several experts, managers achieving the support of important personalities.

As we can see from image 14, the learning process has two perspectives: number 1 behind the scenes, that is task force, and number 2 taking part in the event, that are participants. At the beginning, MARKETERs Club members organized events in order to attend them and to learn from guests' speech on interesting themes, such as strategic marketing and project management. Eventually, each event was not the source of learning anymore, but the organization of the event itself was: as we said, *learning by doing*.

A fundamental step in the learning process of MARKETERs is *debriefing*. It is a document with all the problems emerged and mistakes that people have committed, for

example, during a task force. This document is really important in order to avoid the mistakes done before. Debriefings are well structured and divided by area: communication, sponsor, logistics, project management, speakers' coordination and general mistakes.

This stimulates people to think about their conduct and actions, to develop solutions and better strategies. Debriefing is a shared document, it is not owned just by leaders. In this way, each member can contribute and be involved. During the final meeting to discuss about debriefing, people do not blame each other, they discuss in order to improve the next project, they feel involved rather than judged by someone else.

Debriefing helps people to avoid mistakes done before, just by discussing them together, solutions are better internalized, not simply understood. Debriefing is developed during the organization of events or general activities. Any members involved can draft and write on this document, in this way every point of view is taken into consideration and analysed. Debriefing is discussed at the end of the event with the whole task force. The meeting is conducted by the project manager in order to discuss about every problem met during the marketing campaign.

This process of revision revealed a valid method to overcome observed problems and mistakes.

Learning mechanism within a task force

The learning mechanism during a task force is a little bit more standardized with respect to the board of directors. Usually a project manager is nominated by the president or mentors. Project manager is already skilled thanks to past experiences during his MARKETERs career. He creates a form to collect all the applications of members who want to join the task force. If applications exceed the sufficient number to shape a group, around 15 or 20 people, the PM selects members based on their motivation or skills.

Once a task force is created, the project manager decides dates of meeting and starts delegating and coordinating areas. Areas are communication, logistics, sponsors and speakers coordination.

The communication area drafts the marketing strategy and divides the group into social media specialists and media partner coordinators. At the same time they start working with graphic designer and webmaster. Marketing manager is guided by mentors, members who joined past task forces with the same role; this is the critic relationship that could make the difference in learning process. Marketing manager is also supported by documents and guidelines prepared during past events in order to make a benchmark and have a reference point. Mentors can always monitor task force through Google Drive through editorial plane, GANTTS, database of sponsors, speakers, media partners. The flow of mails is controlled, since every time a member sends an email must put cc PM or responsible for that area. In this way, a complete control over situation is available.

During the organization of event, each member can propose an idea or a performance. New initiative are always well accepted if budget and time are enough. During the event task force works on the backstage, dealing with all the aspects.
The most important part of an event, is "post event" when members report what is happened during the event through photos, videos, posts, storify, social media reports and emails in order to thank guests and participants and to communicate the success of the day. This fundamental step is needed to maintain a professional behavior and to strengthen network. When MARKETERs Club asks sponsor and media partner to collaborate at the event through social promotion or technical support in exchange to visibility. So, members developed tangible proof with videos, photos and mainly social media reports.
Social media report is really important to demonstrate to all partners the impact of what we did.

These are a few examples:

Image 15. Storify of MARKETERs Experience 2015.

Image 16. Storify of MARKETERs Experience 2015.

Image 17. Storify of MARKETERs Experience.

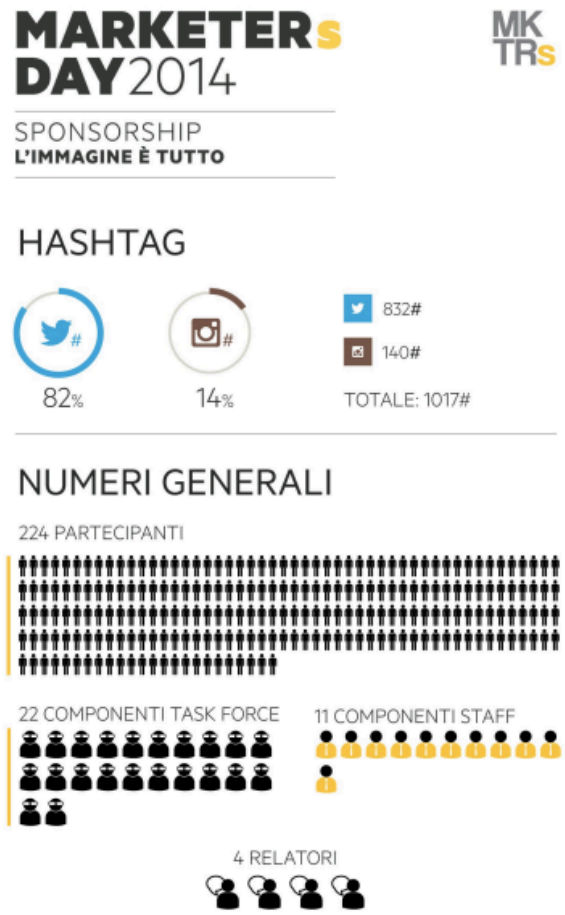

Image 18. Social Media Report of MARKETERs Day 2014.

SPONSOR

	Tipo di post	Data e ora pubblicazione	Visualizzazioni	Mi piace	Commenti	Condivisioni	Clic sul post
ESSEQUATTRO	Foto	03/06/14 19:17	385	15	0	0	50
Leni's	Foto	05/06/14 11:34	302	11	0	0	62
	Video	05/06/14 19:05	629	13	1	0	46
SUPPAN CAFFÈ	Video	06/06/14 13:45	451	12	0	0	32
FREE FUTOOD	Foto	07/06/14 17:25	344	15	0	0	50
	Foto	08/06/14 18:35	474	12	1	0	82
KAPLAN	Video	09/06/14 18:30	1041	13	0	1	82
sodastream	Foto	10/06/14 14:10	620	17	1	0	97
	Foto	11/06/14 11:05	402	11	0	0	99
KEGLEVICH	Foto	12/06/14 17:05	524	15	1	0	120

Image 19. Social Media Report of MARKETERs Day 2014.

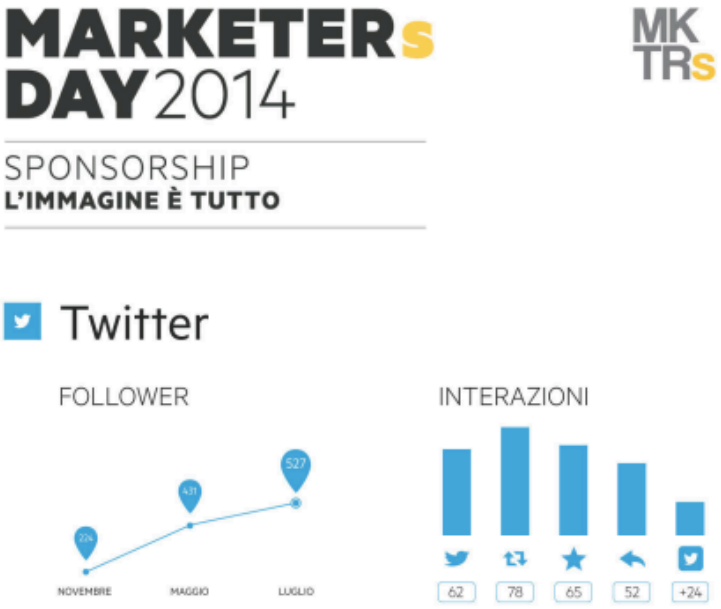

Image 20. Social Media Report of MARKETERs Day 2014.

3.3.1 Communication and Organization

Internal organization of board of director is possible and managed thanks to IM Apps for informal communication as WhatsApp, Telegram or Slack, formal communication and important information thanks to Gmail, and archiving documents as editorial plan, check list, budget, GANTTS, database and so on thanks to Google Drive. In order to manage a task force is generally used excel documents or Project Management Programs as Wunderlist, Podio and Asana. These kind of digital platforms helps anyone to have an outline of the situation about personal tasks and other ones.

At the beginning of the experience of anyone there is a period to learn how to use these tools thanks by senior members. In this way knowledge is shared and transmitted. Competences are little by little increased and developed through the continuous process of learning by doing, observational behavior and readiness to learn about new things everyday.

3.3.2 Development of talent, Mission and Vision

The development of talent occurs naturally. In MARKETERs no one is forced to take responsibilities or undertakes activities. Each member can take initiative to get a project and develop it.

There is a sort of MARKETERs Career, a process of learning a member could undertake:

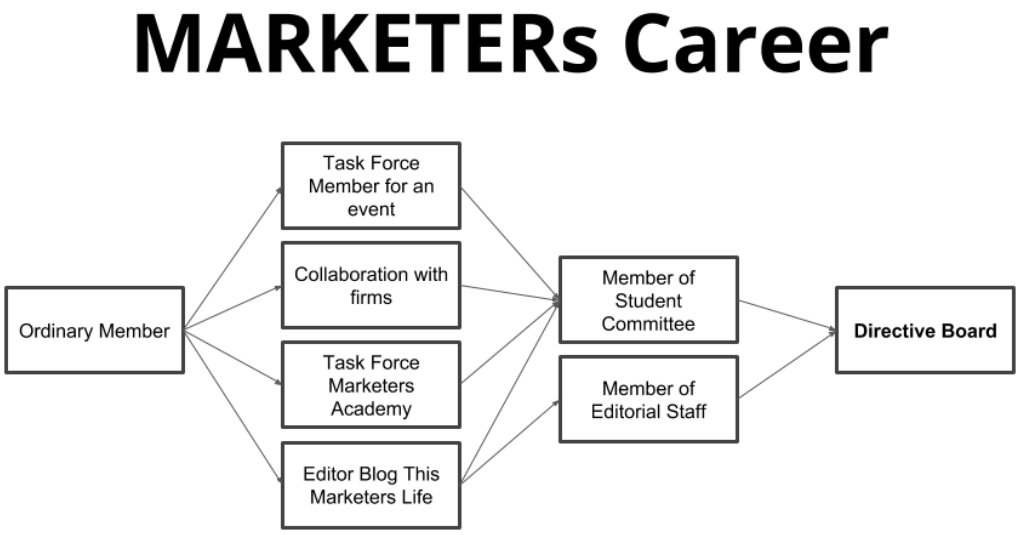

Image 21. Possible career of MARKETERs Members within the association.

MARKETERs club contributes mainly to attitude of members, competences could be taught and learnt successfully. Attitude for problem solving and initiative could be learnt through experiential learning, through a task force. Competences are a direct consequence of attitude, because it refers not to what someone could do, but why he does it. Social identity within MARKETERs Club plays an important role in order to achieve objectives, because the first goal of people is learning and common good to share and acquire knowledge in order to strengthen the club.

As every brand, MARKETERs club has a mission and a vision. Vision is composed by the objectives and why people want to contribute to these goals. Payoff is "learning by doing", this is the big "why" of MARKETERs, not "what" it does. It does not matter what we do, we can organize events, company visits, courses, but the most important thing is learning through these activities. Mission is how we can go toward our vision, how we can realize our dreams. MARKETERs club identified mission into organization of several activities, but this does not mean that we can change our direction in the future.

This concept has been inspired by The Golden Circle by Simon Sinek.[7]

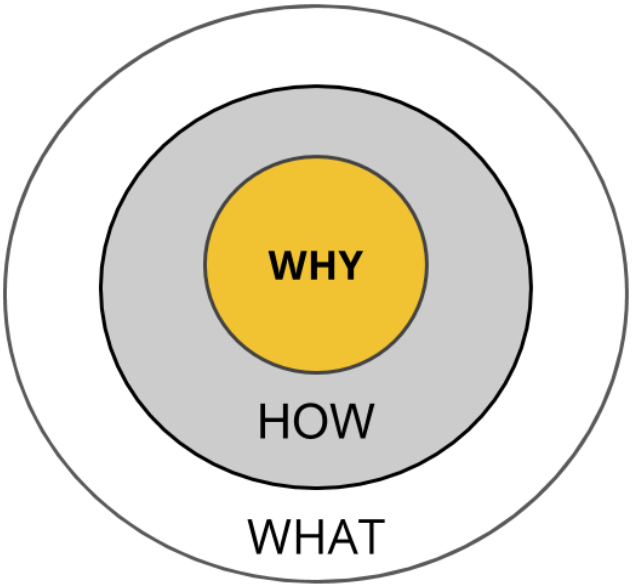

Image 22. The Golden Circle developed by Simon Sinek.

[7] According to Simon Sinek, the fundamental difference between the "Apples" of the world and everyone else is that they start with "why". To explain this concept Sinek has developed The Golden Circle that has three layers: "why" business exists and the core belief, "how" the business fulfills that core belief and "what" the company does to fulfill that core belief. What Sinek found is that most companies do their marketing backwards, because they don't know why they do what they do.

3.4 MARKETERs Events

Every year MARKETERs Club organizes several events. The small ones, called MARKETERs Talks, are a sort of conference of 2 hours length with important personalities of business or marketing environment. Students have the possibility to attend and make questions to guests. These types of events occur three or four times per year.

The most famous **MARKETERs Talks** are:

- September 2014, Diego Bolzonello, former general manager of Italian shoes producer **Geox;**
- February 2015, Giuseppe Morici, President of European Region of **Barilla**'s group;
- November 2015, Ester Gazzano, Marketing Manager of famous start up **Uber;**
- February 2016, Paolo Iabichino, Chief Creative officer of **Ogilvy & Mathers.**

The main activity of MARKETERs Club is the organization of events and their marketing campaigns. All details are entirely managed by members of the Club.

Since November 2014 four big events have been:

MARKETERs Taste, November 2014

The topic was "Luxury Brand Management" across different sectors; food, automotive and consultancy. The speakers were Giulio Pastore of **Maserati**, Giraldin Von Lahnstein of **Van Lahnstein Management** and Marisa Huff of **Alajmo Group**. This event immediately has reached a sold out with 180 participants.

MARKETERs MakeIT!, March 2015

The topic was "3D Printing – the New Digital Handicraft", discussing about Made in Italy and the match between traditional craftsmanship and technological innovation in the modern age. Speakers spoke about new technological tools used to create handmade

objects; they were Stefano Micelli, professor at Ca' Foscari University of Venice and founder of the "Fablab a scuola" project, Elia de Tomasi Co-Founder of FabLab of Venice, Martina Lodi, project manager of IDEA GINGER crowdfunding platform, Marco Bettiol, professor at University of Padua, Bianca Marchioro, ideator of Blancharme brand of 3D jewelley, Giulia Favaretto, commercial manager at Bijouets.

MARKETERs Day 2015, June 2015

An event focused on "Emotional Sports Marketing", four famous brands told about their different marketing strategies and how they gain their competitive advantage. Guests who hold the speech were Floriano Macchione, **Nike** Football event manager, Michele Mancassola, Marketing Manager at Athena Group the official distributor for **GoPro** in Italy, Giorgio Saviane, Senior Brand Manager at **The North Face** EMEA and Massimo Braconi, Product Testing Manager for **Nordica.** There have been also **4Anci**, **San Benedetto**, **Decathlon**, **Marketing Arena** and **RedBull** as technical sponsor. The event went totally sold out with 350 participants.

MARKETERs Experience, November 2015

MARKETERs Experience is the new event format, and this first edition concentrated on theme of customer shopping experience across different backgrounds; in stores, online and omni-channel. Speakers were Silvia Ceolin, Head of Online Store Management of **FiloBlu**, Andrea Crociani, Partnership and Marketing Manager of **Airbnb** and Javier Gomez Palacios, Co-Founder and Managing Director of **Tiger**. This event collected 212 participants, a sold out within 8 minutes.

3.4.1 Structure of events

There are generally two types of structure of MARKETERs events. Programs are similar between them, but those of MARKETERs Taste and MARKETERs Experiences are shorter than those of MARKETERs MakeIT! and MARKETERs Day. Once the check in is completed, the event starts with an opening and an initial speech of a member or professor. Speakers have forty five minutes to hold the conference and then they are available for fifteen minutes for students' questions. During the event a coffee break and lunch is offered to participants, with an eventual cocktail closing party.

MARKETERs events are conceived and developed by members of the task force who cure live communication during the event through several social networks. Live tweeting is monitored by the communication area and it implemented to ask questions to speakers and involve all participants through official hashtags.

3.4.2 Experience of Task Force as real impact of Digital Learning

MARKETERs events are not simply conferences, as the task force tries to keep attention and involvement always at a high level; this is possible thanks to interaction through live tweeting and other social networks. The task force encourages participants to use official hashtags and take a selfie on social networks. As a matter of fact during the check-in participants receive a badge, gadget, pen and sheets to take note. Everything is MARKETERs-branded in order to create a social identity. At the end of the event there is an award ceremony, where MARKETERs club, after developing a contest during the marketing campaign linked to the theme of the event, in order to promote the event itself and further involve participants, delivers themed prizes to winners. During the event there are often surprises like selfie zones, live contests, scenic designs, background actors and so on.

MARKETERs Club is a stimulating environment where people's ideas can come true. Task forces growed even more structured and coordinated during the years. This was possible thanks to several debriefings, mistakes and trials. MARKETERs Club is working with a continuous process of self-improving.

The task force experience is highly formative, as it gives several possibilities to express members' talent. How? Once each member's roles have been defined, anyone can get

inspired from the most famous marketing campaigns and apply them to MARKETERs Events. This is an incredible aspect of what is possible thanks to observational behavior. It is not sufficient to observe, people have to inform, study, try and examine in depth.
For example, for the marketing campaign of the last MARKETERs Day, the task force did not limit itself to posting names and logos of sponsors, media partners or speakers on social networks, but a few members created and developed a teaser in the style of Nike's emotional adverts. The theme of MARKETERs Day 2015 was emotional sport marketing, so we asked members if they wanted to test themselves by interpreting a short video playing a given sport. The video required three months of shooting and editing, but the result was an amazing success.

3.4.3 Surveys

In order to assess if digital platforms and social learning have had impact on the learning process of the task force, I drafted a survey to test if there has been an improvement on members' competences.
Based on literature, I identified the most important and influential variables that made social learning effective and efficient. In the first part of the survey, it is necessary to understand if the following variables during task force exist:

- Individual member behavior and team working;
- Organizational surrounding and environment;
- Collaboration;
- Technological support;
- Leadership and guidelines support;
- **Social media and digital platforms.**

The second part of the survey focuses on improvement and development of competencies from t0 to t1. For this kind of research, the importance is not on what kind of improvement on personal learning of members, but whether there has been a real improvement. It has been hard to find a way to understand if competences have been improved thanks to the task force, because for the organization of events the development of soft skills, such as problem solving, time management, leadership and so on, is crucial.

Therefore I identified three main areas of competences that are fundamental in order to participate within a task force. Once I decided macro areas of competences, I divided them into micro areas, or micro competences. In this way, if someone learnt and acquired just a micro competence, he influences the whole macro area by improving it.

Competences are the following:

1. Professional email using Gmail
    - How to use an anchor text
    - How to put someone on cc or ccn
    - How to create digital signature
    - How to upload an offline file and from Google Drive
    - How to format text

2. Use and management of Google Drive
    - How to share documents with external users
    - How to comment documents
    - How to upload offline documents
    - How to use Google Forms
    - How to use Google Slides

3. General knowledge about Social Networks
    - How to create projects on LinkedIn
    - How to confirm competences on LinkedIn
    - How to create new job positions on LinkedIn
    - How to program posts on Facebook
    - How to manage editorial plans on Facebook
    - How to tweet or retweet on Twitter
    - How to mention other users on Twitter
    - How to manage editorial plans on Twitter

In the third part of the survey, I evaluated which variables influence more than others the process of learning focusing mainly on social networks and digital platforms. This is the most important part of the survey, where I can understand if social tools are just a support

for learning, or if they are becoming a fundamental aspect in order to improve competences. I asked if without social media and digital platforms, member would have obtained the same results in terms of quality, speed of performance, availability and involvement of people. The last part of the survey collects personal data about people interviewed.

The empirical model behind the structured of survey is:

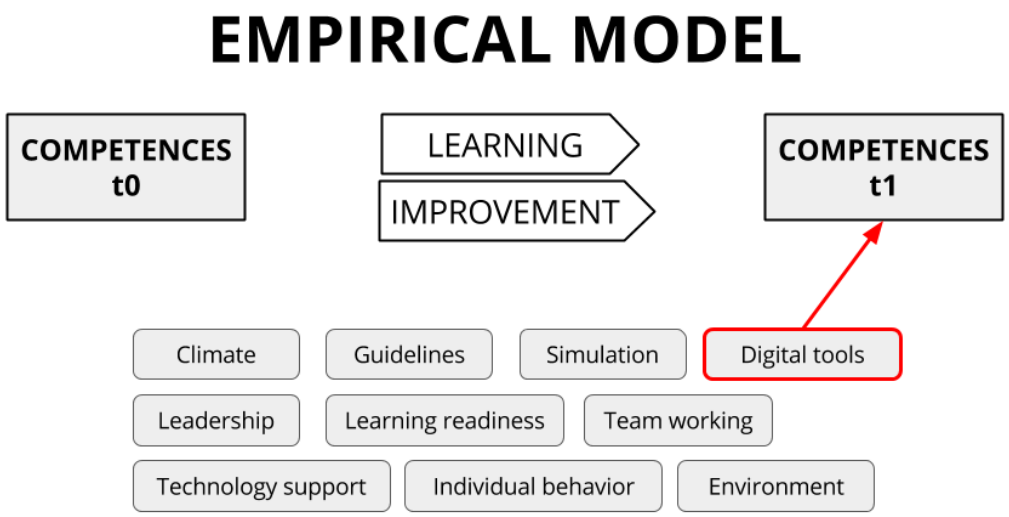

Image 23. The Empirical Model of Thesis.

3.4.4 Methodology

Learning through task forces was evaluated by students rating their own learning development during four different task forces.

Participants were 58 MARKETERs regularly enrolled in Ca' Foscari University of Venice. The 32.8% of them attend the second year of the master's degree, the 31% the third year of bachelor degree. Just the 1.7% of members are enrolled at the first year of the bachelor degree and the 8.6% at the second one. The remaining 8.6% attends the first year of the master's degree. The 17.2% of members are now graduate and they are working.

The academic environment is variegated, MARKETERs are enrolled in several courses as economics and management, marketing and communication, international management and economics.

The 51.7 of respondents are male, the 48.3% female. The age range goes from 18 to 22 years old (29.3%), from 22 to 26 (60.3%) and more than 26 years old (10.3%).

Respondents represent 4 task forces for 4 different events:

- MARKETERs Taste, November 2014;
- MARKETERs MakeIT!, March 2015;
- MARKETERs Day, June 2015;
- MARKETERs Experience, November 2015.

Participants rated their perceptions of their learning development while working on event. Each event had about 20 students organized into teams.

Task structure

A task force is composed by three main working areas; communication, sponsors and logistics area. Students choose their favourite one and thanks to written job descriptions and mentors, they start working. These teams want to achieve a common goal, that is the organization of a real event. The communication team is in charge of promoting the marketing campaign through management of social networks, website, off line promotion with flyers, brochures and posters. The sponsors and logistics teams have the goal of collecting and coordinating sponsors and partners in order to make the event more attractive and cool.

The final goal is tickets sold-out. These team projects in this way are not the same as the university's, they are not evaluated or graded by professors, but they will have a real impact based on the success of the event. It is believed that the use of project teams or task force, as they are called in MARKETERs club, not only help students to develop teamwork skills, but also to enhance individual student learning.

3.4.5 Findings and graphs

The following graphs show data collected by 58 surveys. Comments and analysis are developed taking into consideration statistics and correlations among graphs and tables.

The first part of the survey tests the presence of variables analyzed by literature. I wanted to observe how these variables changed during the organization of events. So, I identified three different phases: the *initial phase* that goes from the first general meeting of the whole task force to the first meeting of specific area; the *intermediate phase that* spans from the first meeting of particular area to the last general meeting, and the *final phase that* goes from the last general meeting to the end of marketing campaign.

The first question is about the individual behavior of task force members. Individual behavior is often taken into consideration in literature regarding social learning, because this aspect is really influential when people work in a learning environment. There were important correlations between motivation and good performance, competences in this way were not simply understood, but internalized.

At the initial phase, the scenario is really positive as the 69% of members are motivated. They feel involved thanks to enthusiastic environment. The percentage of worried, uninterested and wary people are lower, they are generally new members who are eventually going to integrate themselves within the group. Motivated students influence others mostly at the final phase representing a reference point when the situation seems to get critical. The goal of the task force should be creating a situation where people could improve skills as problem solving and stress management.

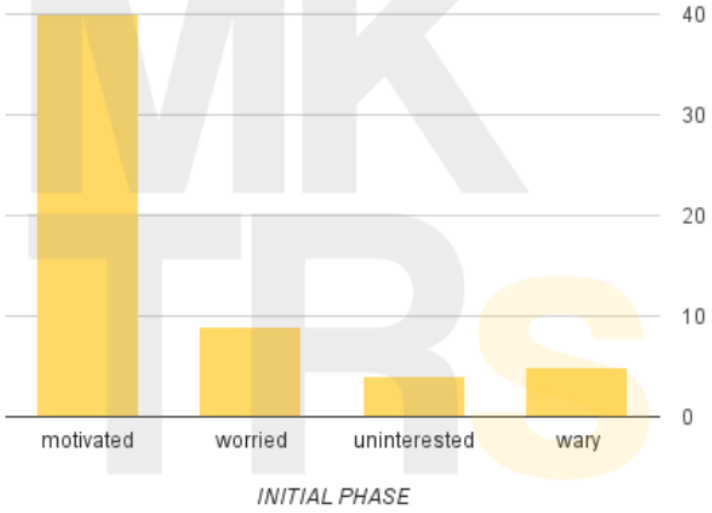

Image 24. Initial phase of Individual Member Behavior.

Uninterested	6.9%
Wary	8.6%
Worried	15.5%
Motivated	69%

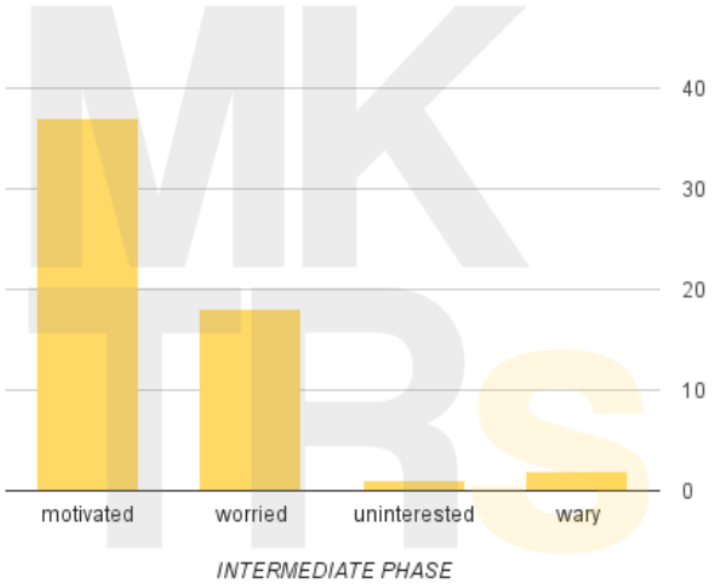

Image 25. Intermediate phase of Individual Member Behavior.

Uninterested	1.7%
Wary	3.4%
Worried	31%

Motivated	63.8%

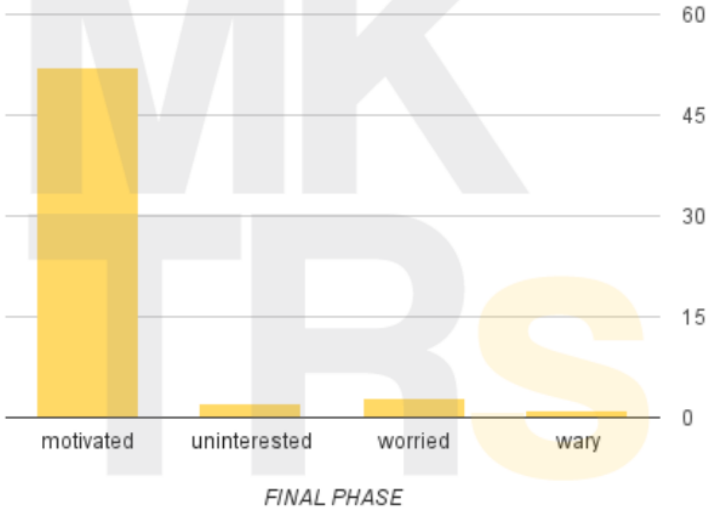

Image 26. Final phase of Individual Member Behavior.

Uninterested	3.4%
Wary	1.7%
Worried	5.2%
Motivated	89.7%

By the way, the majority of respondents felt *motivated* in the each phase. At the initial phase the motivated people stands at 69%, at the intermediate phase the percentage changes and worried people increase from 15.5% to 31%. At the final phase motivated students achieved 89.7% and worried decreased to 5.2%.

It is interesting to notice that the percentage of worried members is higher during the intermediate phase, this probably is a sign of stress because at this stage people started receiving confirmations or refusals form sponsors or speakers. In this case, the task force has to find other solutions and to look for other brands enjoying the event. The following results could mean a better performance working under stress, a fundamental skill for organization of events.

Individual behavior directly influences the personal role perceived by members of task force.

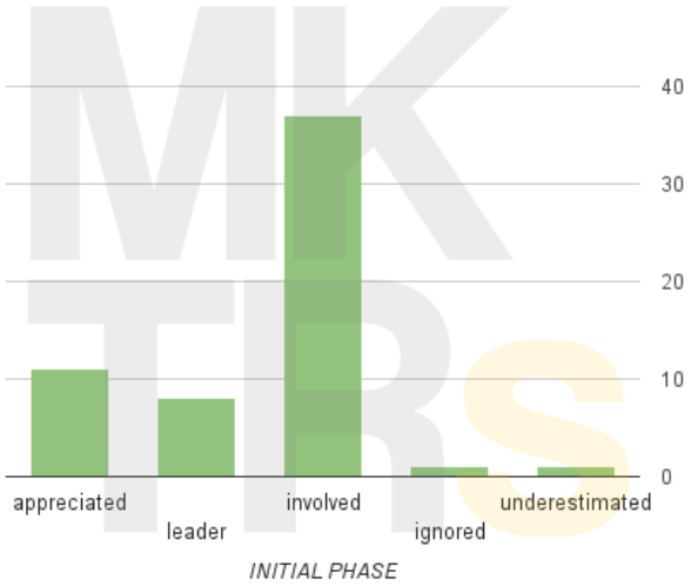

Image 27. Initial phase of personal role perceived by members.

Ignored	1.7%
Underestimated	1.7%
Involved	63.8%
Appreciated	19%
Leader	13.8%

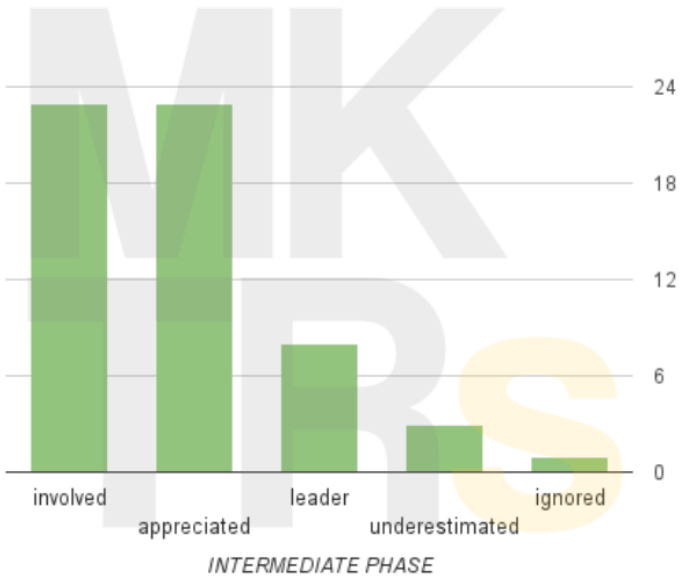

Image 28. Intermediate phase of personal role perceived by members.

Ignored	1.7%
Underestimated	5.2%
Involved	37.9%

Appreciated	41.4%
Leader	13.8%

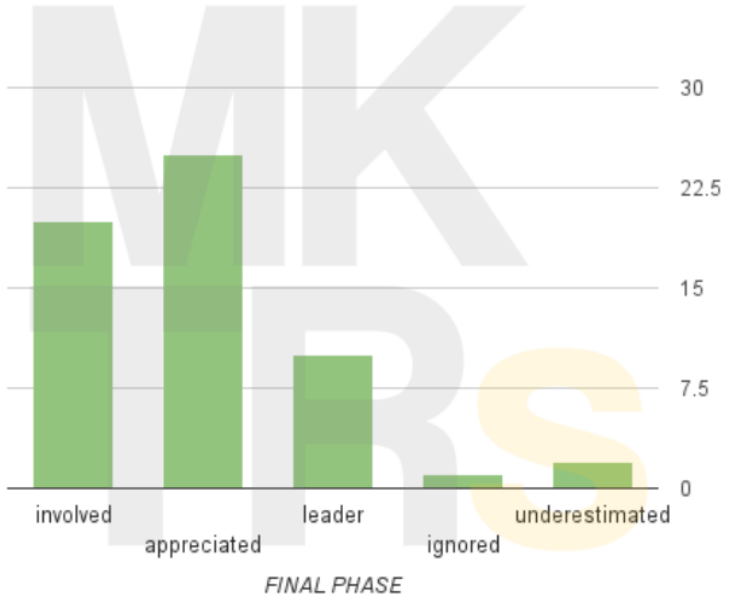

Image 29. Final phase of personal role perceived by members.

Ignored	1.7%
Underestimated	3.4%
Involved	29.3%
Appreciated	48.3%
Leader	17.2%

At the initial phase the majority of people, 63,8%, feel involved. Involvement is then replaced by appreciation; at the intermediate phase the appreciated group increased from 19% to 41,4%. At the end of the task force appreciated-feeling people were 48,3%. Appreciation is positively correlated to acquisition of competences, because it influences the readiness to learning as literature confirms. During the final phase of the task force people achieved self-consciousness about what they learnt and in terms of contribution to the event, for this reason the percentage of leaders increased; consciousness is directly proportional to initiative. But leadership has to be naturally recognized by others, and this is why the percentage increased a little bit.

The next graphs are relative to the environment and climate during task force in terms of atmosphere. These variables, as individual behavior, are positively correlated with the attitude to learning. These are the results:

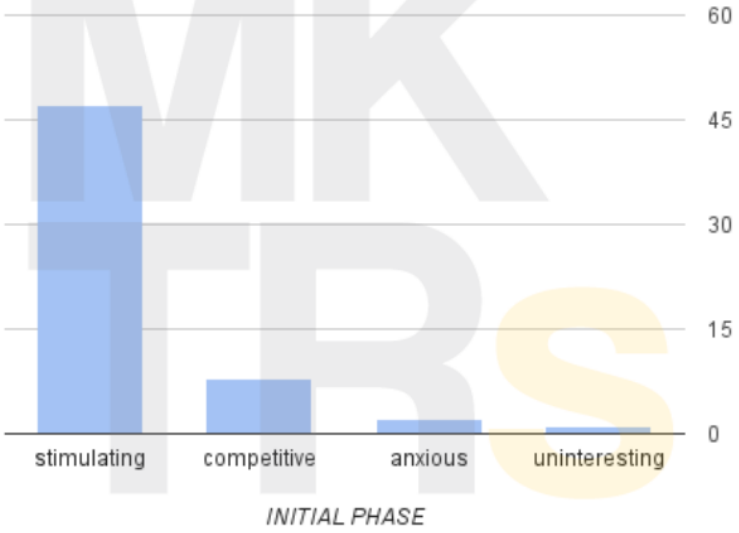

Image 30. Initial phase of environment perceived by members.

Demotivating	0%
Uninteresting	1.7%
Anxious	3.4%
Competitive	13.8%
Stimulating	81%

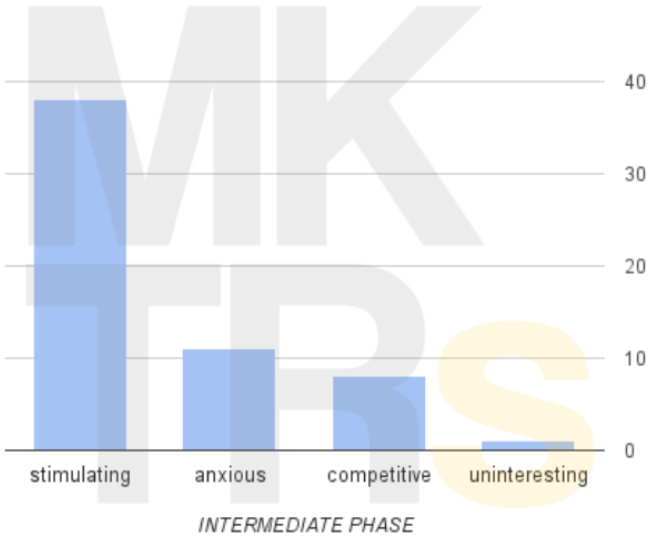

Image 31. Intermediate phase of environment perceived by members.

Demotivating	0%
Uninteresting	1.7%
Anxious	19%
Competitive	13.8%
Stimulating	65.5%

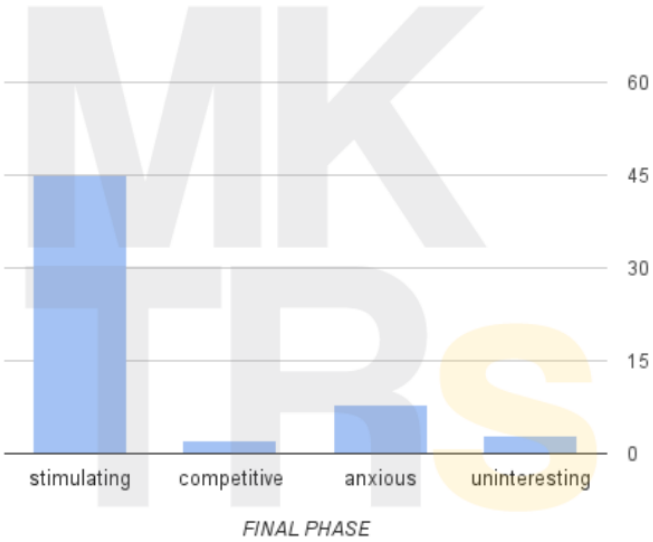

Image 32. Final phase of environment perceived by members.

Demotivating	0%
Uninteresting	5.2%
Anxious	13.8%
Competitive	3.4%
Stimulating	77.6%

Individual behavior is positively influenced by environment and climate perceived by the task force. Also in this case, we can notice that the predominant feeling is of a stimulating environment, but during the intermediate phase people feel the organizational surrounding a little bit competitive and anxious. The percentage of anxiety goes from 3,4% in the initial phase to 19% and at the end to 13,8%. It is interesting to underline that no one perceived a demotivating environment. This aspect demonstrates that the task force is potentially a good setting to stimulate learning and initiative.

The following question asks if devices actually contributed to management of internal communication and coordination among members. From now on, people are asked to give a value ranging from 1 to 4 to evaluate the impact of several variables, where one stands for *very little* and four for *a lot*.

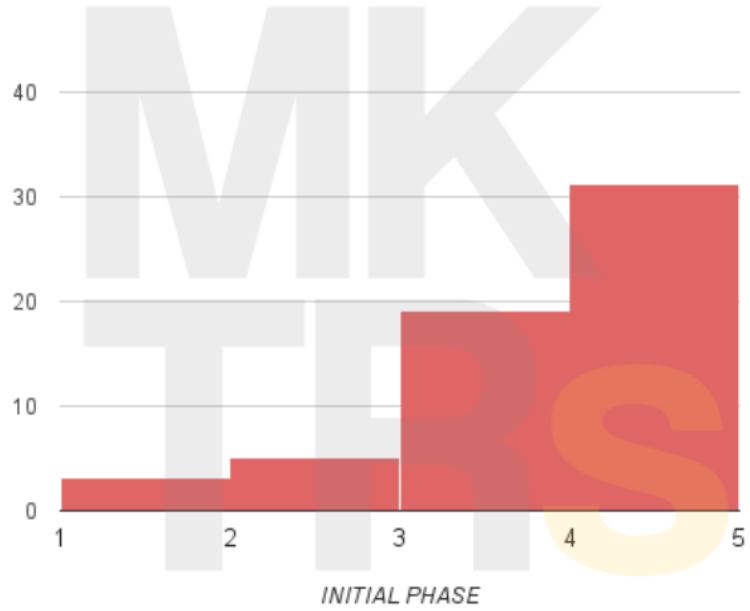

Image 33. Initial phase of contribution of devices to internal communication and coordination.

1	5.2%
2	8.6%
3	32.8%
4	53.4%

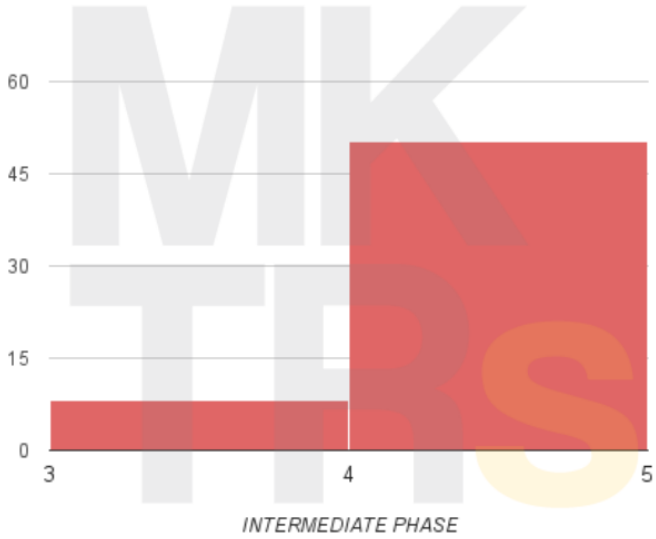

Image 34. Intermediate phase of contribution of devices to internal communication and coordination.

1	0%
2	0%
3	13.8%
4	86.2%

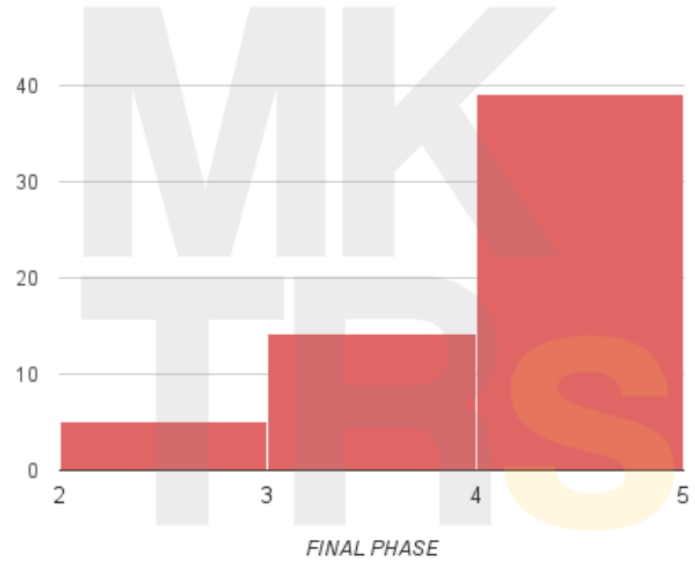

Image 35. Final phase of contribution of devices to internal communication and coordination.

1	0%
2	8.6%
3	24.1%
4	67.2%

Participants were asked how much time they spent on devices (personal computers, tablets and smartphones) during task forces in order to manage internal communication and coordination. At the initial phase the 53,4% of participants declared to use devices a lot, during the intermediate phase the percentage increased to 86,2%, but at the end there there was a downturn, as devices were used a lot by 67,2%. This is because at the final phase members of task forces started working, meeting each other in order to organize logistic aspects and manage merchandising, so devices were not needed as much as during the intermediate phase.

A similar question was asked regarding mentors, leaders and heads of areas.

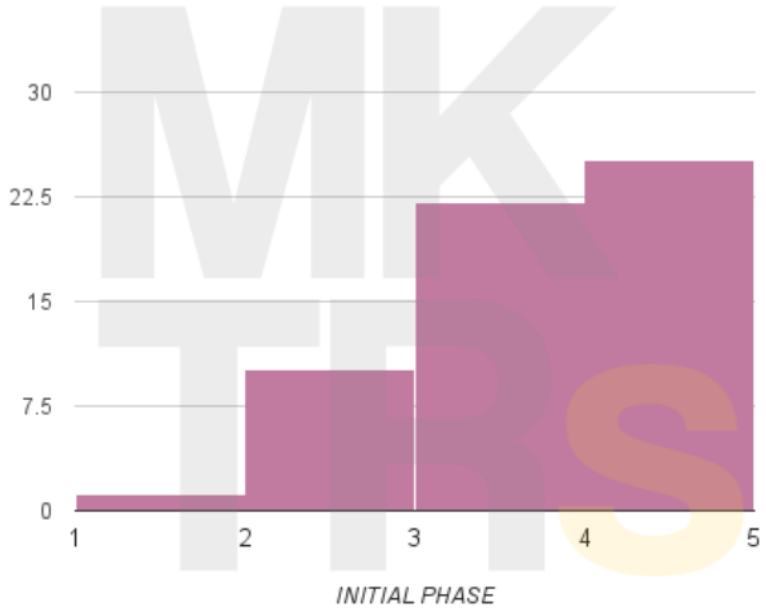

Image 36. Initial phase of contribution of mentors to internal communication and coordination.

1	1.7%
2	17.2%
3	37.9%
4	43.1%

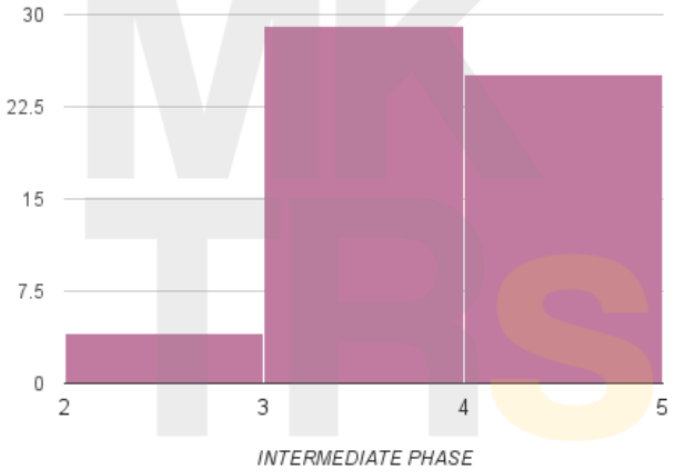

Image 37. Intermediate phase of contribution of mentors to internal communication and coordination.

1	0%
2	6.9%
3	50%
4	43.1%

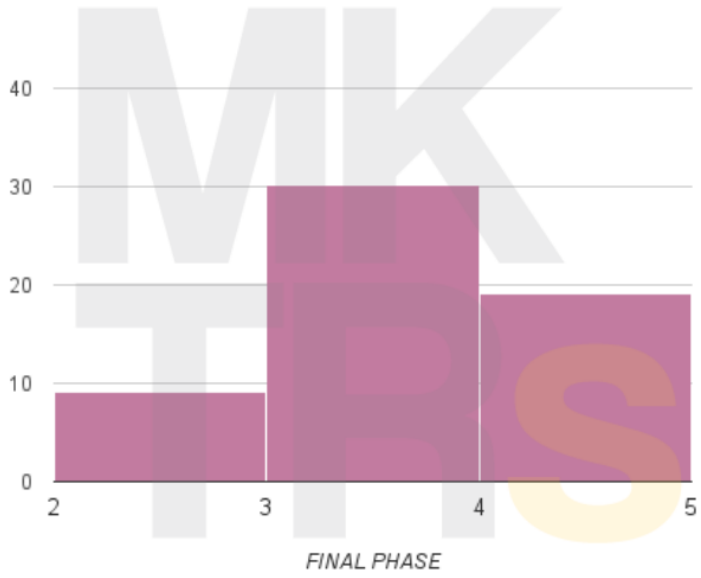

Image 38. Final phase of contribution of mentors to internal communication and coordination.

1	0%
2	15.5%
3	51.7%
4	32.8%

During the initial and intermediate phase participants assessed they entrusted a lot the heads of areas, 43.1%, this percentage decreased at the final phase to 32.8%; people became more independent and responsible. During the task force members face a process of growth and development, this aspect influences a lot learning by doing, so people practice problem solving on their own and improve their performance under stress. Generally, mentors have a fundamental role during the whole task force, they are the reference point. In terms of social learning, they represented the *models*, individuals observed by members.

Devices were used a lot during the entire organization of events, so several social networks, digital platforms and IM Apps were employed both for internal communication among members and for management of marketing campaigns. In the following graphs we can see which social tools have been used more than others.

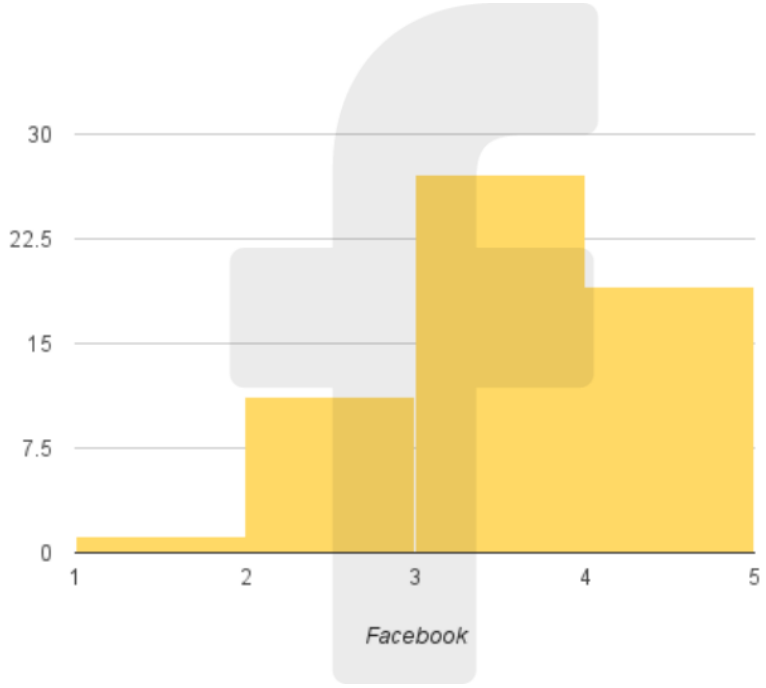

Image 39. Facebook

1	1.7%
2	19%
3	46.6%
4	32.8%

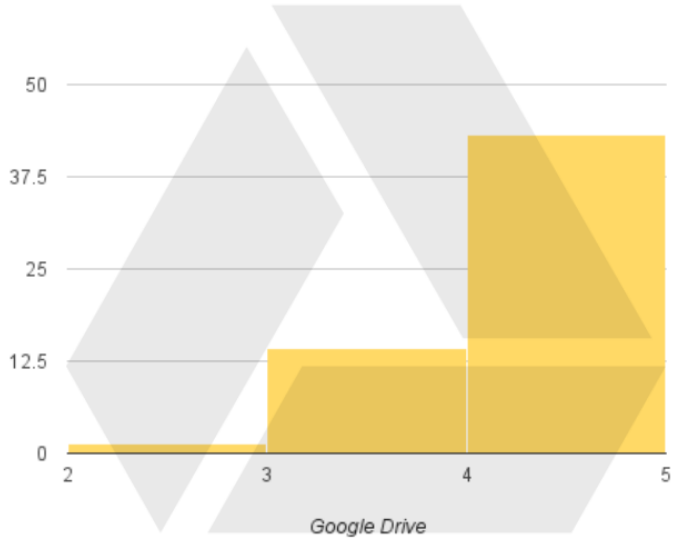

Image 40. Google Drive

1	0%
2	1.7%
3	24.1%
4	74.1%

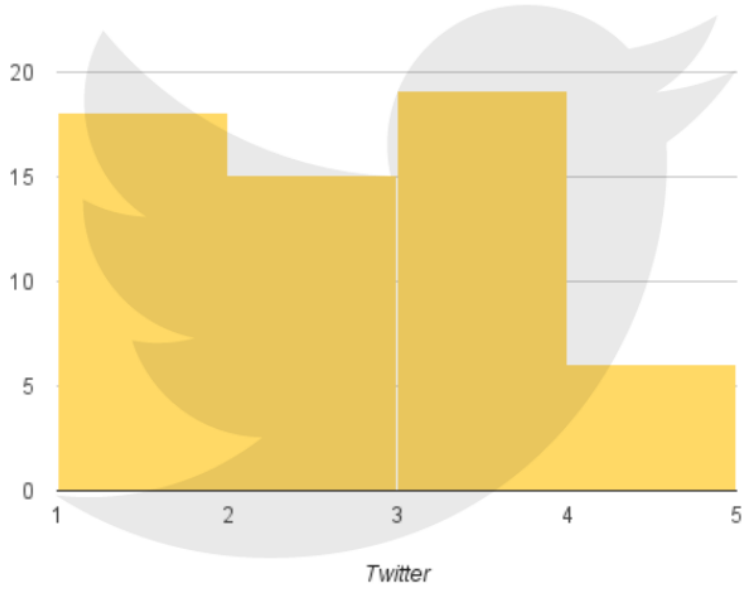

Image 41. Twitter

1	31%
2	25.9%
3	32.8%
4	10.3%

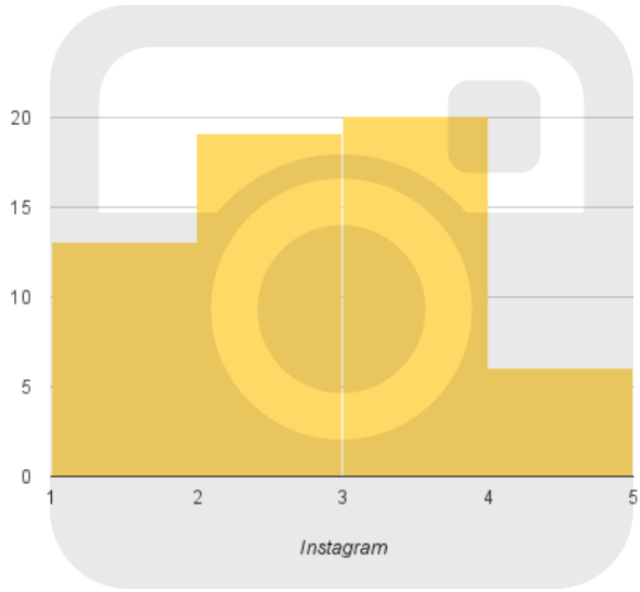

Image 42. Instagram

1	22.4%
2	31%
3	32.8%
4	13.8%

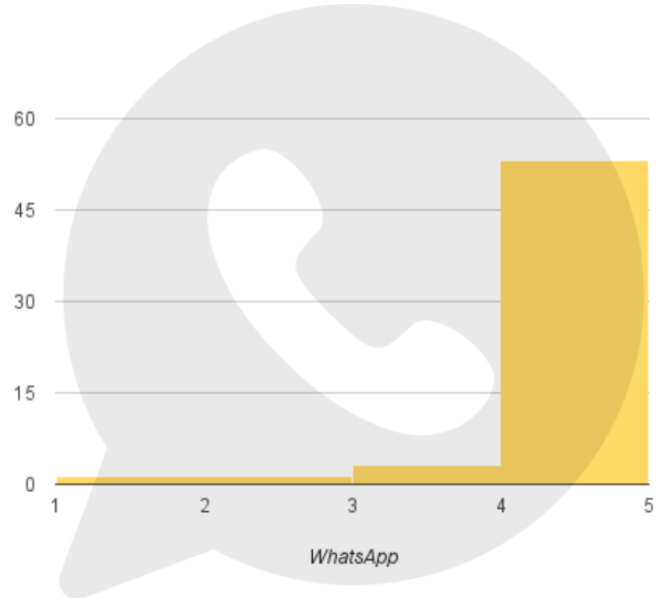

Image 43. WhatsApp

1	1.7%
2	1.7%
3	5.2%
4	91.4%

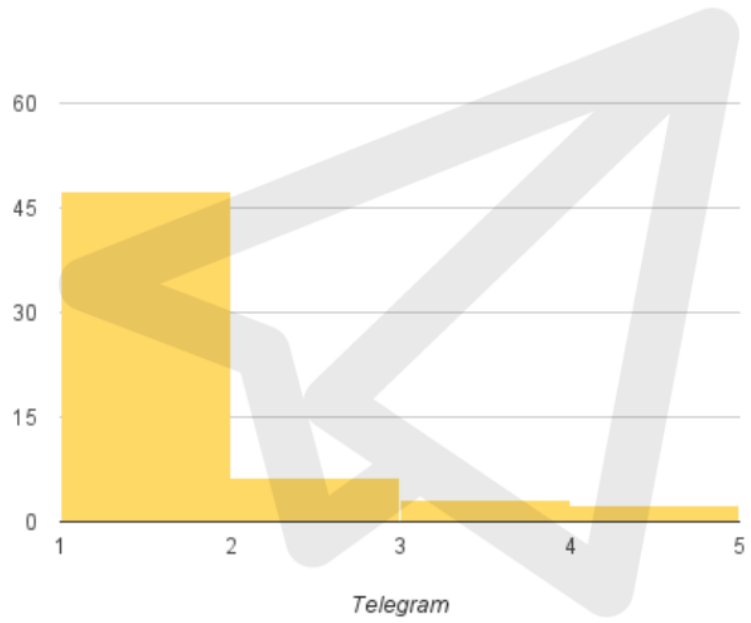

Image 44. Telegram

1	81%
2	10.3%
3	5.2%
4	3.4%

Social tools and digital platforms have been used for professional aims, but also in informal ways to communicate with others. Here we can see how much participants used them. WhatsApp was used a lot by 91.4% of members: this IM App was a fundamental tool for internal and informal communication and to coordinate specific areas of task forces. WhatsApp is fundamental, because it represents the most immediate tool, but it is alone not sufficient for the organization of an event.

Results demonstrate that the second social tool used was Google Drive. Google Drive is like a bible for the task force, here members can upload or create all the important documents, contacts, editorial plans and so on. It is necessary for project management as it gives a complete scenario of the situation. The third social network is Facebook, used both for marketing campaigns and for coordination and communication among members. Facebook is considered the most important and institutional social network for promoting the marketing campaign. While other social networks, as Twitter and Instagram, are useful

to create engagement and to involve followers, Facebook is perceived as the reference point to achieve all necessary information; sometime more than the official website itself.

Respondents used also other digital tools, such as Podio, Wunderlist, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Trello, Dropbox, Skype, Slack, Snapchat, Bit.ly, Hootsuite, Eventbrite and YouTube.

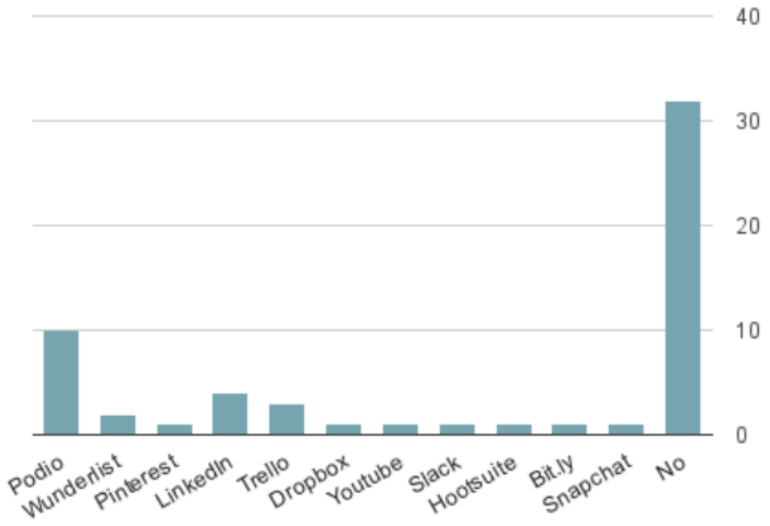

Image 45. Other digital platforms

Podio	17.2%
Wunderlist	3.4%
Pinterest	1.7%
LinkedIn	6.9%
Trello	5.2%
Dropbox	1.7%
Youtube	1.7%
Slack	1.7%
Hootsuite	1.7%
Bit.ly	1.7%
Snapchat	1.7%
No	55.2%

The second part of the survey was fundamental in order to identify which competences members achieved during task forces. It is not important to know which competences, but

only if there has been an improvement of their competences. The aim of this survey is to show whether improvement is due mostly to social networks or to other variables.

The second part of survey has been divided among three macro areas of competences regarding Gmail, Google Drive and Social Networks (Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.) Participants were asked if they had learnt specific competences thanks to the task force, if they already possessed them before the task force, if they do not do them still now or if they have already known them, but task force improved the quality of competences.

Gmail

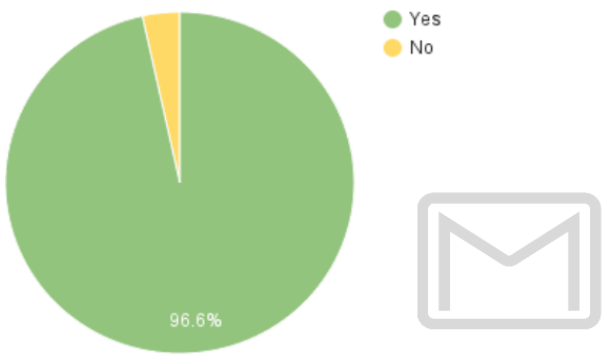

Image 46. Gmail

Yes	96.6%
No	3.4%

Before task force, 96.6% of respondents had already used Gmail to send an email.

First micro competence was *anchor text.* Only 10.3% learnt how to do an anchor text thanks to the task force, and 15.5% has already knew how in precedence, but improved the quality during the task force.

Image 47. Anchor Text

Never learnt	31%
Already known, but my competence improved	15.5%
Already known	43.1%
Learnt it thanks to Task Force	10.3%

The 65.5% of members already knew how to put someone in cc or ccn, just 19% learnt it during the task force.

Image 48. Cc and Ccn

Never learnt	0%
Already known, but my competence improved	15.5%
Already known	65.5%
Learnt it thanks to Task Force	19%

The 17.2% of members learnt to create digital signature thanks to the task force, and 13.8% improved these competences.

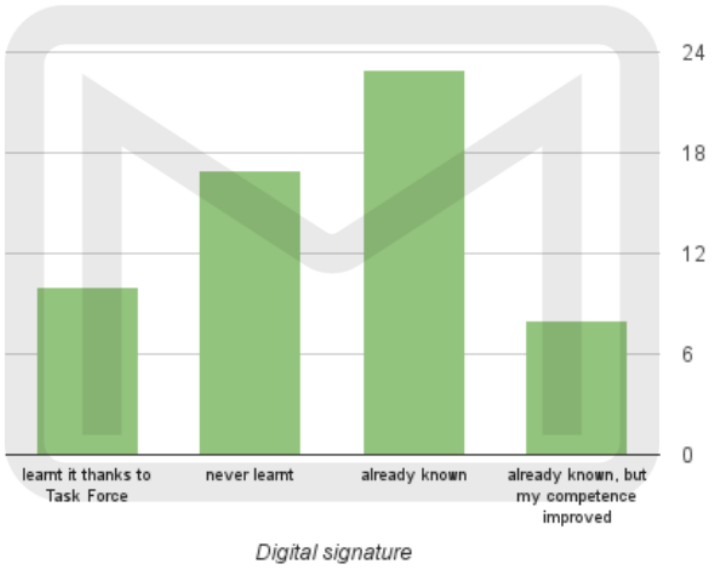

Image 49. Digital signature

Never learnt	29.3%
Already known, but my competence improved	13.8%
Already known	39.7%
Learnt it thanks to Task Force	17.2%

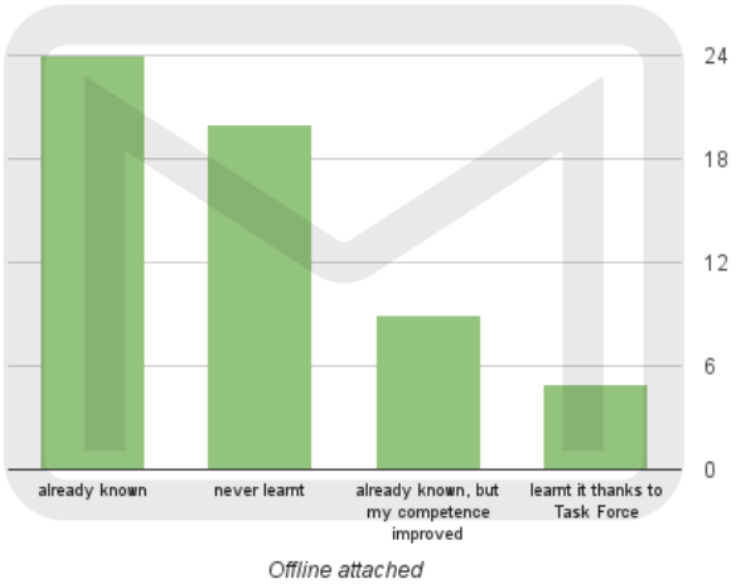

Image 50. Offline attached

Never learnt	34.5%
Already known, but my competence improved	15.5%
Already known	41.4%
Learnt it thanks to Task Force	8.6%

Then, I asked what about uploading offline attached and drive files to mails. The majority of respondents have already known how to do it before task force.

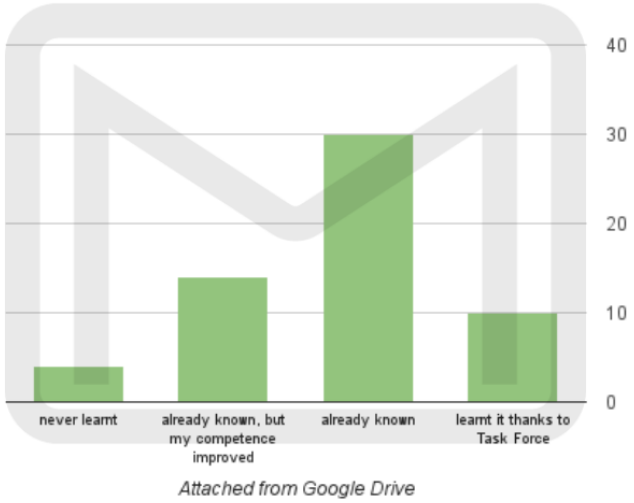

Image 51. Attached from Google Drive

Never learnt	6.9%
Already known, but my competence improved	24.1%
Already known	51.7%
Learnt it thanks to Task Force	17.2%

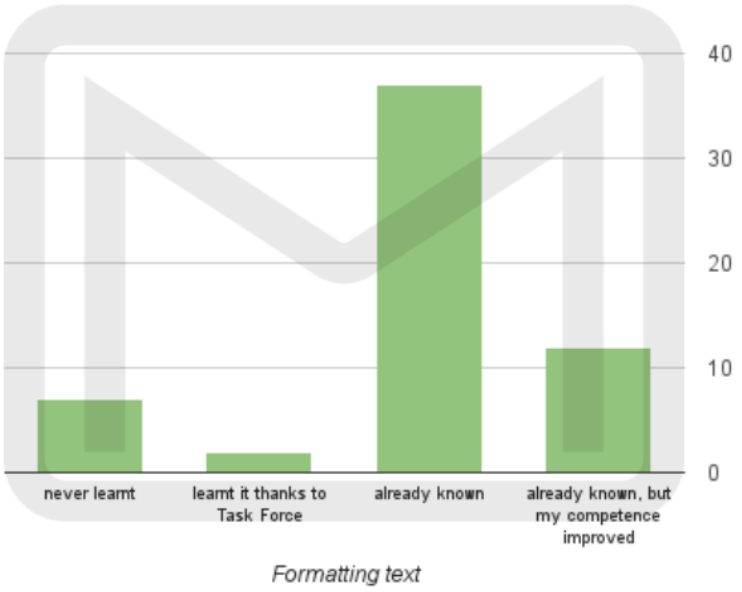

Image 52. Formatting text

Never learnt	12.1%
Already known, but my competence improved	20.7%
Already known	63.8%
Learnt it thanks to Task Force	3.4%

Generally respondents use fluently Gmail, improvements were not significant.

Google Drive

The second macro area is Google Drive, a fundamental tool for every task force. The 75,9% of participants had already used it.

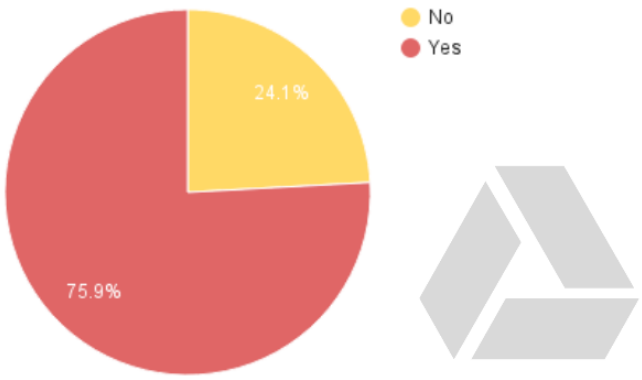

Image 53. Google Drive

Yes	75.9%
No	24.1%

The 56.9% of respondents were already familiar with creating documents in Google Drive before the task force, while the 20.7% learnt it thanks to task force.

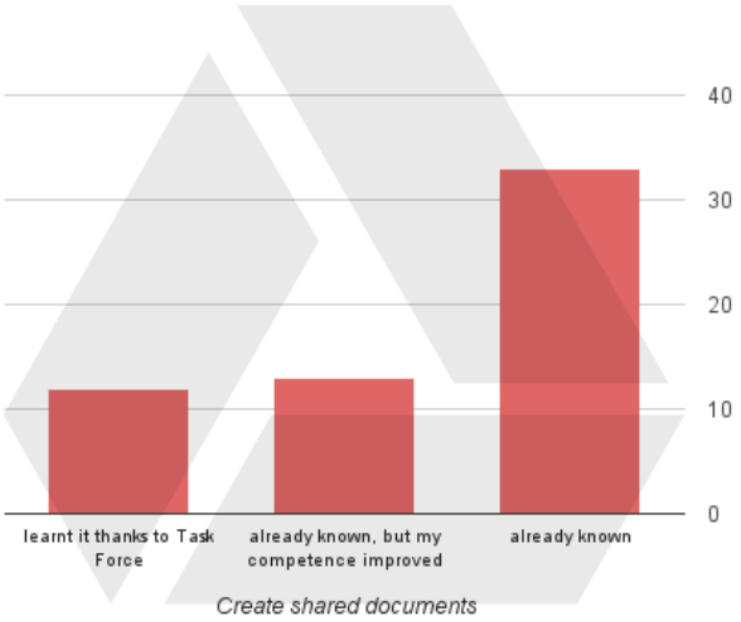

Image 54. Create shared documents

Never learnt	0%
Already known, but my competence improved	22.4%
Already known	56.9%
Learnt it thanks to Task Force	20.7%

Sharing documents with external users was already known by the majority of respondents. Just the 19% of them learnt it thanks to task force.

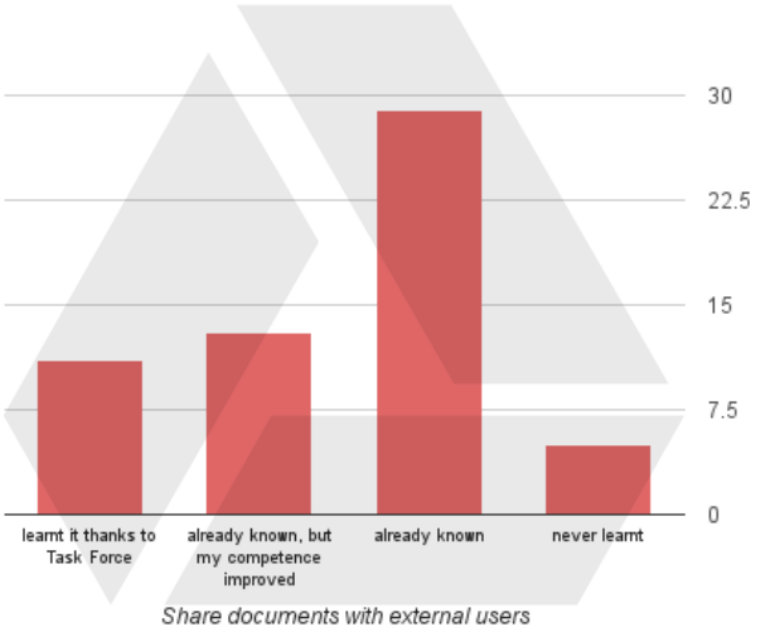

Image 55. Sharing documents with external users

Never learnt	8.6%
Already known, but my competence improved	22.4%
Already known	50%
Learnt it thanks to Task Force	19%

The 39.7% of members learnt how to comment documents on Google Drive thanks to the task force, and this is a significant result because comments are necessary only if a document is shared with other users and it needs to be modified together. Comments are feedbacks in order to improve and complete documents. The task force works together on several issues, and Google Drive is therefore a fundamental tool to share everything and coordinate a project.

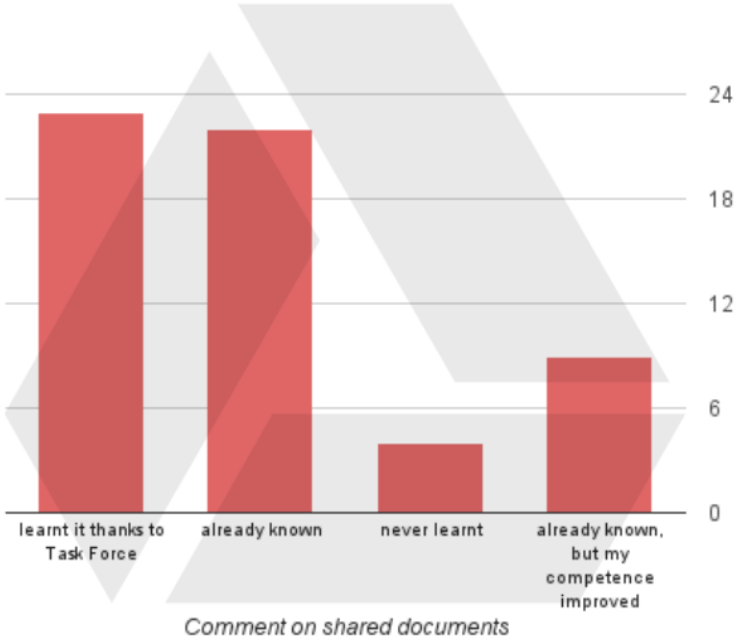

Image 56. Comment on shared documents

Never learnt	6.9%
Already known, but my competence improved	15.5%
Already known	37.9%
Learnt it thanks to Task Force	39.7%

Probably before task force, students used Google Drive to share notes or slides for university, not to drafting a project together. Organization of an event needs a lot of documents, as press release. These documents are created by a team and controlled by project managers; Google Drive makes the process of editing quickly and efficient.

Uploading file to Google Drive is probably the first functionality that people learnt, so it is quite normal that majority of participants have already known it.

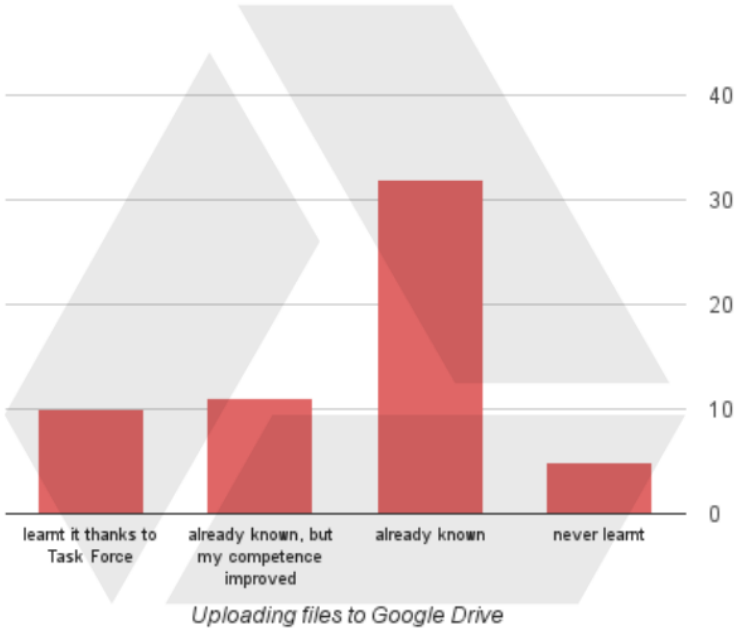

Image 57. Uploading files to Google Drive

Never learnt	8.6%
Already known, but my competence improved	19%
Already known	55.2%
Learnt it thanks to Task Force	17.2%

Google form is the main tool used to create surveys or calls to action. It is mainly used by project managers or mentors when the task force has to be shaped and at the end of event when the public is asked to evaluate the whole organization of the event.

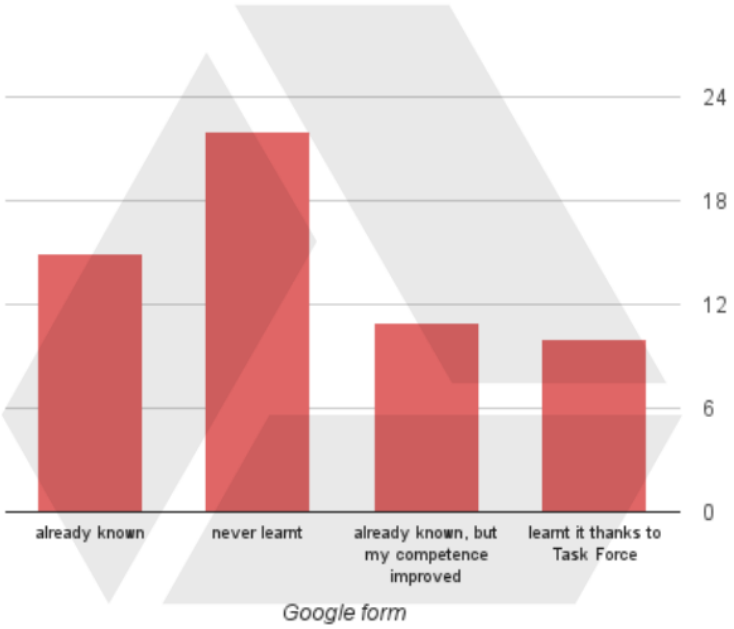

Image 58. Google form

Never learnt	37.9%
Already known, but my competence improved	19%
Already known	25.9%
Learnt it thanks to Task Force	17.2%

Google Slides is used by communication area and project managers. Project managers use slides when they have to hold a meeting: it is a useful and fundamental tool to maintain a focus on critical issues. The communication area, on the other hand, uses Google Slides to create a presentation of events for sponsors and speakers to draft the operative plan for managing communication area and live promotion during the event, to create the official presentation of the event for speakers' speech.

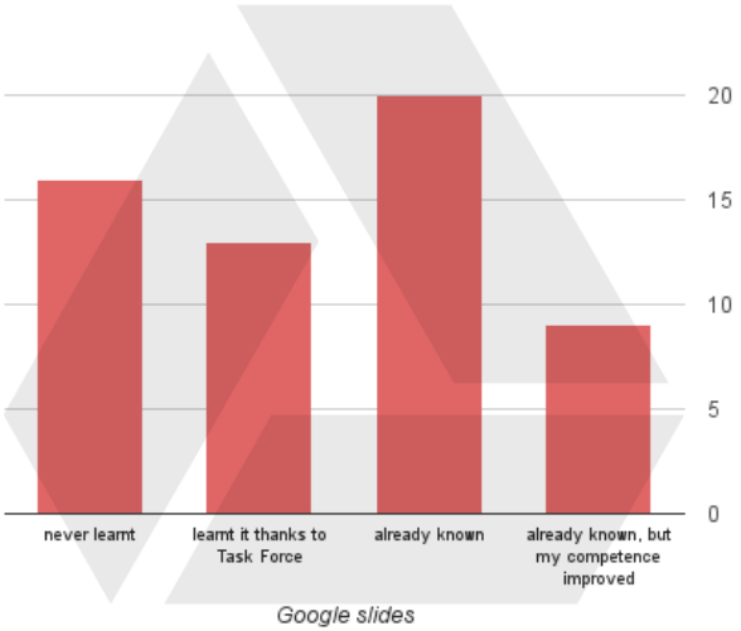

Image 59. Google Slides

Never learnt	27.6%
Already known, but my competence improved	15.5%
Already known	34.5%
Learnt it thanks to Task Force	22.4%

Social Networks

The 87.9% of members were registered to LinkedIn before Task Force, the 100% on Facebook and 79.3% on Twitter. We can presume that general knowledge about these social tools was quite good before experience of the task force experience.

LinkedIn	87.9%
Facebook	100%
Twitetr	79.3%

LinkedIn

At the end of the task force, the communication area used to create a project on LinkedIn, a description of event and roles, to improve the members curriculum. This is not a common functionality, as only people who enjoy a team work need to create a project on LinkedIn, for this reason the majority of respondents, the 34,5%, learnt it thanks to the task force.

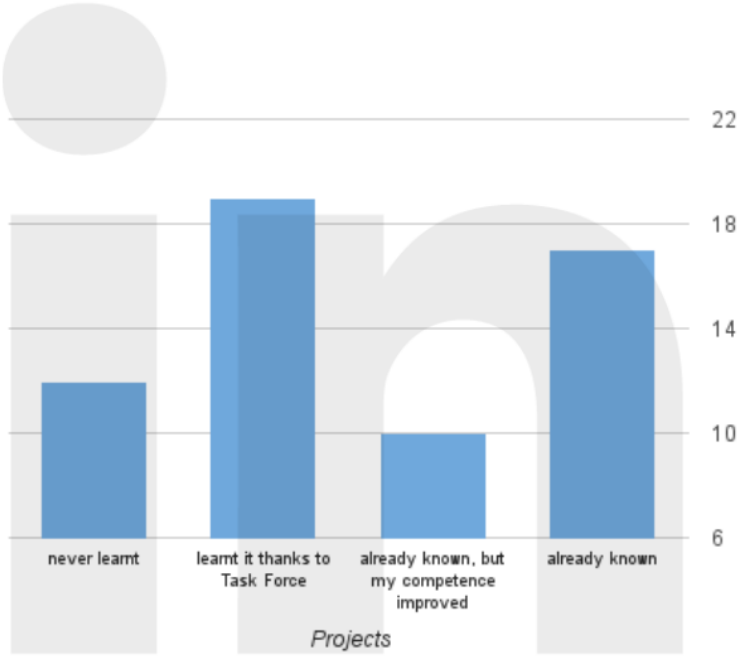

Image 60. Projects on LinkedIn

Never learnt	20.7%
Already known, but my competence improved	17.2%
Already known	31%

Learnt it thanks to Task Force	31%

One year ago, MARKETERs Club developed an *endorsement program* among all members in order to confirm everyone's competences, so probably the majority of respondents, the 62,1%, had already known about it because of this.

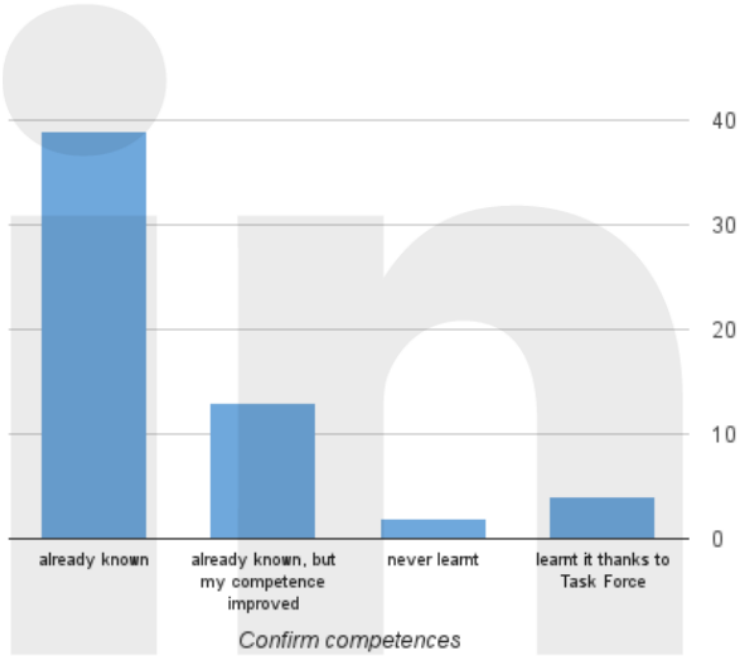

Image 61. Confirm competences on LinkedIn

Never learnt	3.4%
Already known, but my competence improved	22.4%
Already known	62.1%
Learnt it thanks to Task Force	12.1%

The 87,9% of members had LinkedIn before the experience of task force, so it is quite common that they already knew the main functionalities of this social media. Creating new job positions was not a new issue for participants and only 10,3% of them learnt it thanks to task force.

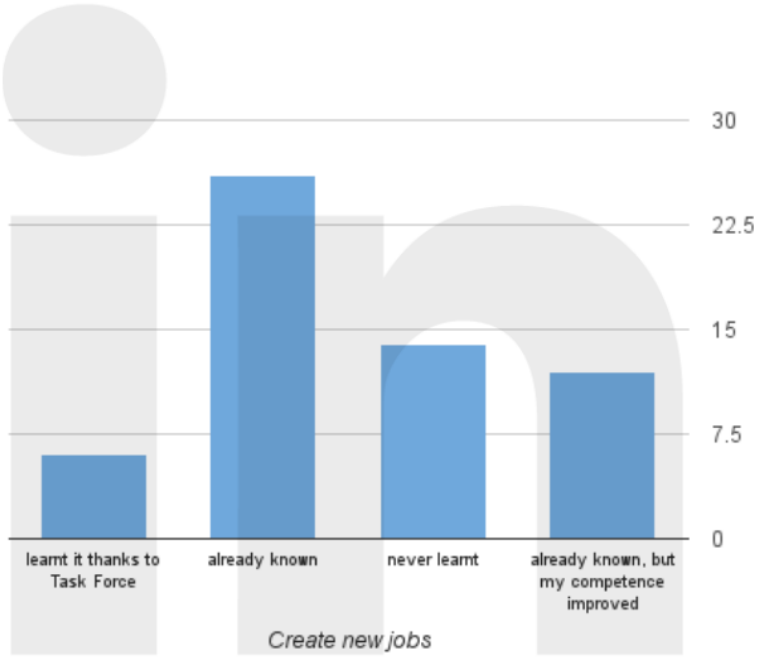

Image 62. Create new jobs

Never learnt	24.1%
Already known, but my competence improved	20.7%
Already known	44.8%
Learnt it thanks to Task Force	10.3%

Facebook

The 100% of respondents had Facebook before this experience, but generally people use this social social media in an informal way. Posting photos and videos alone dos not mean that they know how to exploit Facebook for professional aims, say for management of marketing campaigns. Programming a post is not a functionality used by private profiles, but it is possible only for a page. In fact, the majority of task force, the 36.2%, already knew how to program a post and the 31% of them learnt it thanks to this experience.

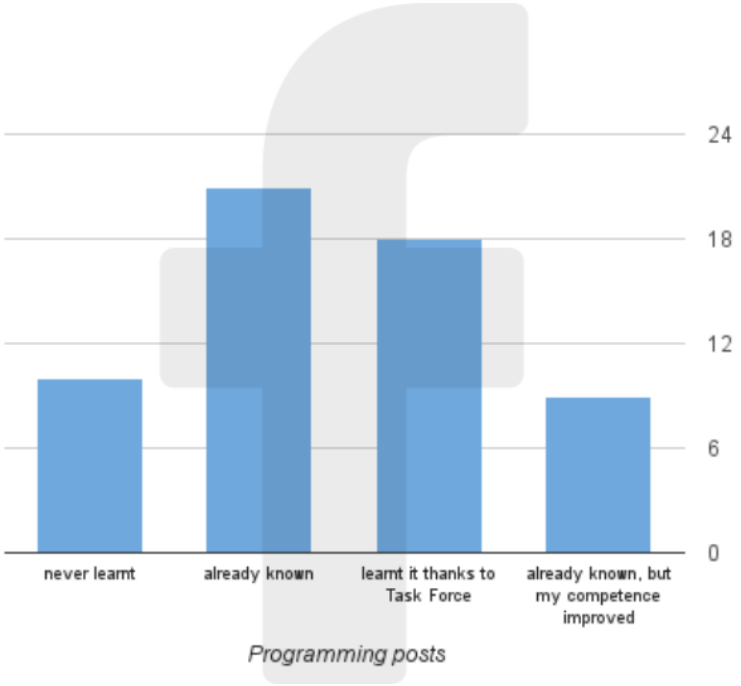

Image 63. Programming posts on Facebook

Never learnt	17.2%
Already known, but my competence improved	15.5%
Already known	36.2%
Learnt it thanks to Task Force	31%

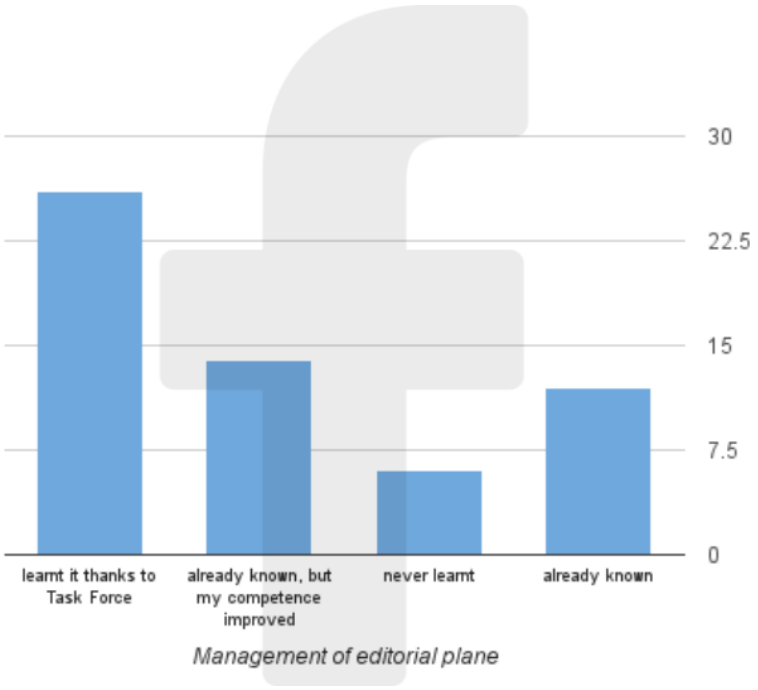

Image 64. Managing editorial plane on Facebook

Never learnt	10.3%
Already known, but my competence improved	24.1%
Already known	20.7%
Learnt it thanks to Task Force	44.8%

The most significant results are about the strategic management of editorial plans of Facebook and Twitter. An editorial plan is a spreadsheet where marketing campaign is developed and managed. In this document, shared to all communication area, members write timing, date, copy and visual of each post on social networks.

The editorial plan is conceived in order to create expectation within the community that is going to attend the event. Through daily posts on social networks, the public is educated and little by little gets familiar with speakers, theme and all other aspects of events. This kind of competence is the most pertinent for the event organization skills and significant data proves that the task force has been a fundamental experience to improve these competences.

The majority of members, the 44.8%, affirmed that they learnt to manage the editorial plan thanks to the Task Force and the 24.1% of them improved this competence during the experience. I gathered similar results regarding Twitter. The 48.3% of members learnt to use Twitter in a strategic way thanks to Task Force, and the 19% of them improved this competence.

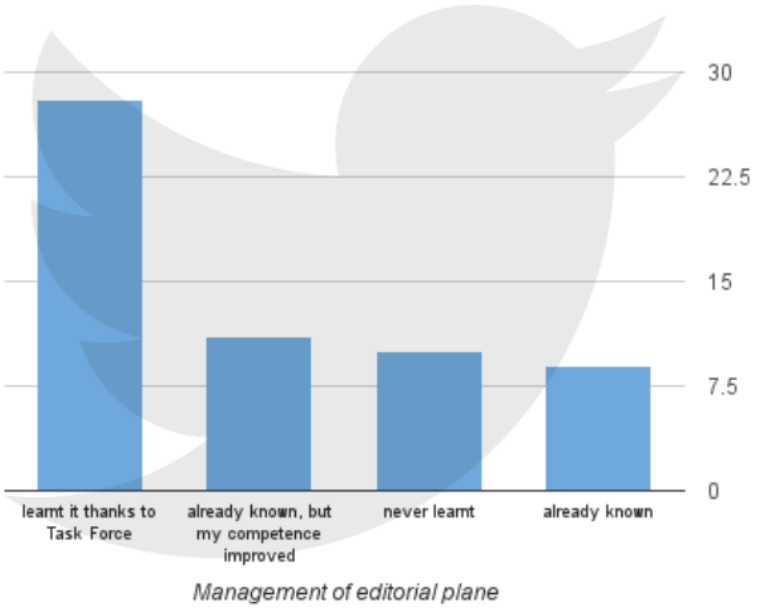

Image 65. Managing editorial plane on Twitter

Never learnt	17.2%
Already known, but my competence improved	19%
Already known	15.5%
Learnt it thanks to Task Force	48.3%

Mentioning other users and tweeting was already known by members. There was not a significant improvement before the task force.

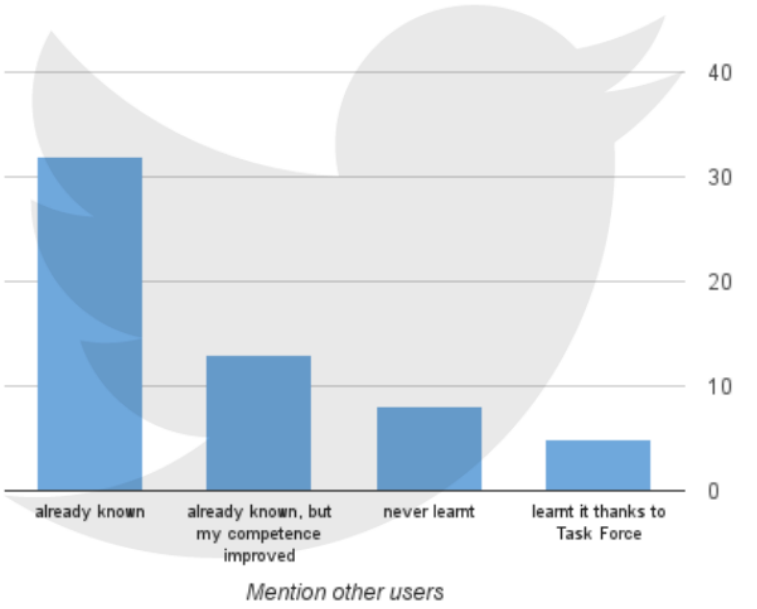

Image 66. Mention other users on Twitter

Never learnt	13.8%
Already known, but my competence improved	20.7%
Already known	55.2%
Learnt it thanks to Task Force	10.3%

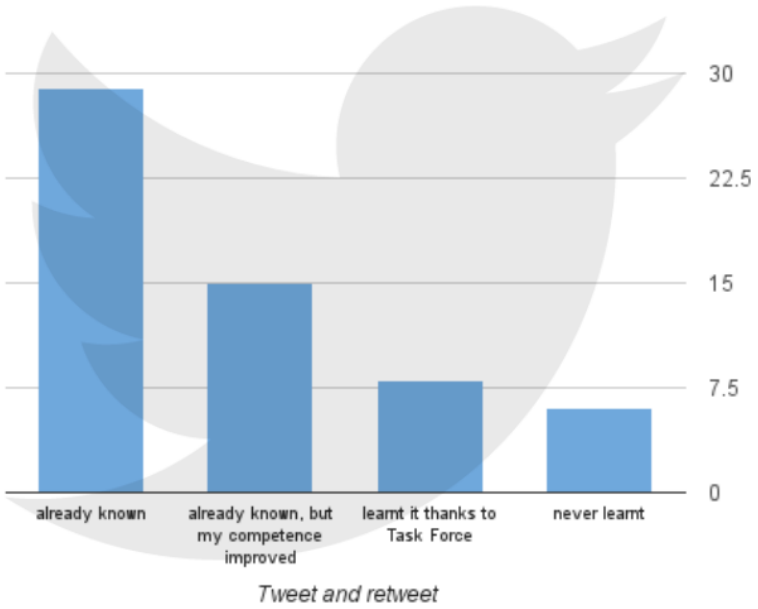

Image 67. Tweeting and retweeting on Twitter

Never learnt	10.3%
Already known, but my competence improved	25.9%
Already known	50%
Learnt it thanks to Task Force	10.3%

Therefore, the only significant improvement achieved regards the strategic management of the social media editorial plan, which is one of the fundamental competences required for managing the marketing campaign with respect to other skills.

Based on these results, I developed the third part of my survey in which I asked whether these improvements were mainly achieved thanks to Social Networks and digital tools or other variables.

The 60.3% of respondents considered climate and environment a fundamental aspect for improving competences and performance. This is because a stimulating environment contributes to learning readiness of members working inside. These data are confirmed by

the previous graphs about environment and climate in which participants were asked to define them: the majority of members declared that the atmosphere was stimulating.

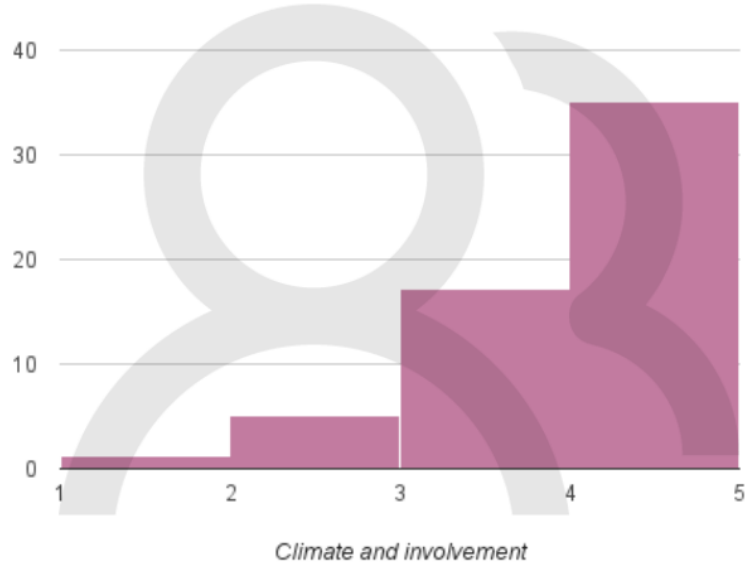

Image 68. Impact of climate and involvement on learning process

1	1.7%
2	8.6%
3	29.3%
4	60.3%

Support from mentors is fundamental at the initial and intermediate phase, when members feel insecure and worried. By the way, the 55.2% of them declared this variable contributes a lot to improvements on performance and competences.

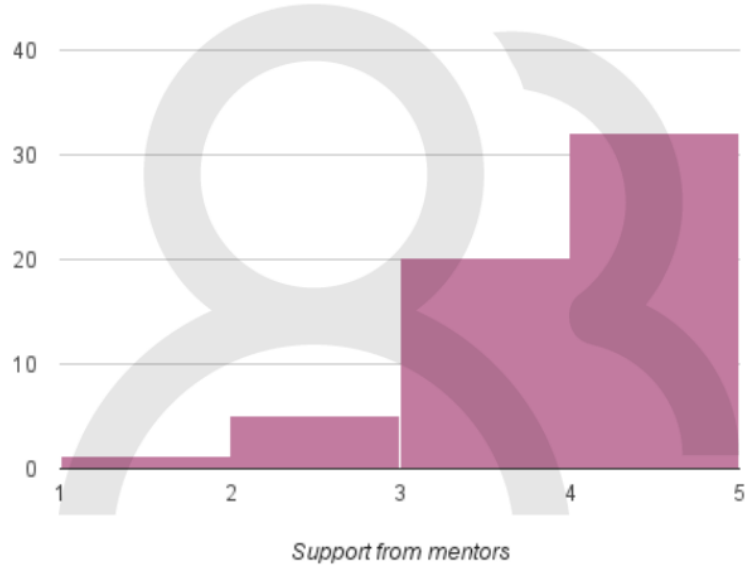

Image 69. Impact of mentors' support on learning process

1	1.7%
2	8.6%
3	34.5%
4	55.2%

Guidelines are useful mainly to project managers and heads of areas in order to better coordinate members. For this reason just the 22.4% of respondents said that guidelines were fundamental for the improvement of competences.

Image 70. Impact of guidelines on learning process

1	6.9%
2	27.6%
3	43.1%
4	22.4%

The following graph regards the most critical question of this survey.

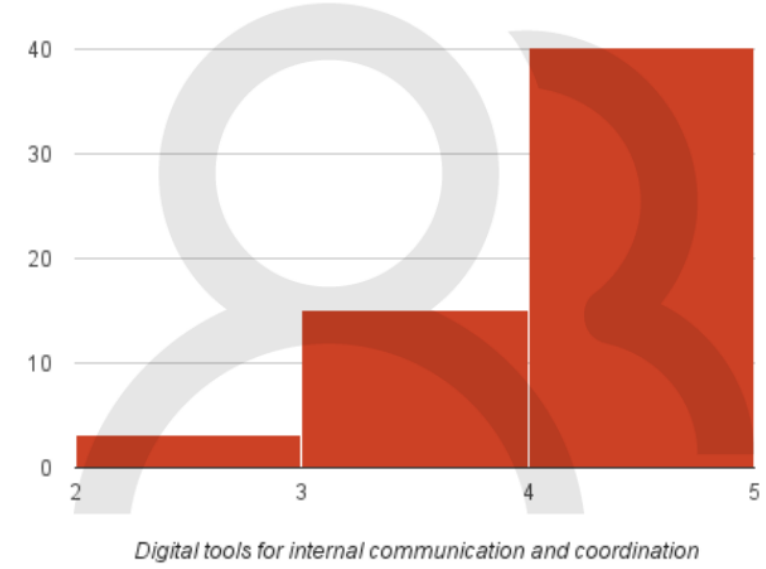

Image 71. Impact of digital tools for internal communication and coordination.

1	0%

2	5.2%
3	25.9%
4	69%

The 69% of respondents affirmed that Social Networks and Digital Platforms affected in a significant way the process of internal communication and management during the task force and the 62.1% of them used social tools at least once a day during the task force period. In the following question, people are asked to express a value ranging from 1 to 4 to evaluate how much time they spent on digital tools, where one stands for *at least once a week* and four for *at least once a day*.

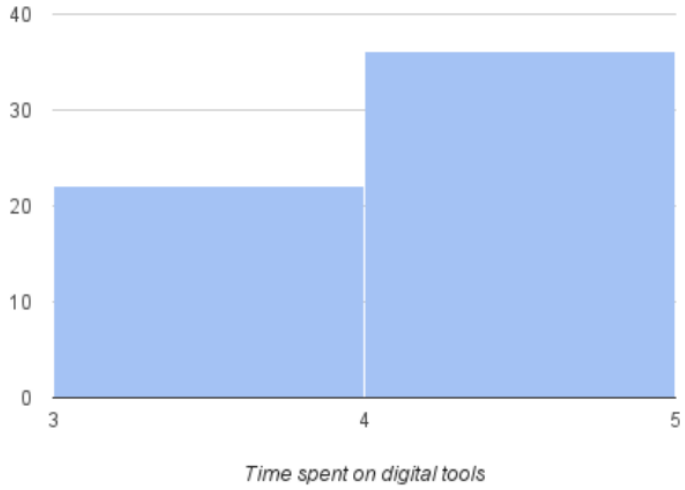

Image 72. Time spent on digital tools.

1	0%
2	0%
3	37.9%
4	62.1%

The next graphs observe how much social networks and digital tools affected members' performance during task force in terms of quality of work, speed of tasks, availability of people and involvement of the group.

The quality of work of each member would not generally have been the same without digital support. The 43.1% of them declared digital tools were fundamental and necessary and 50% affirmed they maybe would have achieved the same results, but not immediately.

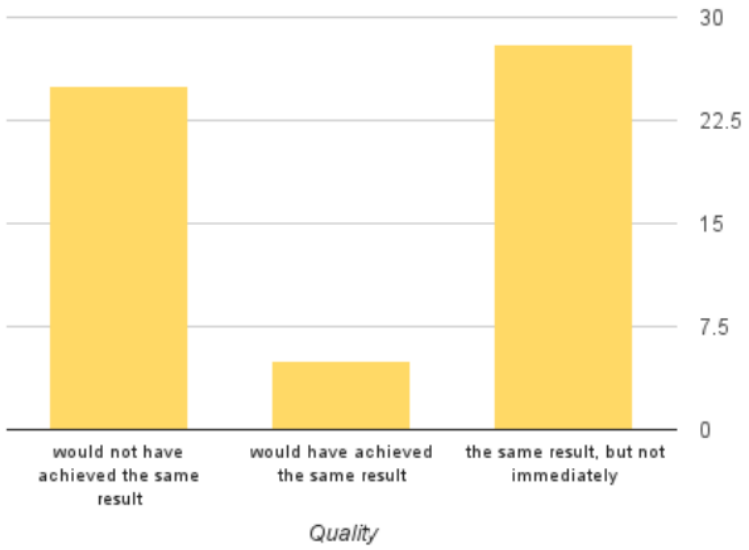

Image 73. Impact of digital tools in terms of quality.

Would not have achieved the same result	43.1%
Would have achieved the same result	6.9%
The same result, but not immediately	50%

Social networks help to avoid the waste of time as we can notice in the next graph, where the 79.3% of members confirmed it.

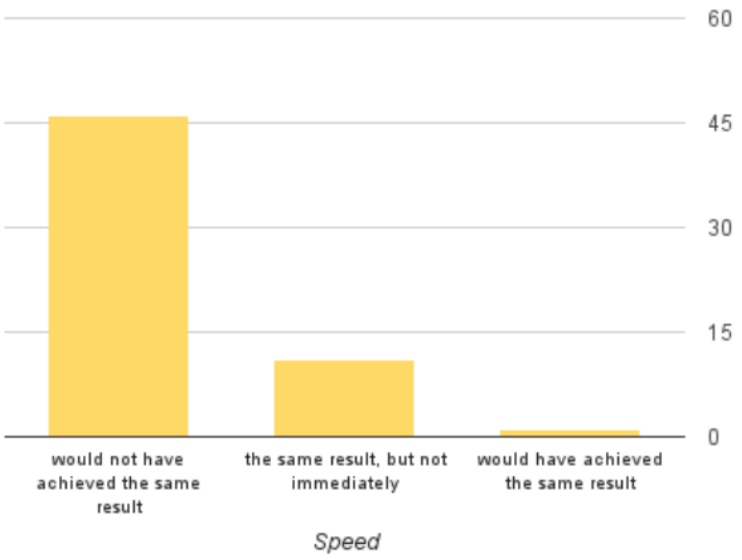

Image 74. Impact of digital tools in terms of speed.

Would not have achieved the same result	79.3%
Would have achieved the same result	1.7%
The same result, but not immediately	19%

In this case, availability is referred to people.

Image 75. Impact of digital tools in terms of availability of people.

Would not have achieved the same result	93.1%
Would have achieved the same result	0%
The same result, but not immediately	6.9%

Social networks and digital platforms overcome problems of space and time, people can work on the same project even if they are not physically together, so this result is quite predictable. The 93.1% of respondents were available quite often during the experience. This also contributed to quality improvements.

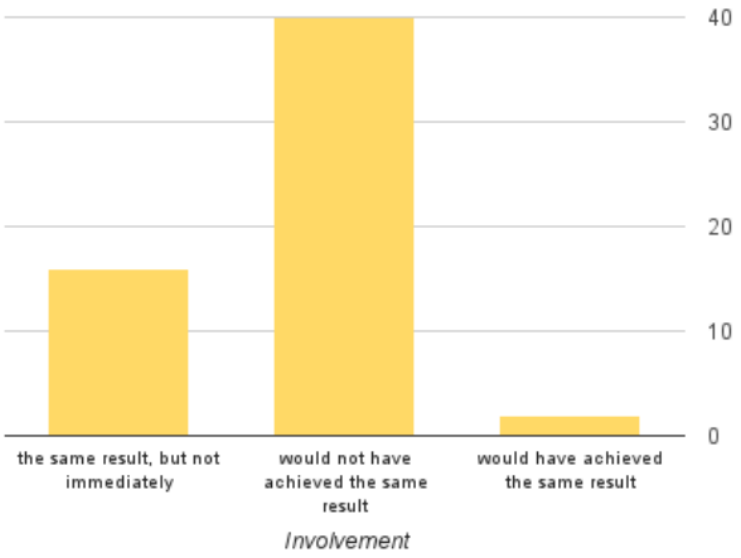

Image 76. Impact of digital tools in terms of involvement.

Would not have achieved the same result	69%
Would have achieved the same result	3.4%
The same result, but not immediately	27.6%

Availability of people contributes to the involvement of the whole group. Everyone feels important and considered, social networks influence the sense of belonging to the group and this is important in order to create a stimulating learning environment. All these variables are linked by social media, improving general performance and attitude.

Social media and digital platforms are cleverly used to achieve a common goal: the development of a project that has a real-life impact, observable by all members.

4. Concluding Remarks

In this thesis, I tried to explain the role of Social Networks, Digital Platforms and IM Apps nowadays; from simple digital tools to fundamental instruments for increasing our competences through an unconventional approach. Digital tools can improve our lives and our performances if they become a support for our learning.

During the seventies Albert Bandura and David A. Kolb developed two famous learning theories; professor Bandura established the most well known theory of modern social learning, which states that people can learn in a social and unconventional context through observational behavior from models. On the other hand, professor Kolb's interest lays in exploring the processes associated with making sense of concrete experiences and the different styles of learning that may be involved. Kolb developed a theory called *experiential learning.* In both theories, learning takes place in an unconventional context that is different from the academic one, where people learn by observing others and through concrete experiences.

Social and experiential learning are a fundamental method for acquiring knowledge and improving competences, but they have to be adapted to the digital age; for this reason they cannot subsist without the support of social media and digital platforms. These instruments have become a fundamental part of our lives, since we can make an opinion based upon them, we can share ideas, opinions, passions, goals and so on. People overcome obstacles of time and space thanks to digital platforms and find a way to work on the same projects even when they are not face to face. Social learning theories mix themselves with digital instruments and become what we call *digital learning*.

In order to analyze this phenomenon, I presented a case study to observe the real impact of digital learning on students who worked together for a common project: the organization of an event. This case study is based on MARKETERs Club, a national association of marketing and management founded in 2012 by a group of students of Ca' Foscari University of Venice.

This thesis describes the story and development of this association during these years in terms of internal organization, communication, culture, vision, learning mechanism and the development of talent. The aim of this research is to discover whether, during a task force, members improve their competences thanks to digital tools.

Literature has identified several variables which influence people during the learning process, such as environment, climate, technological support, collaboration, simulation, guidelines, individual behavior and so on. I asked participants whether these variables emerged also during task forces and I received positive feedbacks. Once I demonstrated if task forces present a scenario similar to ones throughout literature, I analyzed whether there were improvements in members' competences. I tried to identify three main macro competences, successfully divided among micro competences. I asked if members improved skills thanks to task forces or if they already knew them, in order to quantify the rate of improvement.

The findings are quite interesting since they demonstrate that digital tools have had a fundamental impact on members' learning process; the 62.1% of them used at least once a day social networks, digital platforms and IM Apps during the task force, and the 37.9% at least once every two days. All members used digital tools in a systematical way, so the next data are qualitatively significant: in terms of quality, speed, availability of people and involvement, the majority of members affirmed that they would have not obtained the same result without digital tools, or sometimes not immediately, for the organization of events.

Before asking the rate of influence of digital instruments on learning, improvements of competences have been tested, and the majority of members were already familiar with functionalities of Gmail, Google Drive and Social Networks.
Since it is generally hard to identify the rate of improvement in soft skills, such as time management, attitude to stress, problem solving, leadership style, it has been preferred to choose more specific and technical competences, such as anchor text, uploading attached files, LinkedIn projects, programming Facebook posts and so on.
It has been interesting to find out that the only two data inherent to the strategic management of events achieved the most consistent results. The strategic management of

editorial plan is the most important competence of my survey, as the following graphs show:

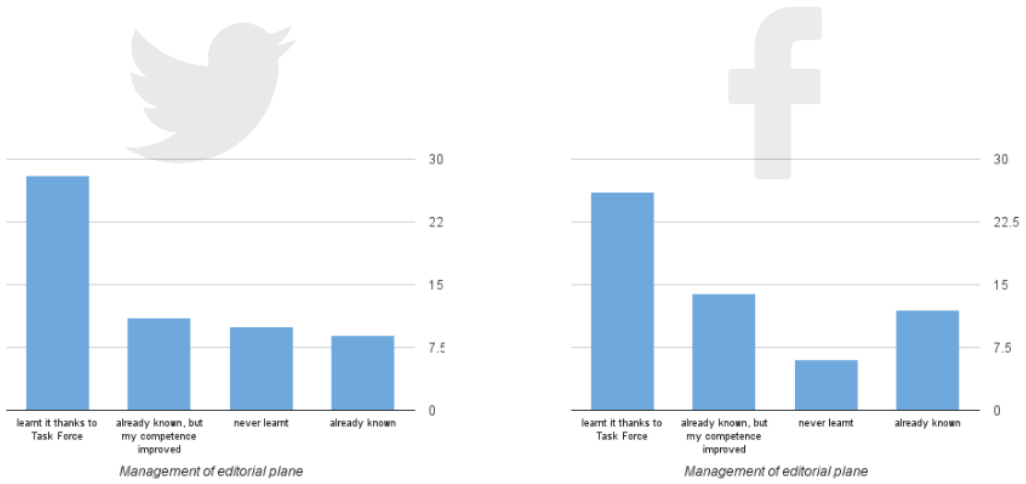

Image 77. Comparison between management of editorial plane on Facebook and on Twitter.

Members of task forces, aided by digital instruments, learnt how to strategically manage editorial plans on social networks. Editorial plan is a spreadsheet shared on Google Drive among all members of a task force, but managed by the communication area. The digital strategist tried to create a storytelling of the event during a month through posts on social networks, in order to gain engagement from followers. The strategy behind editorial plan consists on education of participants about principal theme and speakers, in order to involve them and get them familiar. In this way, the sold-out result is achieved as soon as possible, because the public is waiting to buy tickets since the middle of the marketing campaign.

This thinking process is accomplished through observational behavior towards people during the past editions of events, and thanks to past editorial plans shared on Google Drive.

We can observe a good example of mix between characteristics of social learning and digital tools. Thanks to the fundamental tool of debriefing and guidelines, members become even more prepared and skilled. The transfer of knowledge is often easy and

immediate, because the Digital Strategist is always someone who participated in the past task force. So, based on literature of learning theories, we can assess that once behavior and environmental factors have been declared stimulating and positive, as stated by Bandura, the process of learning can be shaped and pushed through concrete experience, observation and reflection, forming abstract concepts and undergoing the test in new situations, as affirmed by Kolb. This is exactly the educational path of the task force during the learning process.

In this kind of environment, characterized by sudden changes, as can be marketing and management, social networks and digital platforms play a fundamental role in the learning process, because they are the main sources of updates and *fresh knowledge.* For this reason the combination of stimulating environment and climate, that influences the learning readiness, avoids the problem of digital platforms, such as distraction and waste of time.

The sample size of this study is relatively small and further research with larger samples is required to determine if these findings will hold up in different settings of collaborative work as associations, organizations or firms. Digital learning cannot be adapted to all working environments, it would arguably make any sense if applied, for instance, to the medical or philosophical world . Digital learning can give a contribution to our general knowledge inside specific contexts.

Consequently, this kind of research needs to be developed considering a larger sample, as digital learning could be exploited and it could improve people's attitude and knowledge. Further qualitative and quantitative data are needed to overcome weaknesses and lacks of digital tools and to improve people's approach to them.

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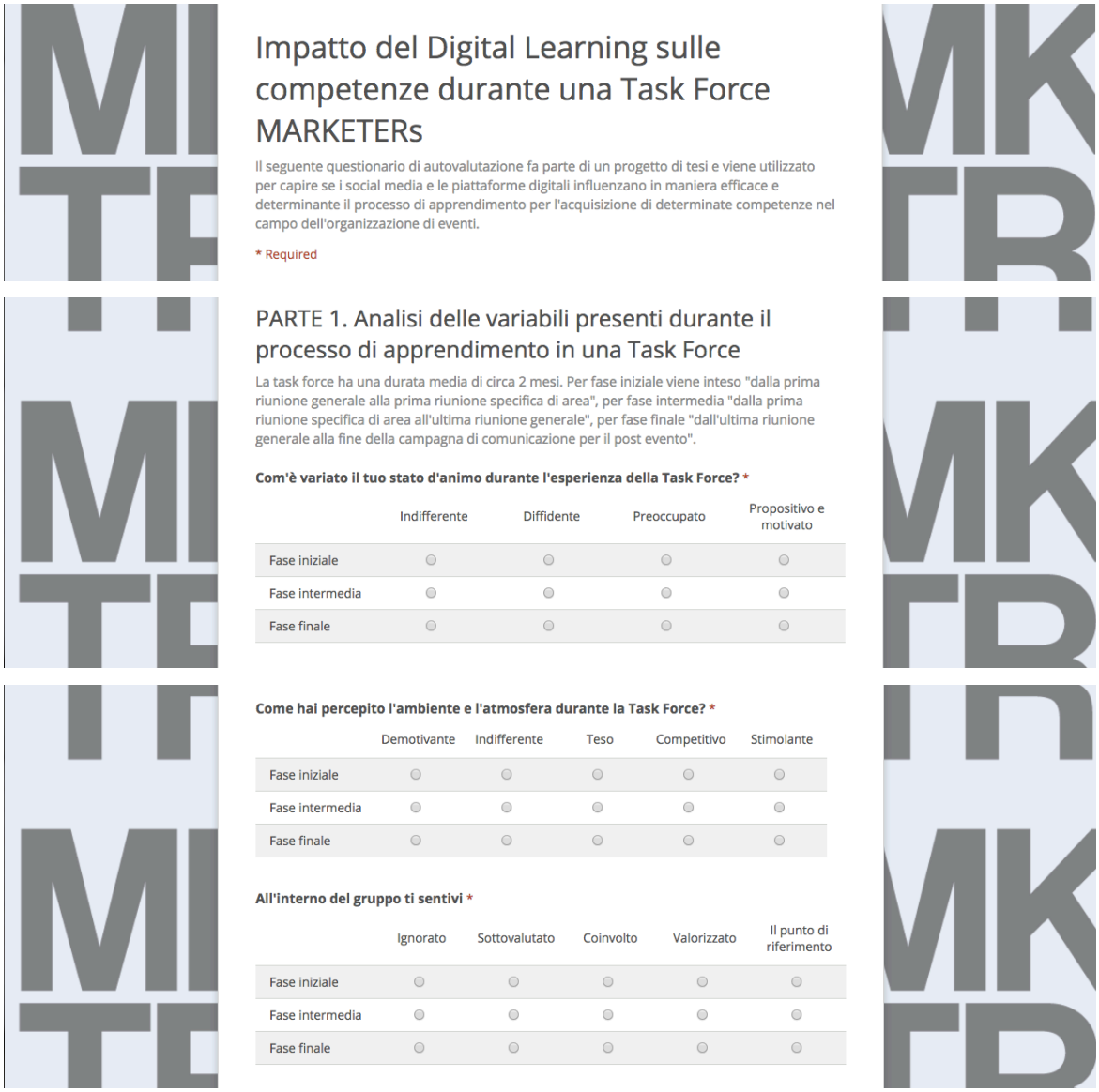
Appendix

The following survey was drafted in Italian for convenience, since participants are Italian.



Impatto del Digital Learning sulle competenze durante una Task Force MARKETERs

Il seguente questionario di autovalutazione fa parte di un progetto di tesi e viene utilizzato per capire se i social media e le piattaforme digitali influenzano in maniera efficace e determinante il processo di apprendimento per l'acquisizione di determinate competenze nel campo dell'organizzazione di eventi.

* Required

PARTE 1. Analisi delle variabili presenti durante il processo di apprendimento in una Task Force

La task force ha una durata media di circa 2 mesi. Per fase iniziale viene inteso "dalla prima riunione generale alla prima riunione specifica di area", per fase intermedia "dalla prima riunione specifica di area all'ultima riunione generale", per fase finale "dall'ultima riunione generale alla fine della campagna di comunicazione per il post evento".

Com'è variato il tuo stato d'animo durante l'esperienza della Task Force? *

	Indifferente	Diffidente	Preoccupato	Propositivo e motivato
Fase iniziale				
Fase intermedia				
Fase finale				

Come hai percepito l'ambiente e l'atmosfera durante la Task Force? *

	Demotivante	Indifferente	Teso	Competitivo	Stimolante
Fase iniziale					
Fase intermedia					
Fase finale					

All'interno del gruppo ti sentivi *

	Ignorato	Sottovalutato	Coinvolto	Valorizzato	Il punto di riferimento
Fase iniziale					
Fase intermedia					
Fase finale					

Esprimi un punteggio da 1 a 4 per esprimere quanto hai utilizzato i device (pc portatile, cellulare, ipad) per la comunicazione interna con gli altri membri, trovare informazioni utili in internet, allineamento del lavoro grazie ad App di project management. *

Dove 1 è quasi nullo e 4 è moltissimo.

	1	2	3	4
Fase iniziale	○	○	○	○
Fase intermedia	○	○	○	○
Fase finale	○	○	○	○

Esprimi un punteggio da 1 a 4 per indicare quanto hai fatto affidamento sui capi area, project manager e mentor in termini di supporto nelle attività e confronto per problem solving. *

Dove 1 è quasi nullo e 4 è moltissimo.

	1	2	3	4
Fase iniziale	○	○	○	○
Fase intermedia	○	○	○	○
Fase finale	○	○	○	○

Esprimi un giudizio da 1 a 4 per valutare il livello di utilizzo di piattaforme digitali e di social network durante l'esperienza della Task Force. *

Dove 1 è quasi nullo e 4 è moltissimo.

	1	2	3	4
Facebook	○	○	○	○
Google Drive	○	○	○	○
WhatsApp	○	○	○	○
Telegram	○	○	○	○
Twitter	○	○	○	○
Instagram	○	○	○	○

Hai utilizzato altre piattaforme digitali e social network durante l'esperienza della Task Force oltre a quelle menzionate prima? *

PARTE 2. Valutazione del miglioramento in determinate competenze rispetto a tre macro aree

Stesura di una mail professionale utilizzando Gmail

Prima dell'inizio della Task Force avevi mai usato Gmail per scrivere email? *

- ○ Sì
- ○ No

Valuta quali delle seguenti competenze possedevi già prima della Task Force o se le hai acquisite grazie alla Task Force. *

	Lo sapevo già fare prima della Task Force	Lo sapevo già fare prima della Task Force, ma ho migliorato la qualità della competenza	L'ho imparato grazie alla Task Force	Non l'ho imparato tuttora
Anchor Text	○	○	○	○
Usare il cc e ccn	○	○	○	○
Creare la firma in calce	○	○	○	○
Mettere allegati offline	○	○	○	○
Mettere allegati da Google Drive	○	○	○	○
Fare la formattazione del testo	○	○	○	○

Uso e gestione di Google Drive

Prima dell'inizio della Task Force avevi mai usato Google Drive? *

- Sì
- No

Valuta quali delle seguenti competenze possedevi già prima della Task Force o se le hai acquisite grazie alla Task Force. *

	Lo sapevo già fare prima della Task Force	Lo sapevo già fare prima della Task Force, ma ho migliorato la qualità della competenza	L'ho imparato grazie alla Task Force	Non l'ho imparato tuttora
Creare documenti condivisi				
Condividere documenti con utenti esterni alla cartella				
Commentare frasi dei documenti condivisi				
Upload di file esterni nelle cartelle condivise				
Usare Google Form (questionari)				
Usare Google Slides (presentazioni)				

Conoscenza generale dei Social Networks

Quali dei seguenti social networks avevi prima della Task Force? *

- LinkedIn
- Facebook
- Twitter

Valuta quali delle seguenti competenze possedevi già prima della Task Force o se le hai acquisite grazie alla Task Force. *

	Lo sapevo già fare prima della Task Force	Lo sapevo già fare prima della Task Force, ma ho migliorato la qualità della competenza	L'ho imparato grazie alla Task Force	Non l'ho imparato tuttora
LinkedIn - Creare progetti				
LinkedIn - Confermare competenze				
LinkedIn - Creare nuove posizioni di lavoro				
Facebook - Programmare post				
Facebook - Gestione strategica del piano editoriale in termini di orari migliori per pubblicare contenuti e che tipo di contenuti				
Twitter - Fare retweet e citare tweet				
Twitter - Menzionare altri users				
Twitter - Gestione strategica del piano editoriale in termini di orari migliori per pubblicare contenuti e che tipo di contenuti				

PARTE 3. Valutazione dell'impatto delle variabili sulle competenze

Esprimi un valore da 1 a 4 per determinare quali delle seguenti variabili hanno inciso maggiormente sull'acquisizione delle competenze menzionate sopra? *

Dove 1 è quasi nullo e 4 è moltissimo.

	1	2	3	4
Atmosfera e coinvolgimento nel gruppo	○	○	○	○
Supporto e aiuto da parte dei capi area e mentor	○	○	○	○
Supporto grazie a linee guida, vademecum e job description	○	○	○	○
Uso di piattaforme digitali e social networks per la comunicazione e gestione interna (Google Drive, Facebook, WhatsApp, Skype)	○	○	○	○

Quale altra variabile o aspetto ha inciso maggiormente sull'acquisizione delle tue competenze? *

Quanto hai fatto uso di piattaforme digitali, app di messaggistica e social networks per l'organizzazione e la comunicazione interna della Task Force? *

Dove 1 è una volta al giorno e 4 è quasi ogni ora.

1	2	3	4
○	○	○	○

Credi che senza il supporto delle piattaforme digitali e social networks saresti stato in grado di svolgere lo stesso lavoro in termini di qualità, velocità, reperibilità e coinvolgimento? *

	Non avrei ottenuto assolutamente lo stesso risultato	Avrei ottenuto lo stesso risultato, ma in maniera meno immediata	Avrei ottenuto lo stesso risultato
Qualità	○	○	○
Velocità	○	○	○
Reperibilità	○	○	○
Coinvolgimento	○	○	○

PARTE 4. Dati anagrafici

Che corso di Laurea frequenti? *

Sei iscritto a *

- ○ Primo anno Triennale
- ○ Secondo anno Triennale
- ○ Terzo anno Triennale
- ○ Primo anno Specialistica
- ○ Secondo anno Specialistica
- ○ Lavoro
- ○ Other:

Sesso *

- ○ Maschile
- ○ Femminile

Età *

- ○ 18 - 22
- ○ 22 - 26
- ○ Più di 26

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Cit. Marco e Laura Scimone