Company Image in Social Media. Case Alaspään Ratsastuskeskus

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Marketing communications are a relevant part of building a company image. In the growing digital world, aspects of digital marketing are highly valued. Interaction and fast pace of communicating are key factors in digital and especially in social media marketing. However, the interactivity can easily affect the company image negatively as well. Clear idea of company image presented helps to maximise the marketing efforts.

The research is commissioned by Alaspään Ratsastuskeskus, a riding school located in Hämeenlinna. Research was conducted in autumn semester 2016. Company image given through social media platforms of the commissioner is studied in the research. Social media platforms used in this study include Facebook and Instagram. Results indicate the current company image and help to identify the issues regarding the subject.

Information for theoretical part is gathered from online sources and by reading books concerning the subject. Theoretical part presents topics such as marketing communications, digital marketing, social media marketing and building of a company image. Data for the research is collected by distribution of questionnaire. Questionnaire is shared via online link. In addition, in-person data collection is implemented.

Key findings and results of the research indicate that the company image of the commissioner is strongly approachable and communal. Moreover, the commissioner is seeing organized and professionally appropriate. In contrast, issues concerning the social media marketing of the company raised. Relationship between Facebook and Instagram is considered weak and advertising efforts indicate not to target all desired target groups.

Level of diversity and professionalism is recommended to be increased in social media marketing. In addition, relationship between Facebook and Instagram should be further improved. Offered services should be clearly visible in Facebook.

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1   Introduction

Today more and more of marketing and customer relations are distributed through social-media channels. Platforms such as Facebook or Twitter do not only serve as a tool for help but also as a make it or break it point to many marketing campaigns. Social media is the current boom in marketing thus it has been integrated in to many marketing plans. Biggest benefits and issues with social media marketing lie however in its interactivity with customers. One positive or negative comment or review can have long-term effects in company's reputation for both good and bad. However, social media marketing also enables easier customer-relations building and reaches people who would not have otherwise looked up one's company. However, main advantage in social media marketing is cost-related. Applications such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Blogspot are free to use. Social media marketing, when done correctly, can give a company more personality compared to regular webpages or advertisements.

The commissioner of the thesis is Alaspään Ratsastuskeskus, a riding school located in Hämeenlinna. The company organizes everything from lessons to competitions and summer camps. Operations are aimed to everyone interested in horses and riding, regardless of age or skill-level. The commissioner is discussed in more detail in chapter two.

The objective in this study is to understand and examine the commissioner's company image that is communicated through social media channels. Focus of the work is on determining the existing company image – in other words the mental picture formed through Facebook and Instagram by individuals not familiar with the company beforehand. Whether the company image for instance is casual or professional, focused on kids or adults or active enough. Improvement suggestions considering the social media marketing are given. Social media platforms used in this study include Facebook and Instagram.

A quantitative study is conducted in order to determine how people who are not familiar with the company interpret the image communicated through social media platforms. The chosen method for data collection is a survey. The survey contains multiple-choice and close-ended questions. The survey will be implemented through an online questionnaire. Expected results include clear picture of the company image the commissioner currently gives out through social media channels.

An overview to the world of equestrian sport as a hobby in Finland and Hämeenlinna is provided together with an outline of the commissioner in chapter 2. The Equestrian Federation of Finland is given special attention to. Theoretical framework in chapter 3 gives a background to marketing communication. Special focus is on digital marketing and especially on social media marketing. Topics such as visual aspects in social media and company image are examined in detail in chapter three. The research method and questionnaire are presented and studied in chapter 4. Additionally, validity and reliability are discussed.

Chapter 5 analyses the results of the research. The collected data is examined and evaluated. Different groups are compared together in order to determine the most specific results as possible. In chapter 6 improvement suggestions and development ideas are provided.

2 Presenting equestrian sport as a hobby and the commissioner

Chapter two gives an introduction to the world of equestrian sport as a hobby. Main points in Finland are provided. Special attention is directed to the Equestrian Federation of Finland and its key actions. In addition, the commissioner is presented and the equestrian sport as a hobby in the Hämeenlinna is described as it is where the commissioner locates.

2.1 Equestrian sports as a hobby in Finland

Humans have long traditions for using horses for different purposes like farming, in combat or competing. However, it was not until after the war that it became popular as a leisure activity. Riding schools were opened and horses come to be more of a hobby rather than a tool. Conversely, the first riding school in Finland was opened already in late 1800s. According to the Equestrian Federation of Finland as a business, horse industry occupies over 15 000 employees. Turnover of the industry is 830 million euros annually. Ypäjä Equine College is the primary training center for the equestrian sport in the country. (Suomen Ratsastajainliitto)

Riding is one of the very few sports were men and women compete with each other equally. However, as the statistic by the Equestrian Federation of Finland show currently 95% out of the 50 000 (2015) registered riders in Finland are women therefore riding is the second biggest female sport in Finland. Senior riders (18 or above) consist 62% of the total. Nevertheless, during high-season there are approximately total of 160 000 riders in Finland. Horseback riding is performed all-year-around. Besides being a leisure activity, it helps to improve balance, coordination, rhythm sense and physical shape as mentioned by Donegal Equestrian Centre. In addition, riding can be used as therapy method for physical and mental conditions.

SRL – The Equestrian Federation of Finland (Suomen Ratsastajainliitto in Finnish) was founded in 1920. The federation's central focus is on "developing equestrianism both as a competition and leisure sport, promoting horse welfare and rider safety". Nevertheless, SRL has regulations and guidelines regarding teaching, tidiness and insurances as well. There are approximately 370 (2015) registered and SRL approved riding schools, riding stables and private stables in Finland. Conversely, there are roughly 500 stables providing riding school type of services in Finland. (Suomen Ratsastajainliitto)

Described in SRL's website, riding school's primary focus is on the quality of teaching and facilities whereas in riding stables, the requirements for teaching and facilities are lower and the focus is more on horsemanship. Private stables offer services exclusively for private horse owners. Riding schools approved by SRL have a professional and trained staff, suitable horses and safe grounds for riding and horse handling. SRL does evaluation visits to its member stables every one or two years. One can be a member of SRL by being a member of one of the 500 hundred riding clubs around Finland. Member of any riding club is provided with a sport insurance and a member magazine. Competing requires a membership. Horse clubs act actively to improve local equestrianism by organizing competitions, education, horse club activities and coaching. (Suomen Ratsastajainliitto)

Typically, most of riding school lessons are dressage based. According to a United States Equestrian Federation "the specific purpose for dressage is to develop a horse's natural athletic ability and maximize its suppleness and attentiveness, all the while fostering ultimate harmony between horse and rider". In riding schools it is mainly about performing different sorts of movements with a horse like circles or extended gaits. Level of performed movements depends on horse and it's riders skill-level. In competitions, movements are predetermined and evaluated. Generally, riding lesson lasts for an hour. However, various riding schools offer shorter sessions for instance 30 or 20 minutes as well. Those are often directed at beginners. Lessons usually consist of a group of three to nine people (SRL guideline). Groups are shaped based on riders skill-level in order for teaching to be most suitable for everyone. Prices of a riding lesson vary from 25-35 euros. Factors such as location and quality have an effect on the rates.

2.2   Equestrian sport as a hobby in Hämeenlinna

In addition to commissioner, several other riding schools locate in Hämeenlinna. Within a short reach from urban area locates SRL proved riding schools Aulangon Ratsastuskeskus and Saajan Talli. Nonetheless, within Hämeenlinna area also locates two riding schools Jaatalli and Harvialan Hevostila. Those however, are not approved by SRL. Regarding offered services, all provide more or less the same product for riders: weekly riding lessons. Leaving main reasons for selection location/accessibility, quality, advancement opportunities, price and atmosphere. Prices vary from 22 euros to 35 euros per hour.

Moreover, numerous private stables and riding stables also locate in area. As already mentioned before in riding stables, the requirements for teaching and facilities are lower

and focus is more directed at horsemanship compared to riding schools. Private stables vary in size and offered services. However, private stables locate further away from urban area compared to riding schools. In addition to traditional riding schools, few riding stables that offer trail riding operate in range. Prices for trail riding are typically higher though the sessions often last longer. Commonly starting from two hours to whole day.

Kanta-Hämeen Ratsastajat (K-hr) is a riding club founded in 1986. As mentioned on their website "aim is to market riding in Hämeenlinna area as a versatile, everyone's hobby regardless of age or gender". According to K-hr club supports its' members in equestrian sports whether the interest is in competing or having horses as a hobby. In additions it aims to develop its' members horsemanship skills. Club organizes for instance competitions and coaching-and education events. Another riding club operating in Hämeenlinna is Tawast Riders (TwR). Club was founded in 2011 and it aims to develop versatile equestrian hobby-and competition operations in Hämeenlinna region. Club organizes competitions in dressage and show jumping. In addition, as clarified by TwR club attempts to support all of its' members activeness in sport. (Tawast Riders)

With variety of possibilities offered in Hämeenlinna area importance of marketing and stable's image grows. Typically mouth-to-mouth marketing has always been popular is this field. However, it makes it hard for companies to influence the message. Companies' should be able to build their image on their strengths. Whether it is the advancement opportunities, atmosphere or something else.

2.3   Alaspään Ratsastuskeskus

Alaspään Ratsastuskeskus is a riding school located in western Hämeenlinna. It provides riding lessons, courses, competitions and private horse boarding. Company was founded in 1970s and is operated by Sammon HorseTeam Oy. Alaspään Ratsastuskeskus is approved by the Equestrian Federation of Finland (SRL).

As pointed out in the company's website it offers four riding lessons every weekday starting from 4 pm. On Saturday lessons start at 10 am and end at 1 pm and on Sunday lessons start on 3 pm and end on 6 pm. Main focus on the lessons is on dressage but show jumping lessons are organized as well. Additionally, trail riding is occasionally offered. One lesson lasts an hour and costs to regular client 25 euros. Nonetheless, there are riding lessons on Thursdays and Saturdays that last for 30 minutes. Aim is for beginners and price is 14 euros. Normally lesson consist of four to six people sharing the same skill-level. Nevertheless, one is able to book a private or small-group session as well. Those

generally locate outside of standard lesson schedule. All lessons are taught by professional and educated teachers. From regular clients a riding club membership is required. (Alaspään Ratsastuskeskus)

There are multiple competitions in dressage and show jumping held in Alaspään Ratsastuskeskus annually. Tawast Riders mainly organizes the competitions. Competitions are held during weekends, primarily on Sundays. As evident from the riding school's website clients of the riding school are allowed to enter the competitions with school horses with an extra fee of five euros. Nonetheless, there are no regulations that exclude private horse owners or riders from other stables from competing in stable's competitions. (Alaspään Ratsastuskeskus)

For private owned horses the stable offers full-time boarding. In other words, the stalls are cleaned daily and fresh sawdust is added. Horses are fed three times per day and spend five hours day-to-day in a paddock. Boarding rate is 500 euros. Additionally, to above mentioned it includes unlimited use of riding ring. One is able to attend riding lessons with own horse for a price of 15 euros. (Alaspään Ratsastuskeskus)

Courses are organized all-year-around. As can be seen from the company's online activities courses are commonly fixated on show jumping, dressage or horse handling. However, through summer time beginner courses are also organized. All summer courses usually last from Monday to Friday and are held during morning and afternoon. During other times of year, courses are typically weekend courses: starting on Friday evenings and ending on Sunday afternoons. All courses consists of theory and riding lessons and horse handling. Number of the daily riding lessons vary from one to two depending on the type of the course.

Thirteen of the 28 horses living in there are for riding school use. Nine horses are private owned and the rest are owned by the company but do not attend to the riding school operations. Reasons for retirement, still in training or gestation.

For marketing purposes the company uses webpage, Facebook and Instagram. Main focus is on the webpage. All necessary information is found there. Facebook serves more or less as a platform for notifications: competitions, events, schedule changes etc. Instagram is still forming its shape.

3 Marketing communications

This chapter focuses on different aspects of marketing communications. Central focus is on digital marketing and above all on social media marketing. Introduction to the world of marketing channels and techniques is also given. Visual aspects in social media marketing are argued and traditional and digital media are compared. Nonetheless, image creation in marketing communications is examined and explained.

3.1 Marketing communications defined

Marketing communications combines different marketing channels and tools. Main purpose of marketing is to get a product or service in the hands of a customer (Ian Dodson, 2013). Marketing communications is on part of the marketing mix. Which includes the 4P's: price, promotion, place and product. Marketing communications falls under promotion. It is the message company desires to send out. Traditional media marketing was the core of marketing communications for a long period. However, according to Irwin (2011) during recent years, digital marketing has grown rapidly and it is set to be the future of marketing.

The 4 P's of marketing are general tools to help define marketing options in terms of price, product, promotion and place. Promotion part looks for the right channel to advertise to company's target audience. For instance, the platforms that experience high popularity among target audience. Promotion includes features like advertising, public relations, social media marketing, email marketing and search engine marketing. Second P the product can be a tangible item or an intangible service. Product's initial purpose and possible customer base need be identified as well as how it will be used and when. Nonetheless, outer features such as size and color need to be decided carefully with the name of the product. Place stands for distribution channels. The product or service can be sold online, directly or in store. It is critical to estimate what the best channels are to convert possible consumers into actual consumers. Price is the value of provided product. Price should be competitive with competitors. (Purely branded, 2016)

Traditional media consists of broadcast channels, print and public advertising. Broadcast channels include television and radio, print includes newspapers, books and magazines whereas public advertising consists of posters and billboards. Name traditional media

comes from the long effective existence in marketing world. Traditional marketing enables tangibility. In other words, it offers hard copy material. (Lilyquist, 2016)

Promotion mix is an important factor considering marketing. It values the effectiveness and essence of promotion. Below the components of promotion mix are discussed. Advertising stands as the basic component of promotion within marketing mix. Advertising consists of any type of indirect presentation of products or services thus advertising is used to increase demand and product sales. Two forms of advertising are used: product advertising and institutional advertising. Purpose of product advertising is to increase sales of a product or service, whereas institutional advertising means promoting the image of the company. Another element of promotion within marketing mix is public relationship (PR). Public relationship consists of communication of company and establishment of relationships. Relationships are formed with different groups such as employees, government, customers and shareholders. Status and image building are the main goals of public relationships. Medias like newspaper articles, press conferences and press releases are used for PR. Furthermore, publicity is seeing as part of PR as well. It can not be controlled and therefore negative publicity is presented as well as positive resulting in the importance of choosing the correct PR approach (Biz Development 2009).

Personal selling is defined as a personalized communication where a concrete or intangible item of value is traded for a money or another item for an equal or greater value than the item being exchanged (Boundless). Personal selling enables creation of relationship with consumer. It is beneficial with increasing chances of future prospects of deals especially with business to business sales. However, as it is one of the most effective methods it is also one of the most expensive methods (Manis 2014).

Nonetheless, sales promotion is part of the promotional mix. Sales promotions are excellent way to increase sales and bring consumers to the product or service. For example coupons for a free drink with a dish sent out by restaurants are sales promotions. Sales promotions are highly used in the hospitality industry Manis 2014). Finally, direct marketing belongs to promotional mix. Direct marketing defines as a way of making direct contact with existing and possible customers in order to promote products or services. It allows targeting of certain people with a personalized communication thus enables focusing of marketing resources to most promising target groups. Multiple different methods are used for direct marketing. Direct mail, telephone marketing and mobile marketing are methods of direct marketing (Marketing Donut 2016).

3.2   Traditional media channels

Television is a competent advertising method due to visual and audio stimulation. Combination of visual and audio content creates higher rates of attention grapping. Nonetheless, it has had a dominance over other marketing channels. Television is often used for brand awareness building. However, consumers tend to avoid watching commercials breaks though this still includes only small percentage of viewers. Desired target audience is reachable with ensuring that advertisements are played during right time with right programs. For example, company selling sport gear generates higher sales when advertising during commercial breaks of sport program. On the other hand, targeting with television is still less specific compared to online advertising (Aland, 2016).

Radio is one of the oldest forms of media transmission still being used. Marketing via radio is cost effective due to low charges. However, compared to television radio only uses audio to communicate messages thus aspects like tone and sound have a huge impact. Nevertheless, as television is more or less watched during leisure time radio can additionally reach consumers at work, during transportation or leisure activities. Similar to television target audience can be reached through specific selection of time slot(s) and radio station (i Market Solutions 2016).

Printed media catches audience through visual methods. It is the second largest advertising channel after television. Aspects such as color, style and size are in great role when determining effectiveness. In its basics, printed media might be most challenging to create to be capturing. It lacks audio and visual aspects what for instance television is able to produce. However, it is a great tactic for message delivery and information communication. Pulizzi (2012) argues that printed media is the best mean of thinking outside of box.

3.3   Digital marketing

Digital marketing is promotion of products through digital channels. Segments such as websites, social media, mobile apps, e-mail marketing and search engines are included. Digital media has given marketing a new interactive model. Customers can easily share their thoughts and opinions about countless products or services through social media channels. Nonetheless, it has become gradually more common for companies to encourage these exchanges in order to have direct contact with customers. Personalized and tailored communications are easier to achieve through digital media compared to traditional one. However, one should apply different marketing approaches to different platforms. Nevertheless, digital marketing enables companies to examine promotion and marketing

campaigns in real time. According to Cave (2016), access to visitor and conversion rates and peak trading times is only a click away.

Digital marketing increases its importance every day. According to Pick (2016) an average person spends more time online than in any form of traditional media (TV, newspaper, radio etc.) combined. Therefore, significance on online advertisements, social media channels and other segments of digital marketing grows. However, the issue of advertisements blockers have resulted in decreased revenue. Nevertheless, there are few other issues to consider regarding digital marketing. People are increasingly worried about their privacy. Option of not to choose their data to be collected should be included and special attention to children should be implemented.

Compared to traditional marketing, targeted audience and its engagement level is typically higher in digital marketing. In addition, marketing costs are lower and reach greater. However, as Swan (2014) points out creation of a successful digital marketing strategy framework is critical to guarantee the success of planned communications. Nevertheless, traditional media should not be overlooked either.

In order to create a functioning foundation for digital marketing the 3i principles need to be considered. The three principles are initiate, iterate and integrate. Initiate stands for the argument that customer is the starting and finishing point for all digital activities. Interaction and two-way dialogue are essential; when customer communicates, it is important to listen. Iterate is about publishing and tracking responses. Effectiveness of digital channels increases with iterative process. However, the length of iterative process should be modified depending on the channel. Lastly integrate works in three levels: digital channels, digital and traditional marketing and reporting sources. Integration of efforts across digital channels stands for improving efficiency of a channel by using the information collected through another channel. Integration of digital and traditional marketing efforts works nearly same. Information learned through digital marketing is integrated to traditional marketing. Lastly, integration of reporting sources is about collecting data in a way that benefits the company. For instance, the amount of visitors on company's site that come from e-mail versus paid search advertising. (Dodson 2013, 4-5)

Two popular types of digital marketing, search engines and email marketing, are argued below. Discussion of social media marketing is provided in chapter 3.4. Search engines can be called the door to the internet. Typing word or two in it offers links to matching websites. Search engine is often a key driver of traffic to websites. Positioning of webpage in search engine results is a significant factor. "It is often said that best place to hide a

dead body is on the second page of search engine results" – Ian Dodson. Paid listings are always on top. Yet location of consumer effects search engine results. Email has been a constant platform in the digital age whereas other platforms have been coming and going. Therefore, email marketing is one of the most effective canals for distributing marketing messages to consumers. However, it should be highly structured and the 3i's discussed earlier in this chapter incorporate to email marketing as well. (Dodson 2013a, 7-10, Dodson 2013b, 122-125)

3.4 Digital marketing versus traditional marketing

One of the biggest differences between traditional and digital marketing is the ability to measure results. Digital marketing enables the usage of tools created for measuring results. For instance, Facebook notifies how many people saw business' post. Nonetheless, tools to determine whether or not seeing the advertisement resulted in purchase are available. In addition, real time measurement enables quick adaptation and modification of strategy. With traditional media, this type of measurement is challenging and in many cases even impossible. Cost related issues are similarly in favour of digital media. Most digital media channels are relatively inexpensive or free to use. This results to more level playfield between small local businesses and their big competitors. In addition, traditional media lacks interactivity. It more or less merely provides information that the company or product exists (Cave 2016).

With digital media and especially with social media consumers do part of the marketing for the company. They share, like and comment business' content and thus pass it around. Generally, traditional marketing reaches merely local audience whereas in digital marketing only the globe is limit. However, with digital marketing spread can be tailored to reach smaller audiences as well. For receiving end, digital marketing offers audience a choice to choose. Some like to read a blog post, another likes to watch a YouTube video. Traditional marketing does not give the audience a choice (Cave 2016).

Faulkner (2013) argues that a well maintained website with quality content targeting the needs and adding value to target audience can provide significant value and lead generation opportunities. Additionally, sharing information and content through digital media channels is incredibly fast. No posters or newspaper advertisements are passed around immediately.

On the other hand, Cave (2016) points out that traditional marketing can be easily understood by most people because they are already exposed to this kind of strategy. In addition, it is still something individuals are accustomed to. Nevertheless, Cave (2016) refers to a study performed by TrueImpact when stating that direct mail is easier to process mentally and tested better for brand recall. Physical material has a meaning and a place and contains more emotional processing thus is connected to a memory better. Compared to digital media local audience might be more easily targeted with traditional marketing. Targeted radio advertisements or mailbox flyers are more than likely to reach target audience. With digital media, the variety of content is huge and advertisements can vanish in the crowd.

Strong online presence of companies and individuals' results often for the paths to end up in digital world. According to a Bakhos (2016) the traditional media drives consumers to websites where customers typically continue the research process. Nonetheless, in many cases the purchase itself occurs online. Companies have online shops and reservations platforms. However, measuring the number of consumers who came online for the reason of traditional media can be challenging.

Although world has gone digital, marketing might still be in its most effective when combining both methods. Goal is similar for traditional and digital marketing: to attract customers and build brand awareness thus generate revenue. "By combining digital and traditional marketing, you put the right ad in front of the right people and give them a reason to visit both your website and swing the doors of your store." (Netsertive 2015).

3.5   Social media marketing

Today customers are online. People interact with friends, search for information, services and recommendation. Social media platforms are used for gaining attention and increasing visibility in marketing. Social media marketing enables greater interactivity between company and consumers. In that sense, it increases the chances to grow audience and customer base. Social media enables connecting with individuals all over the globe. However, social media should be used only as an extension to other departments of the company. As there are millions of social media users online variety of content can be overwhelming and companies need to put effort in to standing out from the crowd. Two types of marketing tend stand out from the crowd in social media: entertaining and beneficial.

As a marketing tool, social media is highly interactive. Direct contact from business to customers is what separates social media marketing from other marketing tools. Process of communication is fast thus it is no longer highly controlled and monitored. This result into more approachable and human feel of B2C communication. Additionally, engaging with customers whether it is listening or problem solving increases customer loyalty. Nevertheless, listening and learning from customers helps to identify what type of social media content is most effective and has the highest engagement level. (Dodson 2013a, 159, Dodson 2013b, 192-193)

Upon entering the world of social media marketing, one should consider the following topics: social media platform or platforms to used, target audience, objectives to achieve and primary content. In addition, if company maintains more than one social media platform, interaction level between them need to be decided. Same strategy should not be implemented similarly to all social media pages. Not all social media platforms work the same in terms of reaching objectives. However, (Korhan, 2013) primary focus should be merely on one social media platform in order to achieve maximum result. With the aim of choosing the right platform, objectives should be measured carefully, whether the aim is to increase brand awareness or traffic and whether image-based sharing or engaging conversation is more suitable for the product. Nonetheless, target audience has an influence as well: which platforms are the most habited by them.

Gunelus (2016) argues that it is better to centre marketing and social media content rather than to be jack-of-all-trades. It increases chances for success and brand building. However, the article points out the importance of interactivity. One should publish content constantly and be available for participating in conversations. Interactivity increases loyalty and loyalty increases visibility and sales. As mentioned by Bolsinger (2016) the direction customers need to develop is from liking the company to loving it and eventually to defending it. Gradually to achieve above-mentioned, marketing should focus on positive experiences and bond forming. However, consumer-to-consumer communication should not be overlooked either. Peer-to-peer dialogue is an excellent way to build trust to products. People are more likely to trust other consumers' experiences. Conversely, this could lead into negative publicity as easily as to positive. One should always be aware of what type of image company gives through its social media channels.

After creation of social media page, there are still few steps to follow frequently. Content should be posted regularly. Couple times per week minimum. Entertainment and usefulness are more important qualities in content than commercialism. Company's social media network should consist of target audience in order to maximise sales and visibility on

the field. Nonetheless engaging is an important tool when keeping customers satisfied and pleased (Neher, 2016).

3.5.1 Social media channels

One segment of digital marketing is social media. This chapter focuses on main social media channels used for marketing purposes. Social media allows individuals, companies and other organizations to share information, thoughts, pictures and other forms of expressions online (Dodson 2013, 153). In addition, it enables interactivity between users thus it connects people. Social media platforms are accessible through smartphones, computers and tablets. All below discussed applications are free of charge.

Table 1: Different social media channels

Channel	Primary purpose	Number of users
Facebook	Connecting, sharing	1790 million (Statista, 2016)
Twitter	Connecting, sharing	317 million (Statista, 2016)
Instagram	Sharing visual content	500 million (Statista, 2016)
Youtube	Sharing videos, commenting	Over 1000 million (Youtube, 2016)
Pinterest	Sharing visual content	100 million (Smith, 2016)

Facebook has been open for public use since 2006. Facebook enables creation of a personal profile and connecting via shared stories, pictures and videos. Features such as sharing, commenting and liking create interactivity between users. As pointed out by Neher (2013, 1) an average person on Facebook is connected to 130 people plus an additional 80 groups, events and pages. It is the most extensively used social network thus far. Most usual age demographic in Facebook is age 25 to 34 and the highest peak in traffic is between one to three pm (2016). On average, females have 166 friends on Facebook whereas males have 145. Fifty-nine percent of aged 50 to 65 years old, social media users have a Facebook profile in Finland (Pönkä, 2015).

Twitter was published in 2006. It allows users to send and receive posts that are 140-characters long through profile. Posts send in Twitter are called "tweets". Tweets are public. However, one can adjust message delivery to followers only. Users can like or com-

ment other people's tweets. Nonetheless, retweeting meaning a forwarding a tweet is possible. Twitter uses hashtags to group posts together by content or theme. For instance, hashtag #football allows users to see tweets related to football (Twitter, 2016).

Instagram was launched in 2010. It allows users to take photos and share them through mobile devices. Application provides users with an opportunity of editing their photos prior publishing with different filters. Instagram enables a creation of profile. With profile user is able to follow others, like photos and leave comments. Instagram can be linked to other social media platforms thus image from Instagram can be shared to Facebook or twitter easily. Nearly 4 billion photos had been shared through Instagram since launch to 2013. Much like Twitter, Instagram also uses hashtags as one of their components (Dodson 2013, 226). Ninety percent of all Instagram users are younger than 35 years old (Smith, 2016).

Pinterest started operating in 2010. It is a photo-sharing social media channel. Through registration users are able to manage, save and upload pictures and other media content through collections. Collections are called pinboards. Users can create pinboards based on particular topic and "pin" individual pieces of content related to the pinboard. Pin is a content shared on Pinterest publicly and can be for instance, photo, article or website. Pin is often highly visual (Neher 2013, 55). Seventy-one percent of Pinterest users are female and 34 % is aged from 18 to 29. Aged 65 and plus cover only 17 percent of users (Teoh, 2016).

Youtube has been operating for longest of the mentioned channels. Since 2005. Users can upload videos and view others. Yet Youtube enables rating, commenting and sharing of videos. However, Youtube does not require registration to view videos uploaded on site. Overall, it reaches more 18-34 and 18-49 year-olds than any cable network in the U.S (Youtube, 2016).

Youtube and Twitter's main purpose described by users is to follow content. Whereas Facebook is mainly used for communication. Users of Pinterest look for inspiration. While Instagram users desire to share pieces of their life (Pönkä, 2015).

3.5.2 Visual aspects in social media marketing

Visual content is most clicked and viewed material by social media users at present. Applications invested in sharing visual content such as Instagram, Pinterest and Snapchat are reaching their peak of popularity. In addition, for instance visual content is the most

clicked and viewed content in Twitter. Science behind "picture is worth a thousand words" is purely on the fact that brains can consume and comprehend information more rapidly through images than text. Ninety percent of data transmitted to brain is visual. In such, images prove to be more efficient way to reach interest and increase visibility. Trend has moved from tell to show. (Neher 2013a, 3, Neher 2013b, 6-7)

As Neher (2013) points out social media marketing started with text. To be more specific with blogs. Facebook shortened the long form of communicating and twitter shortened it even more. Now people have transferred from blogs to microblogs and multimedia microblogs and image sharing sites like previously mentioned Instagram and Pinterest.

Images are crucial to whether or not content will be shared and to how effectively. Images should present the company image wanted. For example, Redbull uses visual content of extreme sports to support their brand of "Redbull gives you wings" and assists to accomplish extraordinary (Neher 2013, 25). Mawhinney (2016) argues that visual content in social media is 40 times more likely to be shared than other content and that almost 52% of professionals worldwide named video as the type of content with the best return of investment.

Images shared on social media channels should express a story and capture interest of targeted audience. Image does not necessarily mean only a picture or video. Current visual content trends include memes and infographics. Infographic is a tool to share data and information in visual framework. Visually shared information is typically easier to understand and comprehend compared to plain text. Neher (2013, 88-89) argues that infographics tend to get volumes of likes, shares and clicks and in that sense increase traffic, sales and brand building. Meme is a picture combined with text. Meme's purpose is to entertain and humoristic in a satirical way. They regularly have a hidden meaning with popular culture reference. However, because of the reliance on humor, the line between amusing and impropriate can be thin and that sense using them in marketing might be risky. Memes are highly shareable content but have a short lifecycle. (Neher 2013, sivut!!)

Although visual social media marketing need to be focused as well, sharing similar types of visual content regularly is not recommended. Consumers ought to be kept interested. Interactivity is one of the key points even in visual social media marketing. However, content should still be directed to company's target audience.

3.6 Company image in marketing communications

Image is a consequence of actions and reactions. It is the perception of a company. Factors such as emotion, knowledge, attitude, beliefs, prejudices and experiences have strong influence on image thus image is created even without any action or effort. Strongest factor have a tendency to be experience. Negative image can be from decades ago even. It might became a real obstacle to purchasing since customers tend to avoid contact with companies with negative images especially if there is room for choosing. (Mikkonen, 2016)

Knowledge — Image — Experiences

Attitude — — Beliefs

Emotion — — Prejudices
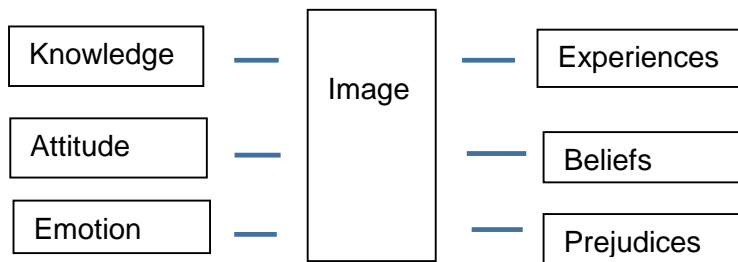
Figure 1: Mikkonen 2016

Easiest way to improve image to better is to enhance quality. However, it tends to be slow road (Mikkonen, 2016). Nevertheless, marketing can be used as well. Marketing influences shared knowledge, emotion, attitude and personal experiences. Fastest way to affect image is through experiences. Positive experiences have a habit of decreasing the negative attitudes. Image reflects directly to consumer buyer behaviour. Positive image is important thus it makes consumer decision process easier. Changes in image are typically visible in sales and revenues. Nonetheless, consumers are not only ones to build an image of a company. Employees, competitors and community have a perception of a company as well (Small Business Notes 2016).

Image is does not limit to only positive or negative. Companies give out different factors like quality, target-group and professionalism as well. Conversely, not always image wanted and received encounter. For instance, a hotel wants to be received as a family destination whereas in reality consumers perceive it as a business destination. Established company image can be altered through calculated, consistent marketing strategies. (Small Business Notes 2016).

Everything affects the image from how customers are served to how company' written material is produced (Marketing Research Company, 2016). Change in image or in marketing will cause an influence on the other. In order to maximize the marketing efforts company

image needs to be clearly defined. Marketing content consistent with image will support sales and simplify introduction of new products. However, this requires the company image to be in line with desired image.

Direct contact with consumers is an excellent way affecting the company image positively. Methods such as free trials of service or organizing of events are ways of direct contact. Control of the environment is on the company and consumers can experience the more individual approach to the marketing (Torres 2016).

Considering company image creation more precisely in digital marketing it is evident that consistent communication is crucial in supporting of a certain company image. Consistency allows consumers to remember the company better through similar visuals and messages. Increase of familiarity can result in increased level of returning customers. Consistent marketing includes logo. Consistent communication can deliver for instance values that company believes in and that will support the company image. On the other hand, professionalism and quality of services together with service-orientation should be evident from marketing. Knowledge of how to present company image as attractive and professional separates professional and amateur marketing. Factors such as logo and layout webpage have an influence in the matter. Conversely, misrepresenting a company declines consumers' trust and therefore affect negatively on company image. Company image should consist of actual values and beliefs of the company. In addition, copying of other brands and company images is a strong negative influence. Good marketing strategy will help the company to build authentic and engaging company image (Rampton, 2015).

4   Research Implementation

This chapter focuses on conducting of research. Research method and questionnaire are presented and studied. Implementation of data collection is discussed by explaining the process. Moreover, validity and reliability are argued. This chapter does not include the results of the research. Results are discussed in the chapter 5.

4.1   Research method

Data for this study were collected in a form of a quantitative survey. Survey consisted mainly of closed-ended and multiple choice questions and was made by using Webropol online tool. Survey was constructed to collect information regarding the research problem: image distributed through social media.

A quantitative research is based on numbers. Information is measured through figures. Considered things such as height and age are easy to measure in numbers. However, factors like intelligence and friendliness can be quantified as well. Yet opinions can be measured. To measure opinions, scales that express agreements are highly valued. Quantitative research typically answers to questions: what, where, how much and how often. It is used to measure and assess the current situations (Mis 2013, 1-2).

Quantitative research enables investigation of the observable world. Concepts like religious explanations cannot be supported by observation. For example science can to not tell us whether we have free will, but it can allow us to measure whether people think they have a free will (Mis 2013, 7).

Common sources for quantitative data collection are surveys, observations and secondary data. Observation involves counting of times a specific occurrence takes place whereas secondary data includes factors such as company accounts. Survey presents question(s) in same format to a large number of individuals. Survey measures attitudes, behaviour and beliefs. Additionally, relationship between variables can be researched. Properly done survey can be highly revealing. Surveys have been used for product development since before World War II (Mis 2013, 10). Companies desire to know what consumers want to purchase to generate sales. Prior designing a survey the research problem needs to be clearly defined.

Questions in quantitative survey usually have ready made answer options. For instance, closed-ended questions. With closed-ended questions, the number of answer options should not be high and options to match all answerers should be valued. Closed-ended questions are easy to analyse and answering is fast. However, answers may not be carefully thought and "I do not know" option might be tempting (Heikkilä 2014, 6-9). Nonetheless, open-ended questions tend to give out more precise data.

Statistical methods are often used for analysing results of quantitative researches. Data analysis aims to make general discoveries about problems researched. Additionally, it looks for patterns and relationships. It has been argued that the think process is strong part of the analyzing process. It is important for the researcher to be able to make sense out of the data collected in order to ensure the trustworthiness and reliability of the research. (Atlas.ti, 2016)

4.2   Data collection

Questionnaire is constructed to examine the research problem. In order for questionnaire to be most effective, the research problem needs to be well defined. Each question presented in questionnaire should provide essential information regarding the problem thus careful planning of research questions is endorsed. Questionnaire is implemented in Finnish in since the targeted respondents are Finnish and therefore speak Finnish.

In order to achieve the most accurate results closed-ended questions are applied. Closed-ended questions provide a possibility to guide the respondent and maximise the understanding of questions. Questions are designed to collect data about company image given through social media pages. Different scales to describe and evaluate the company are implemented together with statements. Age and gender are gathered as a general information to study whether or not there were any difference in answers between genders and age groups. Complete questionnaire can be found in appendix.

Data collection was executed through an online survey. Link was distributed through social media networks and personal connections. No specific target group was defined, only regulation for the respondents was to have no previous connection to commissioner. However, large proportion of respondents were under 50 years old. In addition to online distribution of data collection answers were also collected in-person. Data was collected through period of one month. Collection started in first of October 2016 and ended in fifth

of November 2016. In order for the respondents to answer to the survey, they were asked to examine the social media pages of the company. Social media pages studied included Facebook and Instagram.

Biggest challenge regarding the data collection was to convince the respondents to answer. With online distribution, one does not have a personal connection to respondents. Problem was to know whether the respondents actually took the time to answer after agreeing to it. With in-person data collection people were more willing. However, respondents' biggest challenge seemed to be the fact that they could not alone answer the questionnaire but they had search information in order to fill it in.

Questionnaire was put together to be simple and quick to answer. Time for responding took no longer than five minutes. However, at the same time questionnaire was designed to gather crucial information regarding the research problem: image given through social media marketing.

Thesis process initiated with strong evaluation of research problem. Author wanted be sure that the aim of the thesis would be beneficial for the commissioner. Thesis was conducted with steady pace. Research begun in early September and finished in late November. First stage of the thesis consisted of giving an outline to the field of commissioner and preparation of questionnaire. As mentioned before questionnaire was send for review to the supervisor of the thesis. Nevertheless, it was approved by commissioner. Questionnaire was opened for responding in the first of October.

Second stage included the data collection and writing of the theory part. As discussed in chapter 4 data was collected through an online link and in-person. Author search different website sources for theoretical part. Additionally, books covering the topics such as digital marketing and quantitative research were used. When it comes to this stage, more strict schedules with the data collection could have been implemented. It took two weeks longer than the author expected to collect the results and this lead in to tighter schedule for implementation of the third stage of the research than previously planned.

Third stage consisted of evaluation of the implementation of the questionnaire, the validity and reliability of the research and analysis of the results. Data collected was examined question by question and different groups were compared together.

4.3   Reliability and validity

Validity and reliability measure the trustworthiness of the research. Validity answers to the question of how well the research method measures the research problem. (Hiltunen 2009, 3). Validity is guaranteed with right research method. Whereas reliability measures whether or not the result of the research is obtainable again if repeating the study. Both are examined below.

Trustworthiness of the research is highly valued in the process. It was aimed to preserve throughout the whole research. Theory part is researched from several different reliable sources in order to maximise the trustworthiness. Nonetheless, theory is reflected in examination of the results of the research to get trustworthy and best possible conclusions. Questionnaire was send for check-up and review to supervisor before implementation. Supervisor provided help with the outlook and structure of the questions. Respondents were informed about the aim of the research. Responding was voluntary and anonymity was ensured.

As the questionnaire is built to measure company image in versatile sense it can be concluded that the validity of the research especially regarding the research problem is high. However, since the questionnaire is distributed mainly through an online link one can not be certain if the respondents fully understood the questions. On the other hand, zero responses came in that would indicate that nor did the respondents ask for further instruction while filling in the questionnaire and searching the social media channels for information. Nevertheless, the questionnaire, with primarily closed-ended, questions guides the respondent. To conclude, validity of the research can be considered good.

Reliability of the research is slightly bit harder to measure compared to validity. Since the questionnaire asked for individuals' opinions, it is highly unlikely that research results would turn out precisely the same when repeating with new group of respondents. Conversely, spread within the respondents was not massive thus, it could be predicted that the situation would be the same with new group of respondents as well. If that were the case, the overall result of the research would remain more or less the same. Number of respondents were 76. When considering a quantitative research number of respondents ought to be near to hundred. Considering the amount of respondents and overall the reliability of the research is measured fairly good.

Results

This chapter presents the results of the research. Each question is studied and analysed carefully and different groups are compared in order to maximise the information obtained. Tables and figures are used to visualize the presentation of the results. Results demonstrate how people interpreted the company image given through social media channels (Facebook, Instagram) of the commissioner. Since the questionnaire was implemented in Finnish, the results are translated from Finnish to English. Result section does not include improvement suggestion. Improvement suggestions can be found in chapter 6.

4.4 General information

Age of the respondents is presented on the table below. As shown majority of the respondents are between 15 to 29 years old, total of 62%. Nobody over 70 years old answered the questionnaire and there are only seven (9%) respondents between 50 and 70 years old. In addition, 29% of the respondents are aged from 30 to 49.
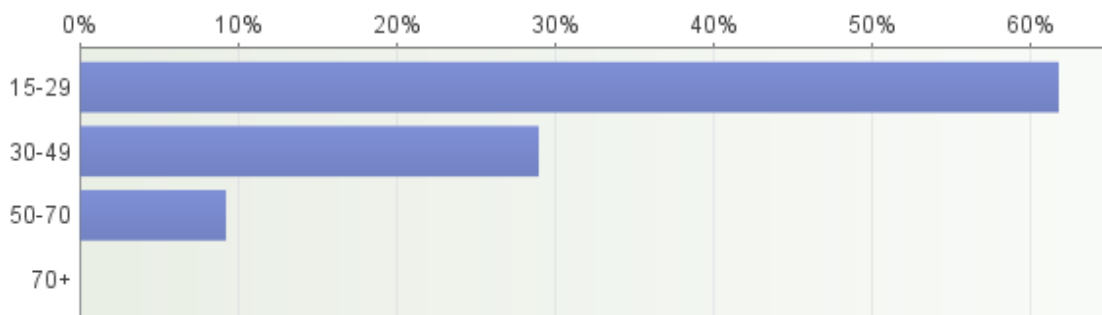
Figure 2: Age (N=76)

Gender of respondents is divided to 77% (59) women and 22% (17) men. Out of the seventeen men 35 % are in the age group of 30 to 49 and the rest 65 % are in the group of 15 to 29 years old. Every respondent between ages 50 to 70 are women. Majority of women, 61% total, are also from the youngest age group. Twenty-seven percent of women are aged 30 to 49.

4.5 Describing the company

Question three evaluates how individuals describe the company. Adjectives are used in order to maximise convenience of data collected and guide the respondent. Firstly, activeness of the company is valued. Altogether, 55% of respondents measured Alaspään

Ratsastuskeskus active over passive whereas 18% of people considered it to be more passive. However, 26% of respondents answered the scale in the middle making their answer more or less neutral. Variation between the two main age groups, 15 to 29 and 30 to 49, was visible. Younger group considered the company to be more active than the respondents aged between 30 to 49. Nonetheless, everyone in the age group 50 to 70 years old considered the company as active. In addition, men measured the company to be more active than women.

Table 2: Adjectives used to describe the company (N=76)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Active	13,16%	42,11%	26,32%	18,42%	0%	Passive
Accessibility high	15,79%	60,53%	21,05%	2,63%	0%	Accessiblity low
Appropiate	19,74%	60,53%	13,16%	6,58%	0%	Inappropiate
Professional	5,26%	44,74%	27,63%	21,05%	1,32%	Unprofessional
Diversity high	7,89%	30,26%	32,89%	28,95%	0%	Diversity low
Organized	7,89%	38,16%	35,53%	17,11%	1,32%	Unorganized
Total	**11,62%**	**46,05%**	**26,1%**	**15,79%**	**0,44%**	

Alaspään Ratsastuskeskus was measured to be easily accessible rather than difficultly by strong majority of respondents. Overall, 76% responded the company to be easily accessible. Also the respondents saw the company more professionally appropriate than inappropriate with 80% of answers on that side of the scale. Especially the respondents from 30 to 49 years old considered Alaspään Ratsastuskeskus appropriate having all their answers on that side of the scale. On the other hand, only 9% of the age group 15 to 29 and 14% of the age group 50 to 70 saw the company as professionally inappropriate.
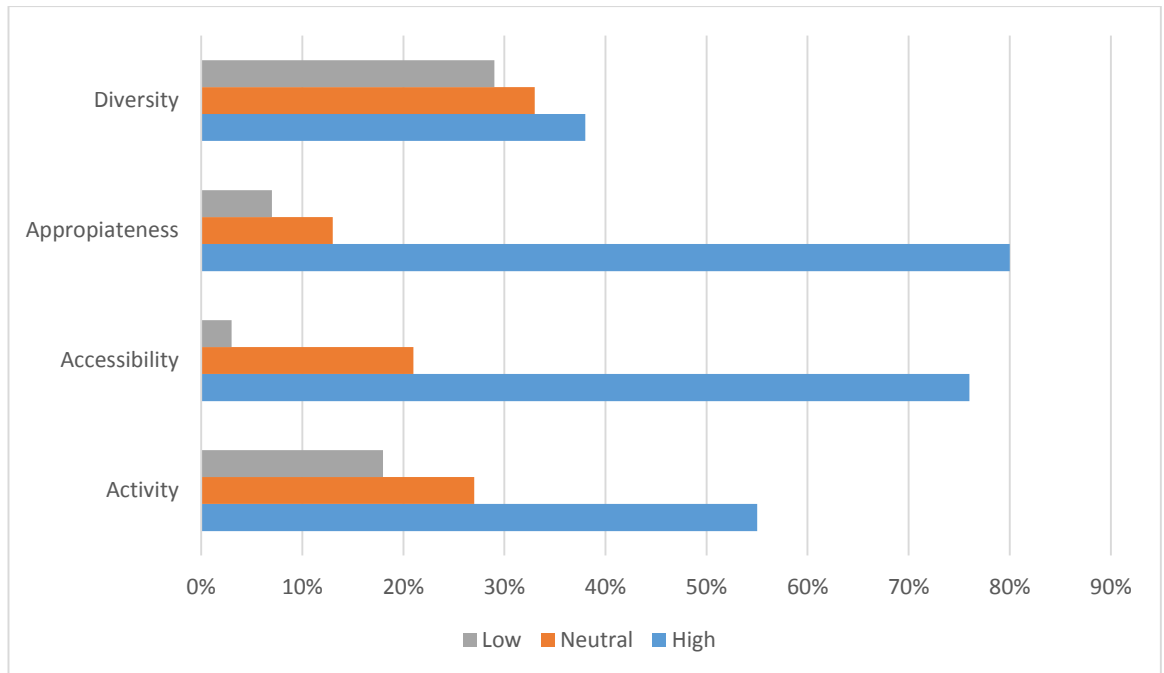
Figure 3: Diversity, Appropriateness, Accessibility and Activity (N=76), High is combined of answers on scale from 4 to 5 and low is combined of answers 1 to 2. Answers in scale of 3 are considered neutral.

Diversity was measured by 29% of respondents to be low. Whereas 38% (29) individuals saw the marketing as diverse. On the other hand, 33% of responses were neutral. Women considered the marketing to be more diverse compared to men. Only three (17%) out of seventeen men responded the company to appear diverse whereas 26 (44%) out of 59 women considered the company as diverse.

Alaspään Ratsastuskeskus was considered organized by 48% of the respondents. Conversely, 17% of the respondents considered it unorganized and one percent felt that it was strongly unorganized. Again over 36% of the responses were neutral. Variation between men and women was noticeable. Majority of men did not consider the company unorganized whereas women were more critical. Only one man choose to use the scale closer to unorganized while 22% of the women decided on that as well.

As evident from the figure 4, the company was considered organized most strongly by the age group of 30 to 49 years old. Fifty-five percent of them chose organized while 43% of the age groups 15 to 20 and 50 to 70 chose the same. On the other hand, neutral answer option had high answer rates as well. Altogether, 43% of respondents aged between 50 and 70 choose neutral answer whereas 36% of the 30 to 49 years old and 34% of the 15 to 29 years old concluded to the same. Highest unorganized rates were received from the age group of 15 to 29. Total of 23%.
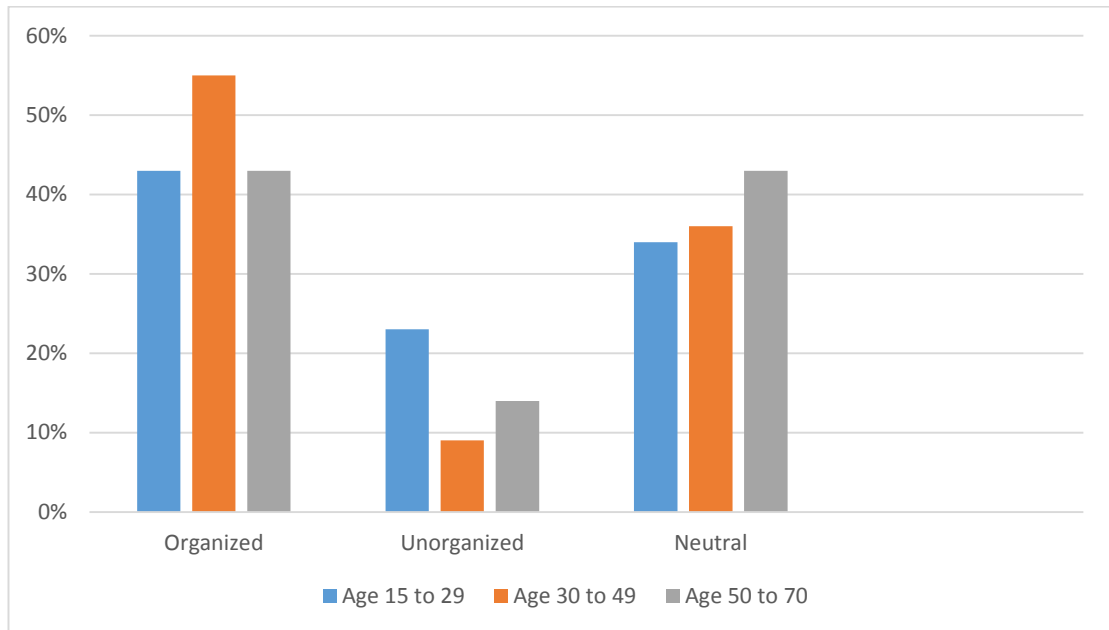
Figure 4: Organized versus Unorganized (N=76

Respondents considered the marketing efforts to be more professional than unprofessional. However, still 22% of individuals' answers were on the scale of unprofessionalism. Comparison between the two main age groups showed that the 15 to 29 years old measured the company more unprofessional compared to 30 to 49 years olds. Twenty-eight percent of the younger age group chose unprofessionalism over professionalism while the same percentage with the age group of 30 to 49 was 18%. Respondents from 50 to 70 years old considered Alaspään Ratsastuskeskus as professional. However, over 55% chose the neutral answer option.
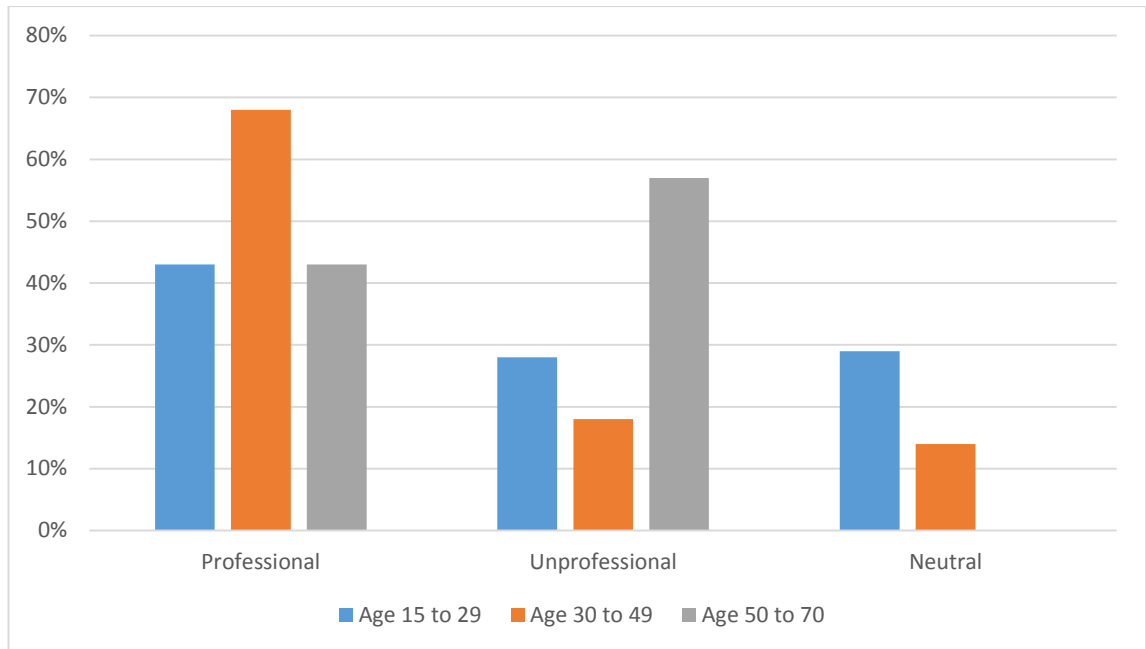
Figure 5: Professional versus Unprofessional (N=76)

Accessibility and appropriateness were classified most positive among all adjectives evaluated. Whereas diversity and professionalism received most responses on the negative side of the scale. Section evaluating how organized the company appears received most neutral answers.

Respondents were asked whether they would use other adjectives to describe the company. Adjectives such as cozy, nice, peaceful, pleasant, good reputation and interesting were given. On the other hand, Alaspään Ratsastuskeskus was also described as ordinary, invariable and bureaucratic. One respondent informed that there were too few images on Facebook regarding the company's activities.

4.6 Evaluation of different qualities of the company

Question five analyzes how strong the company is regarding the following qualities: quality of the services, communality, advancement opportunities in the sport and approachability. Data collected from this question gives an outlook to the strengths of the company presented through social media marketing. Qualities were evaluated with scale from one to five, five being very strong and one being very weak. Strongest quality was evaluated to be communality with 66% of the answers on the scale of four or five. Approachability was considered strong as well: over 60% of the answers were on the strong side of the scale. None of the qualities were clearly defined as weak by the respondents. However, advancement opportunities was considered weakest. When measuring answers collected

from men it is evident that men mainly chose neutral answer option. Variation of the responses is demonstrated in table 2.

Table 3: Strength of Alaspään Ratsastuskeskus regarding different qualities (N=76)

	1	2	3	4	5
Quality of services	0%	14,47%	38,16%	38,16%	9,21%
Communality	1,32%	9,21%	23,68%	52,63%	13,16%
Advancement opportunities	6,58%	11,84%	34,21%	38,16%	9,21%
Approachability	1,32%	6,58%	31,58%	46,05%	14,47%
Total	2,3%	10,53%	31,91%	43,75%	11,51%

Compering the three different age groups together, some differences were noticeable. Quality of offered services was considered strong by 71% of the respondents between ages 50 to 70. Whereas with the age group of 15 to 29 years old the same percentage was 47% and with the 30 to 49 years olds it was 41%. Communality was considered as a strong asset by 74% of the 15 to 29 years olds and by 54% of the 30 to 49 years olds. Forty-three percent of the respondents aged 50 to 70, saw communality as a strength. Conversely, 43% of their answers were also neutral. Communality was seeing weakest by the age group of 30 to 49 years old. Eighteen percent of them selected communality to be weak.

Variation between age groups with question of advancement opportunities in the sport was not massive. With respondents aged 15 to 29, 45% considered that Alaspään Ratsastuskeskus was strong regarding the advancement opportunities. Altogether, 54% of 30 to 49 years olds and 57% of 50 to 70 years olds considered the same. In addition, 32% of aged 15 to 29 and 45% of aged 30 to 49 chose the neutral answer option. With 50 to 70 years olds the percentage was 14%. On the other hand, 29% of them did not see Alaspään Ratsastuskeskus as strong regarding advancement opportunities in the sport, whereas with the other two age groups the percentages on that side of the scale were lower. With 15 to 29 years olds it was 23% and with 30 to 49 years olds it was 5%.

Lastly, approachability is compared among age groups. Approachability was considered strong by 68% of respondents aged 15 to 29, by 54% of respondents aged 30 to 49 and by 57% of respondents aged 50 to 70. Two percent of 15 to 29 years olds thought Alaspään Ratsastuskeskus as difficult to approach, while 13% of respondents aged 30 to 49, and 28% of respondents aged 50 to 70 thought the same. Nonetheless, rest of the answers were on the scale of neutral.
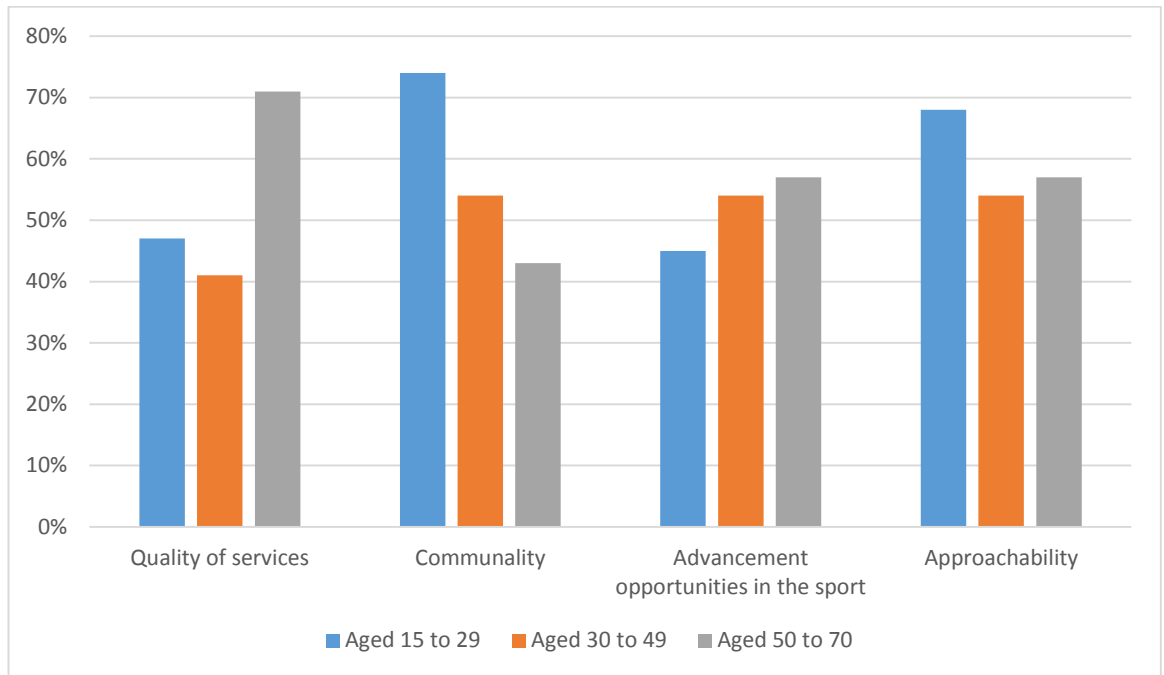
Figure 6: % of respondents considering following qualities of Alaspään Ratsastuskeskus as strong

4.7 Evaluation of advertising efforts

Question number six examines the level to what respondents agreed with different statements. First statement evaluates whether the marketing is targeted to consumers of all age. Respondents mainly agreed with the statement. Altogether, 14% strongly agreed and 58% agree with the statement. However, 23% disagreed and total of 5% of the respondents strongly disagreed. Out of seventeen men, only three (17%) disagreed while with women the number was eighteen (13%) out of 59. In conclusion, as presented below, overall advertising was seeing to be targeted to people of all age.
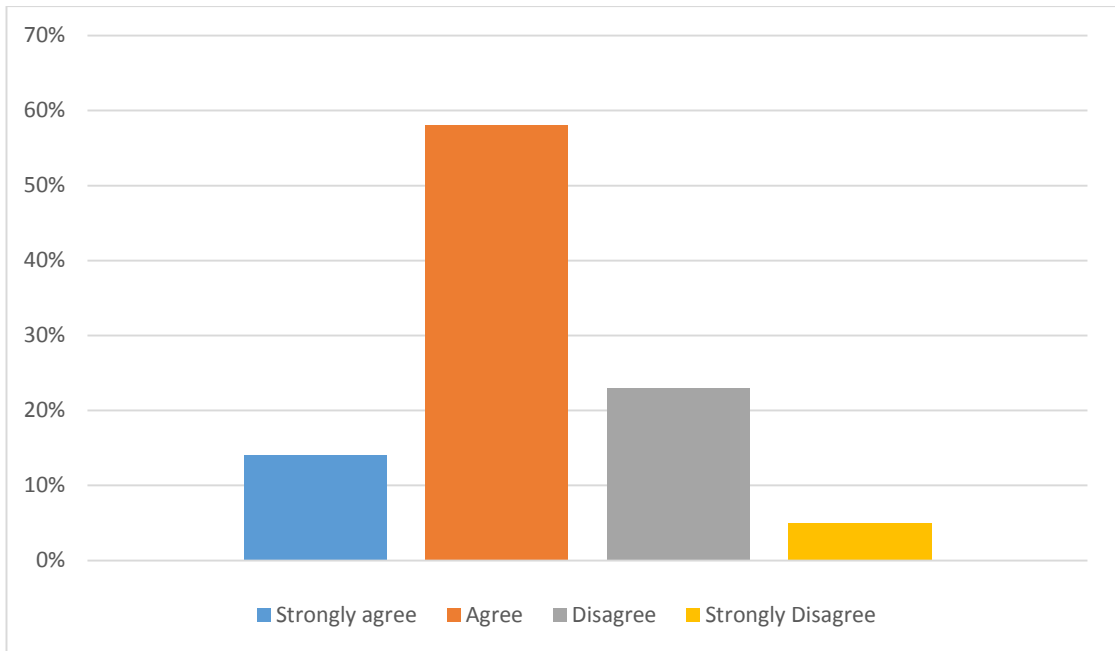
Figure 7: Advertising of Alaspään Ratsastuskeskus is targeted to people of all age (N=76)

Yet it was examined if the advertising took in to account both riding school clients and private horse owners. Responses indicate that approximately half of respondents agreed and other half disagreed with the statement. In total, 47% agreed while 53% disagreed with the statement. Matter of fact, 13% out of the 53% of the disagree responses were strongly disagree. On the other hand, 9% of the individuals strongly agreed with the statement as well.
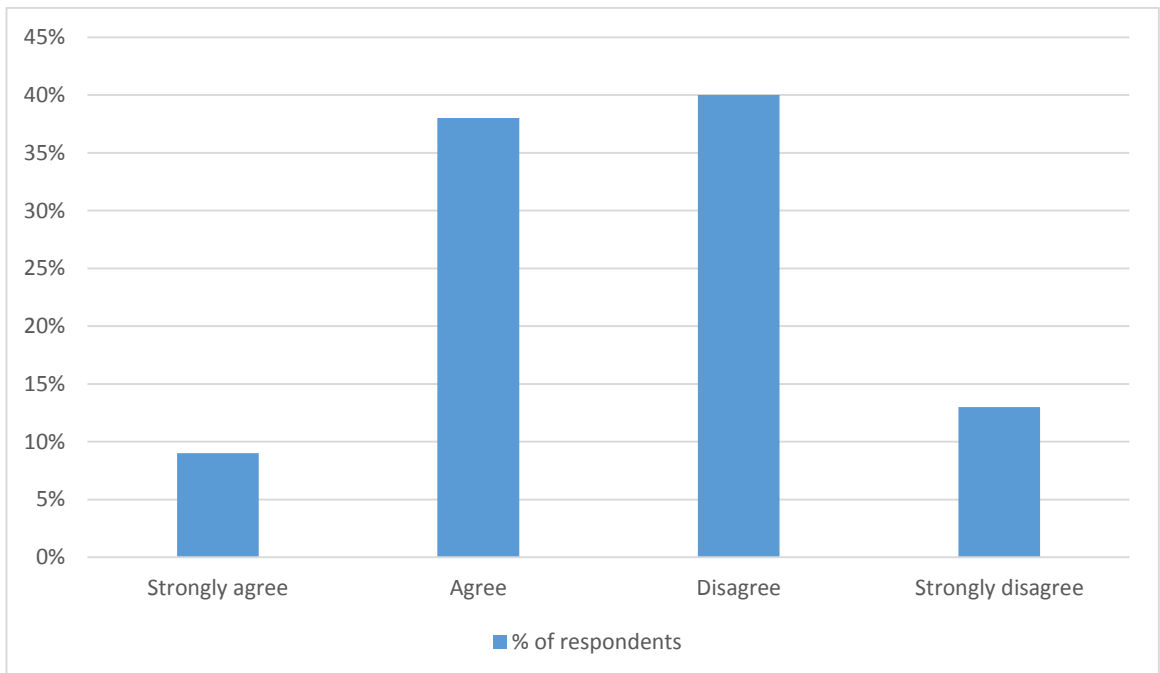
Figure 8: Advertising targets to both riding school clients and private horse owners (N=76)

Another statement evaluated whether the cooperation with different partners of the field was visible in advertising. The statement divided the respondents' opinions in half. Overall, 5% strongly agreed and 49% agreed with the statement. Conversely, 41% disagreed and 5% strongly disagreed with the statement. Variation between female and male respondents was not strongly evident in results as demonstrated below. Only 7% of women strongly agreed while with men the percentage was zero. Forty-nine percent of women and 41% of men agreed. Percentage of disagreement with women was 37 whereas with men it was 53. Six percent of men and 7% women strongly disagreed.
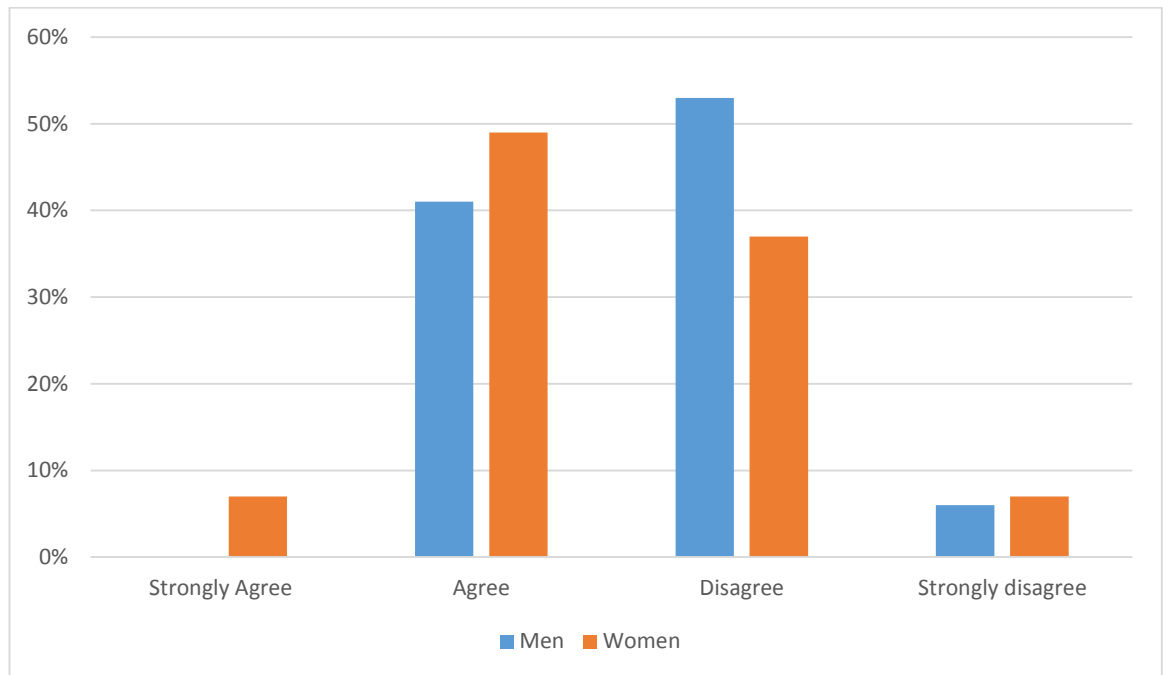
Figure 9: Cooperation with different partners of the field was visible in advertising (N=76)

Last statement studied whether or not Facebook and Instagram supported each other enough in terms of advertising. Statement received the highest strongly disagree rates with 28% of the respondents strongly disagreeing. Nevertheless, another 28% of the respondents disagreed. However, 44% of the respondents agreed with the statement as well, 2% of them strongly agreeing. Variation between males and females was not visible. Both disagreed slightly more than agreed.
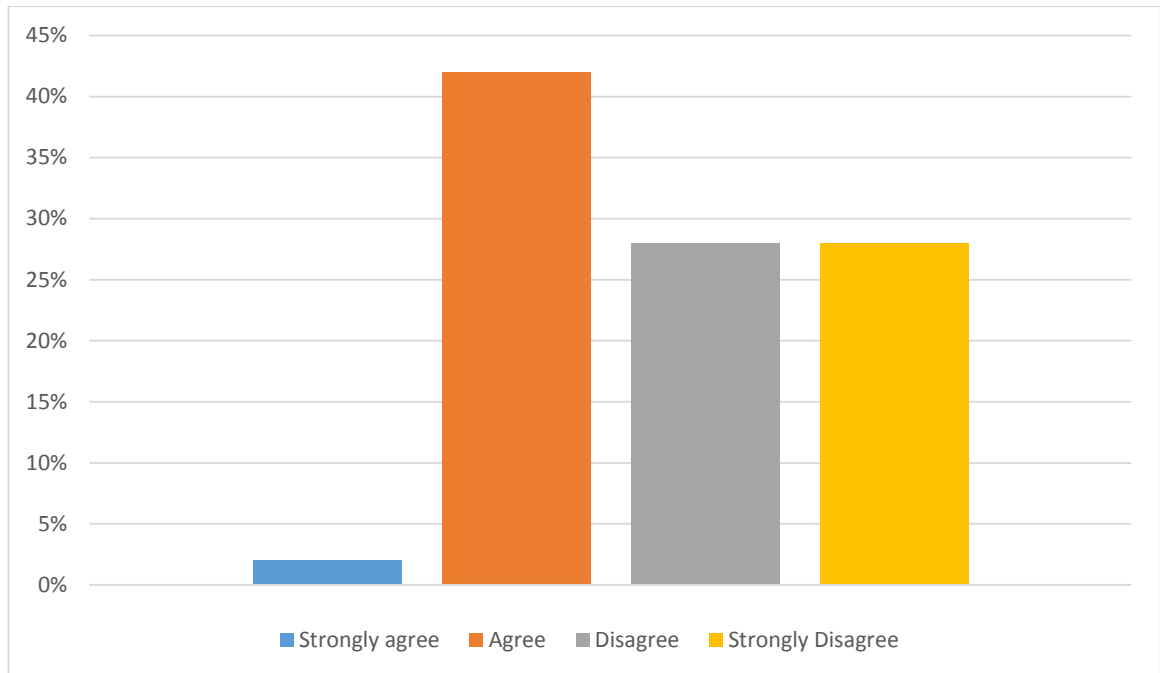
Figure 10: Facebook and Instagram support each other enough in terms of advertising (N=76)

Respondents aged between 15 and 29 years old disagreed (55%) with the statement slightly more than they agreed. Out of 45% of the agree answers only 4% were strongly agree while 27% out of the 55% of disagree answers were strongly disagree. Nonetheless, age group consisting respondents from 30 to 49 years old also disagreed with the statement more than agreed. Altogether, 68% disagreed while 32% agreed. Thirty-six percent strongly disagreed and 5% strongly agreed with the statement. On the other hand, respondent aged 50 to 70 agreed with 86% majority. Only 14% disagreed with the statement.

In conclusion, most agreed statement was whether the advertisement is directed at people of all age. Most disagreed statement was whether Facebook and Instagram supported each other enough in terms of advertising. Statements asking about cooperation and of the advertising is targeted to both riding school clients and private horse owners divided the opinions in half.

4.8   Evaluation of Facebook as a source of information

Question number seven evaluates how easily certain information is found on Facebook. Information measured were opening hours, driving instructions, contact information and offered services. Respondents found majority of the above-mentioned information relatively easy. However, offered services were somewhat hard to locate by respondents.

Thirty-three percent of the respondents did not find it at all whereas 45% found it after a search and only 22% found it easily. On the other hand, opening hours were found without difficultly by 77% of the respondents and 20% found it after a search. Only two percent of the individuals were unable to find the information. Contact information and driving instructions were quite easily found as well. Merely 4% of the respondents did not locate the information in both cases.

Table 4: Level to what the information on company's Facebook page is found (N=76)

	Found easily	Found after a search	Not found
Opening hours	77,63%	19,74%	2,63%
Driving instructions	61,84%	34,21%	3,95%
Contact information	68,42%	27,63%	3,95%
Offered services	22,37%	44,74%	32,89%

Question number eight studies whether Facebook was considered useful when searching for information regarding Alaspään Ratsastuskeskus. Sixty-six percent of women considered Facebook as a useful source of information while 41% of men agreed with them. Total of 59% of men were not able to say and choose to answer "can not tell". Women choose that option on 24% of times. In addition, ten percent of women found Facebook as a useless source of information. Figure 11 is shown below.
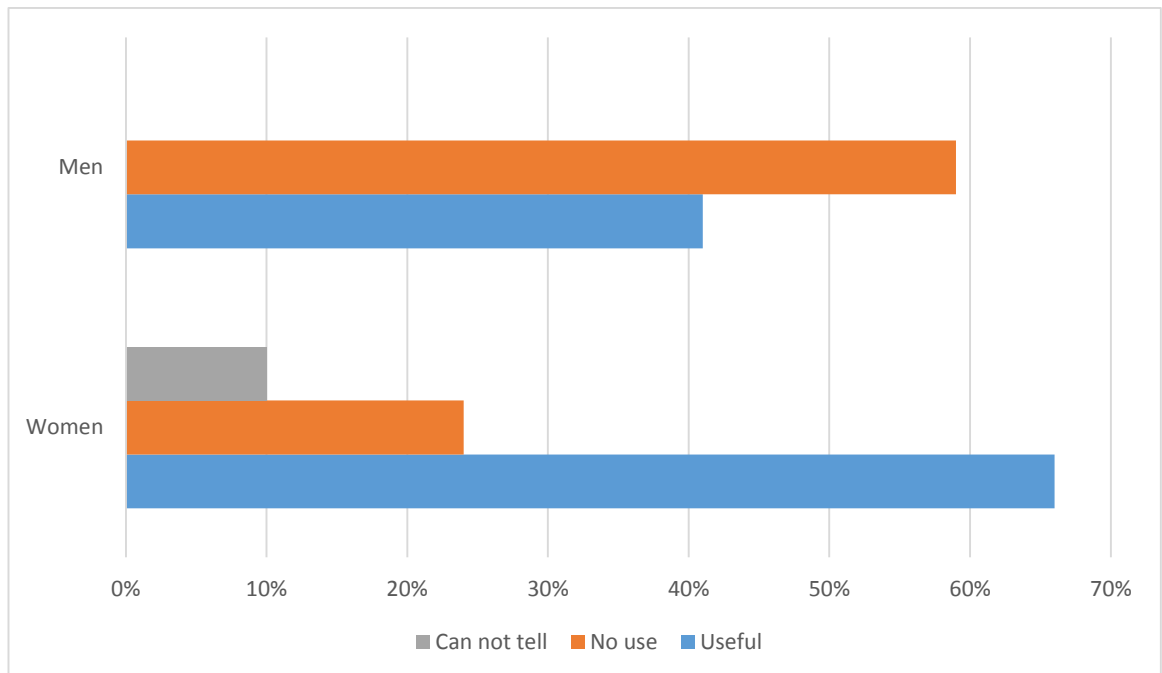

Figure 11: Usefulness of Facebook when searching for information about Alaspään Ratsastuskeskus (N=76)

To sum up, mainly information was found on Facebook relatively easy with slight exception of offered services. Nonetheless, Facebook was seeing as quite useful source of information. However, fairly many respondents chose to answer "can not tell".

4.9 Evaluation of the focus of advertising

Lastly, question number nine examines whether respondents felt that the advertising was too focused on pictures or text. Total of 41 out of 76 (54%) respondents answered the question meaning that 46% considered that there was a balance between visual and written social media content. Sixty-eight percent of the 54% of respondents who answered the question considered that advertising is too focused on text. Conversely, 32% thought it is too focused on pictures. Nine men responded the question and 100% of them answered text. Most of women also chose to answer text, responses divided 19 – 13. When comparing age groups together it became evident that the opinions of respondents aged 50 to 70 were opposite compering to other two age groups. Overall, 20% of the age group of 50 to 70 years old thought that the focus was too much on text. While 85% from the age group 30 to 49 and 70% of the age group 15 to 29 considered the same. In conclusion, it is strongly evident that the oldest age group prefer text over visual content whereas the two younger groups prefer advertising more concentrated on pictures.
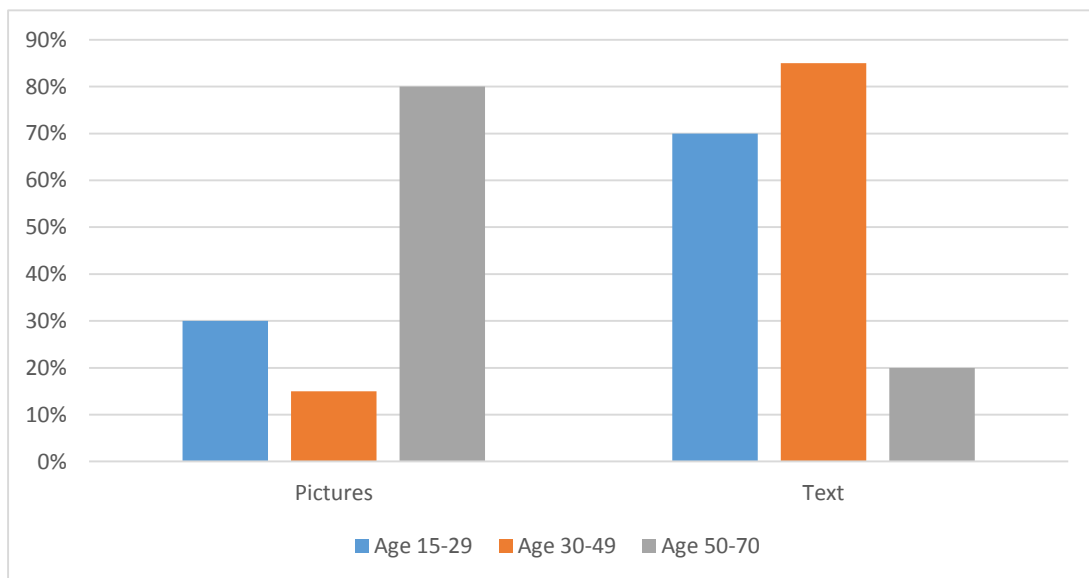

Figure 12: The focus of advertising (N=41**)**

5 Conclusion

Findings of the research are discussed in the chapter 6. Improvement suggestions and development ideas are concluded on the basis of the results. Nevertheless, trustworthiness is examined and suggestions for further research are given.

Table 5: Development needs and actions to be taken

Needs of development	Actions to be taken
Diversity	Altering messages communicated
Relationship between Facebook and Instagram	Further developing Instagram and matching the advertising with Facebook in order to have more balanced marketing.
Offered services	List of offered services could be added to Facebook
Professionalism	Usage of professional referenced material
Advancement opportunities in the sport	Further promotion of different aspects of advancement opportunities provided by commissioner

When concluding the key findings of the research it is evident that there are points for improvement. Firstly, activity level of the social media marketing of the commissioner should be increased since it is now valued fairly passive. This could increase the trust of consumers since the interaction level would be higher. Diversity and the professionalism of advertising efforts should be further developed. Currently both are seeing below average. Diversity can be increased by altering the type messages communicated. Usage of diverse marketing methods for instance different visual aspects (pictures, videos and infographics) and storytelling are recommended. However, it is nevertheless important to maintain balance between different social media marketing efforts. Professionalism could be increased by usage of referenced material. For example by sharing an article. Nevertheless, professional of the company could be further promoted. In addition, development opportunities in the sport should be promoted further if that is part of the company image commissioner desires to achieve. Moreover, appears that quality of service is not clearly presented in marketing. On the other hand, commissioner attains an organized, accessible and professionally appropriate company image as evident from the results. Nonetheless, company image is approachable and communal according to respondents.

Social media platforms are presently considered to target people of all age. In conclusion, company is seeing to provide services to everyone. However, to reach better the target audience of the company certain topics should be considered. As presently, the advertising efforts of social media are not seeing to target both riding school clients and private horse owners. Further balancing the advertising between both groups could maximise the consumer potential of them both. Moreover, currently Instagram and Facebook are not considered to support each other enough. In order for both platforms to produce the company image desired it is crucial to support the development of the relationship between both. Nonetheless, proper marketing efforts from both channels could help to reach new consumers. Moreover, even if cooperation between different partners on the field is fairly visible it could be further promoted.

Even though Facebook was considered to be useful when searching for information regarding commissioner one thing in particular should be paid more attention to. Offered services were not easily found from Facebook by strong percentage of respondents. However, riding school as a company often provides a certain picture of offered services itself: it is general knowledge that riding schools offer riding lessons. Altogether, a brief explanation of offered services could still be included in Facebook. Especially when there are, other services provided as well. Another finding from the results indicate that the focus of advertising seems to be more on text than pictures. As visual marketing is considered to be more effective way of reaching attention it is recommended to strengthen position of visual marketing in social media channels. Increased visibility could lead to new potential customers.

It is suggested to further research the company image given through the social media channels of the commissioner. If implementing the development suggestions it is essential to see whether change was detectible. In the end, to ensure that the company image desired is achieved and maintained, it is important to research the development. In conclusion, similar research could be implemented yet again.

6   Discussion

This chapter assesses the thesis process. Thesis process is examined stage by stage. Moreover, the author evaluates own learning. Since the author has a strong background in equestrianism and a long history with the commissioner, the possibility of conducting the thesis for them seemed appealing. Decision of conducting the research was made in August.

The author sees the thesis process as a great learning experience. Information and knowledge gained about the marketing communications and company image research are seeing valuable. Especially knowledge achieved of digital marketing is seeing as an asset regarding the future since it is ever growing section of marketing today. Challenges regarding finding and usage of referenced material and time scheduling were encountered. However, author learned to overcome the obstacles and became more professionally confident as a result. Author regrets little not to have written theory part before preparing the questionnaire since useful information came out while writing it. Altogether, writing of theory provided author with several new perspectives of image research and marketing communications. As the author is considered the most revealing and exciting part of the research was examination of results. Author was able to implement studied theory and practical knowledge in analyses of data. However, the author had some previous experience of analysing collected data, which became helpful when examining the results.

In conclusion, author finds the thesis writing process as great indicator of skills learned during studying. Additionally, the author developed a further interest for marketing and researching. Consequently, a future career in either one of them appears tempting. Altogether, the thesis writing process is step towards professional readiness.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Questionnaire

Alaspään Ratsastuskeskus

Kyselyn tarkoituksena on koota tietoa yrityksen itselleen antamasta imagosta sosiaalisen median välityksellä. Vastaukset auttavat parantamaan ja kohdentamaan sosiaalisen median kautta tapahtuvaa markkinointia. Kyselyyn osallistuminen on täysin vapaaehtoista ja vastauksia käytetään vain tähän tutkimukseen. Osallistuminen on nimetöntä. Kysely suoritetaan osana opinnäytetyötä.

Tutki sivuja https://www.facebook.com/alaspaanratsastuskeskus ja https://www.instagram.com/alaspaanratsastuskeskus/ ja vastaa kysymyksiin oman mielikuvasi perusteella.

1. Ikä *

◯ 15-29
◯ 30-49
◯ 50-70
◯ 70+

2. Sukupuoli *

◯ Mies
◯ Nainen

3. Missä määrin seuraavat adjektiivit kuvailevat ratsastuskeskusta ja sen toimintaa? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Aktiivinen	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Passiivinen
Helposti lähestyttävä	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Vaikeasti lähestyttävä
Asiallinen	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Epäasiallinen
Ammattimainen	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Harrastelijamainen
Monipuolinen	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Yksipuolinen
Organisoitu	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Epäorganisoitu

4. Kuvailisitko yritystä vielä muilla adjektiiveilla? Jos kyllä millä?

Appendices

5. Arvioi kuinka vahva Alaspään Ratsastuskeskus on seuraavilla osa-alueilla? (1=erittäin heikko, 5=erittäin vahva) *

	1	2	3	4	5
Palveluiden laatu	○	○	○	○	○
Yhteisöllisyys	○	○	○	○	○
Etenemismahdollisuudet lajissa	○	○	○	○	○
Lähestyttävyys	○	○	○	○	○

6. Arvioi missä määrin olet samaa/eri mieltä väitteistä *

	Täysin samaa mieltä	Samaa mieltä	Eri mieltä	Täysin eri mieltä
Ratsastuskeskuksen liittyvä mainonta on suunnattu kaikenikäisille	○	○	○	○
Mainonta ottaa huomioon sekä ratsastuskouluoppilaat että yksityishevosten omistajat	○	○	○	○
Yhteistyö alan eri osapuolien kanssa on näkyvillä markkinoinnissa	○	○	○	○
Instagram ja Facebook tukevat toisiaan riittävästi markkinoinnissa	○	○	○	○

7. Kuinka hyvin löysit seuraavat tiedot facebookista? *

	Löysin helposti	Löysin etsinnän jälkeen	En löytänyt
Aukioloajat	○	○	○
Ajo-ohjeet	○	○	○
Yhteystiedot	○	○	○
Tarjottavat palvelut	○	○	○

8. Kuinka hyödylliseksi koet Facebookin etsiessäsi tietoa Alaspään Ratsastuskeskuksesta kaiken kaikkiaan? *

○ Hyödyllinen ○ En osaa sanoa ○ Ei hyötyä

9. Koetko, että mainonta keskittyy liikaa kuviin tai asiatekstiin? Jos kyllä, kumpaan?

○ Kuvat ○ Teksti

Lähetä