LAB University of Applied Sciences

Promoting Asikkala as a domestic destination by utilising digital marketing

Abstract

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Abstract
The digital era is now, and traditional marketing seems to die out soon. In addition, the epidemic of coronavirus getting severe nowadays causing travel abroad is more restricted. Hence, domestic destination will be demanded and required to promote on digital channels in order to attract visitors from Finland. But how?
The goal of this study is to develop ideas to promote Asikkala as a domestic destination by utilising digital marketing.
First, the theories of digital marketing and the three pillars of digital marketing will be presented in this study. Follow by empirical research and data analysis will be carried out on finding how people's digital behaviour towards searching for information on domestic destinations. Thus, by doing so to understand the current digital channels and content that people are searching for upon planning a trip domestically.
The study is conducted by using the inductive approach with the mixed methodology, which combines qualitative and quantitative data. Furthermore, primary data and secondary data are obtained for this study. The primary data is collected by conducting the interview and survey to find out the current digital behaviours and content towards information searching for domestic destinations. The secondary data is collected from online reliable sources to establish general knowledge on digital behaviour.
Findings from the research show that the visual content on its homepage and social media platforms are vital, follow by deciding which channel solely for visitors and develop a user-friendly homepage for visitors when reaching out the potential visitors. Cooperating with third parties could be extra help to promote and advertise the place rapidly within the country.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Research background

The traditional marketing world seems to die out soon nowadays. From the very beginning, the trend of marketing by advertising through the newspaper, leaflet, poster, television, and radio, are slowly losing their popularity when the technology is up to the market. Greg (2019) explains that technology has changed marketing by personalised and immersive for people and creating ecosystems that are more united and targeted for marketers.

The explosive growth in digital technology has fundamentally changed the way how people live, for instance, how people communicate, share information, learn, shop, and access entertainment. Conversely, it has had a major impact on the ways how companies bring value to their customers. For better or worse, technology has become an essential part of human life. (Kotler & Amstrong 2014.) Digital marketing has become more and more highly demanded in our daily life. Furthermore, it is hard to predict a consumer's behaviour and interest. Thus, for business to survive, most of them have to strive, evolve or change their behaviour from the old method into the technology realm at least. Nowadays, marketing through social media could save costs and create better presence engagement for business. It also creates a great impact for marketers to reach out to a wider range of potential users when compared to traditional marketing. Besides, it evolves, refines over the times that able to create great opportunities for a certain business. That is the reason why digital marketing is chosen for this research.

Due to the epidemic of coronavirus (known as COVID-19), the government of Finland recommends avoiding any unnecessary travel abroad. However, from 29 May onwards, travel within Finland is allowed if health and safety procedures are followed according to the guidelines (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland 2021). Hence, the demand for travelling to domestic destinations will be rising in the country itself. Therefore, it will create more opportunities for domestic destinations to be explored further and visited during this period. The author has chosen Asikkala as the case example for this study and as a benchmark for the domestic destinations of Finland.

This study focuses on how visitors are retrieving the information when traveling domestically. The purpose of this study is to develop ideas for Asikkala in digital marketing and to promote it as a domestic destination.

1.2   Thesis objectives, research questions and limitations

A research aim usually will be described and formulated as a broad statement of the main purpose of the research. On the other hand, research objectives will specify how the study will answer it. The research questions and research objectives make the same statements but, in different arrangements. The aim for research emphases on what the research project is planned to achieve and there are usually relatively broad. The objectives for research emphases on how the aim will be achieved. (DiscoverPhDs 2021.) The objective of this thesis is to develop ideas for Asikkala in digital marketing and to promote it as a domestic destination to visitors.

Research questions are the questions that study, or research project aims to answer. There often address concern or difficulty, through assessment and understanding of data, is resolved in the conclusion. Often research questions are dynamic, which means researchers can change or refine the research questions as they review related literature and develop a framework for the study. (Imed 2020.)

The main research question of this thesis is

- How can Asikkala   utilise digital marketing to promote Asikkala   as   a   domestic destination?

The sub-questions are the backbone to support the main research question. The following sub-questions are composed to accomplish the answer to the main question:

- How is Asikkala using digital marketing currently?

- What kind of content do people like to explore further when searching information about domestic destinations?

Every study has its own limitation. The research party is Asikkala, one of the small municipalities of Finland. Hence the information gathers and discusses in this paper are primarily targeted at the small municipalities. However, the bigger municipalities may not be benefited from this study but, they may refer it as reference only. Nevertheless, the validity information which provided in this study is to assist the research party to develop ideas by utilising digital marketing and promoting it as a domestic destination. This study will solely concentrate on digital marketing and, it does not cover other areas of marketing.

1.3   Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework presents and defines the theory that explains why the research problem under study exists (Sacred Heart University Library 2020).

Theories about digital marketing, which include the SOSTAC® planning system and digital marketing strategy, also the theories about three pillars of digital marketing are presented in the next chapters.

During this pandemic period, people are happy at least, that still able to travel domestically as long the safety guidelines meet up to the requirements. Nowadays, travel internationally is more restricted compare to last time. This study aims to analyse the digital marketing tool that the domestic destination - Asikkala is having. Besides, theories about digital marketing and three pillars of digital marketing are the focus points in this study.

1.4 Research methodology and data collection

Generally, there are two main approaches to conducting research: a deductive approach and an inductive approach. If study research starts with a theory, often developed from the researcher's reading of the academic literature, and the researcher designs a research strategy to test if the theory is true or false, this is the deductive approach. It involves the development of a theory that has subjected to a demanding test through a series of propositions. In turn, if research starts by collecting data to explore a phenomenon and the researcher generates or builds theory (often in the form of a conceptual framework), this is the inductive approach. Its trend to construct an inflexible methodology that does not allow alternative explanations of what is going on. It is the choice of theory and definition of hypothesis. (Saunders et al. 2012, 143-146.)

After choosing the research approach, the next step is to lock down which research methods to be used: qualitative, quantitative, or combine both elements.

Qualitative method

The qualitative method refers to a synonym for any data collection technique or data analysis procedure that generates or uses non-numerical data. The aim is to find out the factors such as thoughts, feelings of research participants. This method consists of the interview or categorising the data and is considered factors other than numerical values. (Ainsworth 2021.)

Quantitative method

Quantitative method refers to a synonym for any data collection technique or data analysis procedure that generates or uses numerical data. The aim for a researcher's job is to make use and make sense of the data. This method is dealing with something countable and able to express in numerical form and consists of questionnaires, surveys, graphs, statistics, etc. (Ainsworth 2021.)

Mixed method

Many researchers likely combine both elements into one project in reality. For instance, research may use a questionnaire (quantitative method) but include some 'open' questions (qualitative method) to ask respondents rather than clicking the appropriate box to seek further understandings or findings from the questionnaire. On the other hand, some qualitative research data may also analyse qualitatively. Thus, often in practice, these two methods are mixed. (Saunders et al. 2012, 161.)

The final step to be implemented after the chosen research methods are in place is collecting data. Data collection is playing a critical part in the research. It is a valuable resource for the research however, it must align with the right direction to avoid exhaustion of resources.

Primary data

Primary data is the data collected for the very first time by the researcher through direct efforts and involvement, especially to tackle the research problem. It is known as raw data. The progress is usually expensive, as the research has conducted by an organisation or third party, which demands resources such as time, money, and manpower. The data collection is under direct control and observation by the investigator. There are few methods to collect such data, such as survey, observation, physical testing, questionnaire, personal interview, focus groups, case studies, etc. (Surbhi 2020.)

Secondary data

Second-hand information has already been gathered and documented by any person other than the research for a purpose, which is not related to the current research question is belong to secondary data. The available data can be found from several sources such as government publications, internal records of an organisation, reports, books, journal articles, websites, etc. (Surbhi 2020.)

The governments, non-government agencies, and other organisations do not have the time, money, or access to gather thorough large data sets by themselves. Thanks to internet evolution, over the past decade, the number of sources of potential secondary data and the effortlessness of gaining access has increased speedily. (Saunders et al. 2012, 304.)

Figure 1 presents the research methodology and data collections for this study.
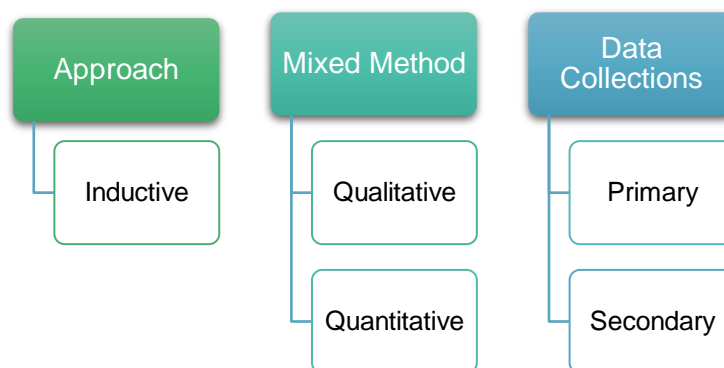
Figure 1. Research methodology and data collections for this study

In this study, the author chose a research approach by using the inductive approach, and the mixed research method by combining the qualitative and quantitative data.

The data collection is concluded primarily through interview and survey conducted towards to two target groups. The first group is selected four residents who are living in Finland, to find out how they choose from digital channels and content when searching for information about domestic destinations. The second group is the adult learners from LAB University of Applied Sciences, Lahti & Lappeenranta to find out their digital behaviour towards the information retrieval upon selecting a domestic destination. Conversely, the secondary data will be concluded through gathering the information from reliable online sources.

1.5 Thesis structure

Overall, the thesis is dividing into two core parts: the first part is the theoretical framework, and the second part is the empirical research section.

Introduction		
Background	Objectives, Questions and Limitations	Research Methodology and Data Collection

Theoretical Framework	
Digital Marketing Plan	Three Pillars of Digital Marketing

Domestic Tourism
Asikkala

Empirical Research and Data Analysis		
Designed Empirical Study	Data Acquisition Process	Data Analysis

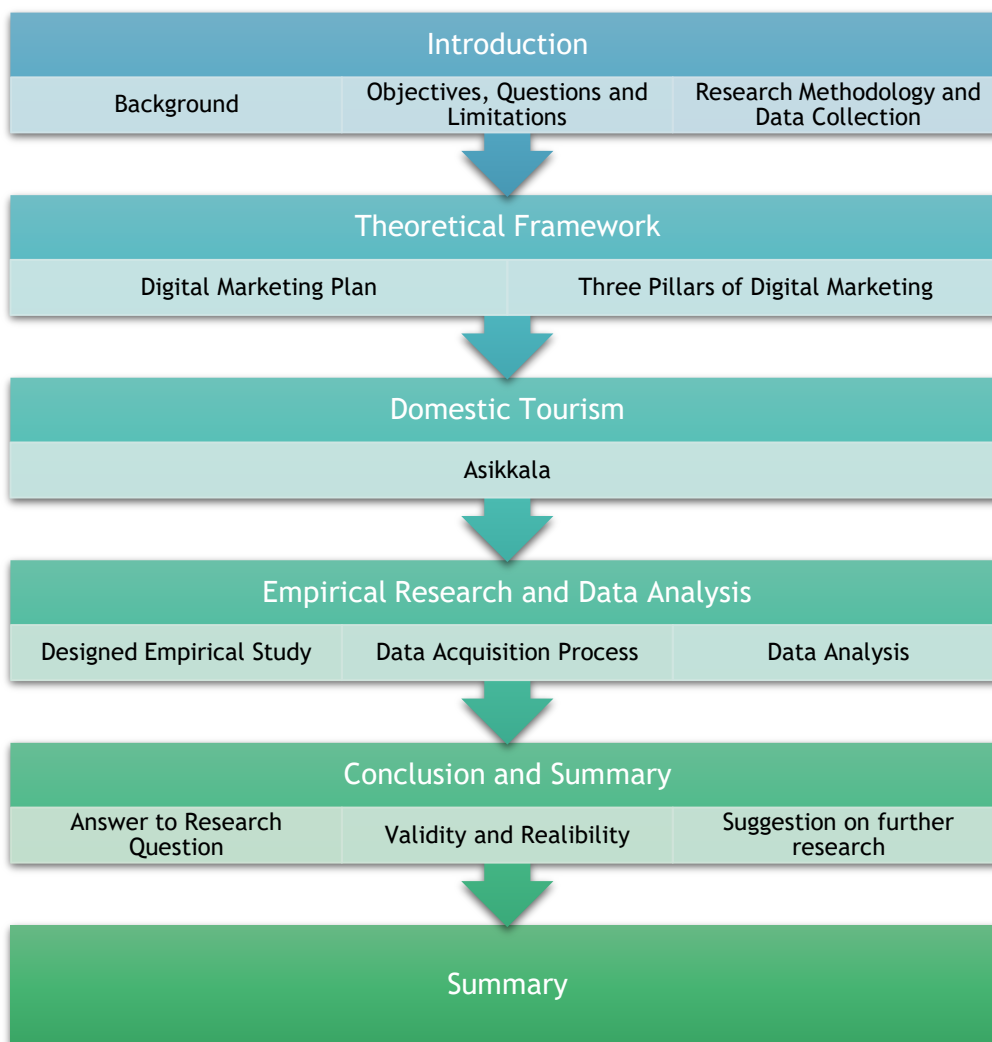| Conclusion and Summary		
Answer to Research Question	Validity and Realibility	Suggestion on further research

Summary

Figure 2. Thesis structure

The first chapter is the introduction part of the thesis. The author illustrates the research background and the reason why the topic has selected. Follow by the thesis objectives, research questions, limitation, theoretical framework, research methodology, and data collection introduce respectively. After that, the structure of the thesis obtains at the end of the first chapter.

The second and third chapters are the theory parts on digital marketing solely, after which domestic tourism and case example will be presented in chapter four. Subsequently, the empirical research and data analysis present in chapter five. In this chapter, the timeline for the thesis process will explain based on the author's reflective diary. In chapter six, the author illustrates the validity and reliability of the thesis and suggests further research according to the author's perspective and findings. Lastly, the author wraps up with the summary of this research in chapter seven.

2　Digital marketing plan

2.1　The definition

It is marketing activities that business tries to attract new customers and retain current customers by using digital channels such as social media, mobile applications, email, web applications, search engines, websites, or any new digital channel (Patel 2020). The purpose is to increase online visibility, brand awareness, and interactions with target audiences efficiently. It is an umbrella term that encompasses different marketing strategies, such as social media marketing, search engine optimisation (SEO), and email marketing. Unlike traditional marketing methods such as print, billboards, or TV, digital marketing is primarily data-driven. Many popular digital advertising platforms today able to provide reports for comprehensive data analysis. This analysis analyses data of the different type of customer, behaviour, or user engagements, enabling them to facilitate more personalised content and advertisements for better results. (Kwok 2018.)

Peñalver (2019) states that a digital marketing plan is a document that consists of the details for all the planning for your digital marketing campaigns or actions. It includes business goals, strategies, channels, development plans, investment and budget, timing, and roadmap. Planning is vital that putting you in control and reducing stress overall. Furthermore, it gives direction and reassurance to the sense of order and good management influence the team to follow the plan.

A successful digital marketing plan is based on and integrated with traditional marketing disciplines and planning techniques adapted for the digital media environment and then mixed with new digital marketing communications techniques. Furthermore, it can highlight and assess opportunities for business growth by targeting new audiences, new geographic markets through introducing new products or services. Most companies have plans or roadmaps, integrate the goals, timeframes, and resources. All these plans could utilise the SOSTAC® planning system. A successful idea must be supported by resources and review with revise frequently. Thus, we need to have the budget for the three vital resources, which are also named 3Ms, Men, Money, and Minutes. (Chaffey & Smith 2017, 556-561.)

2.2　SOSTAC® planning system

SOSTAC® planning system has developed by Paul Smith, which is one of the well-established marketing planning systems. It has been used by thousands of professionals to produce all kinds of plans, such as marketing plans, corporate plans, advertising plans, digital marketing plans, and also for wedding plans. For these reasons, the SOSTAC®

planning system gains its reputation. This system consists of six phases. There are situational analysis, objectives, strategy, tactics, actions, and control. (Chaffey & Smith 2017, 3.)

Figure 3. SOSTAC® planning system. Source: www.sostac.org

2.2.1 Situational analysis

Situational analysis is the first phase of the digital marketing plan. The main question to ask is 'Where are you now?'. Hence, you can focus on goal performance, customer insight, brand perception, and market trends. Chaffey & Smith (2017) explain that within an organisation, developing a mutual understanding of the terms and how they interrelate, who will manage them, is vital that enable the development of a consistent and well-defined strategy. An overview of SWOT analysis could be conducted internally on the strength and weaknesses, externally on the opportunities and threats of a company.

	Helpful To achieve the objective	Harmful To achieve the objective
Internal (Attributes of the organization)	Strengths	Weakness
External (Attributes of the organization)	Opportunities	Threats

Figure 4. SWOT analysis (Pratt & Tucci 2021)

SWOT Analysis has implemented by Albert S. Humphrey in the 1960s and 1970s at the Stanford Research Institute. The analysis has been adapting by organisations of all types as support to making decisions. (Pratt & Tucci 2021.) This analysis helps you to build up what you are doing well, to address what you are missing, also to minimise your risks in order to take the greatest possible advantage of chances for succeed. Besides, it can give you the insight you need to craft a clear and successful position. However, realistic and strict would be the attitude required upon carrying out the analysis. (Emerald Works Limited 2021.)

2.2.2 Objectives

There are several questions relating to objectives. 'Where are you going?' or 'Where do you want to be?', 'Why go online?', 'What are the purpose or benefits of going through all this and putting all effort?' 'Why you want to involve in digital marketing and the areas on which you want to focus?' etc. The 5S can summarise marketing objectives for physical-digital action – sell, serve, speak, save, and sizzle. On the other hand, objectives are quantified and concluded as SMART, which is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

2.2.3 Strategy

The strategy is the big picture of all, and usually, it takes a longer time frame and more enduring process. The specific question likes 'How do you get there?' could sum up how you achieve your objectives. It has influenced by both the priority of strategy and the number of resources available. You may think of this as a channel strategy where electronic channels and digital media support other communications and distribution channels. It requires clear priority that how to utilise digital channel. To identify target markets, positioning, online value proposition (OVP), choose a mix of digital media channels to acquire new customers and contact strategies to welcome and develop existing customers. (Chaffy & Smith 2017, 42.)

2.2.4 Tactic

Tactics are driven by the strategy, which some tools are better than others at achieving specific tasks. It is usually a short-term and flexible process. Gantt chart simplicity shows which tactical tools to be used and with what budget. It explains how to implement the strategy. (Chaffy & Smith 2017, 44.) Foley (2021) explains that the Gantt chart is a project management tool, that can be used to display a project and the milestones of a project throughout the period. It gives a visual monitor of the start and the finish periods of different

activities, the positions, and the progress of the activities. Excel template could play a good tool for simple project management.

2.2.5 Action

Execution is the implementation of the whole plan. With attention to detail, well-defined processes, procedures, and checklists can make the execution smooth. Internal communication is very vital for every organisation. It involves stakeholders' motivation and training for new tools and software. Good project management skills are essential for implementing the ideas into action. After that, you are now ready to control your destiny by building control mechanisms into your digital marketing plan.

2.2.6 Control

Control is monitoring whether you have achieved the objectives, tackled the challenges, and revised the strategies, tactics, and actions. Most organisations will measure key performance indexes (KPIs) within the given time frame. Good marketers have control systems to ensure they know what they are doing, what area is working, what area is not working, etc. Besides, to determine the data that you will look at, monitor the key metrics regularly. For this instance, every once per week, per month, per quarter, etc. If something is wrong, you have a system in place that can detach and correct them early, rather than sorry. If something is working unbelievably well, you learn and perhaps accelerate towards the success path. (Chaffy & Smith 2017, 601-602.)

2.3 Digital marketing strategy

Storm (2020) illustrates that a digital marketing strategy is a series of activities that allows you to use online marketing channels to accomplish your designated targets. Figure 5 shows the way to design a digital marketing strategy.
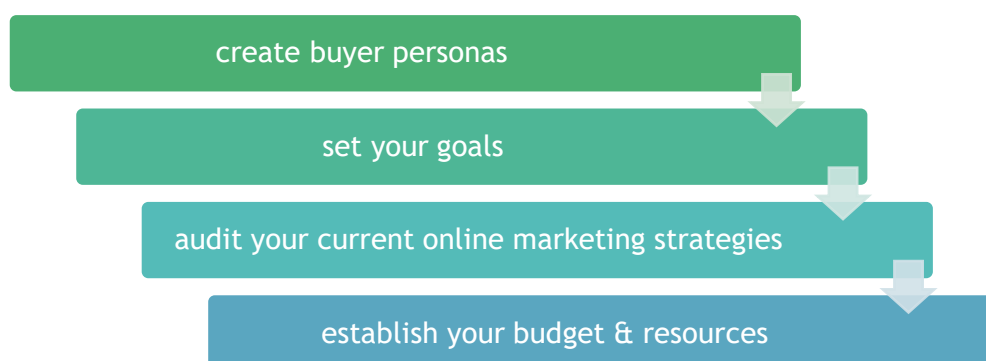

Figure 5. The steps of creating a digital marketing strategy (Storm 2020)

At first, you must know who you are targeting for your products or services. Thus, creating buyer personas will help you know each kind of person that wants to purchase your products or services. Research your audience and interview them to learn more about their need. Therefore, you do not make the wrong assumptions about your audience. There is an essential document demographic information, i.e., location, age, income, and job. In addition, the goals, interests, hobbies, and challenges of the audience will structure your strategy and define which channels you should use to influence them. (Storm 2020.)

Second, you must set your goals. Upon setting up your goals, you must create what you want to accomplish, when you want to reach them, and how you will measure the accomplishment by creating specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) for your digital marketing strategy. Third, it is advisable to audit your current online marketing strategies on your site. You may discover where to improve in future and enhance the user experience or optimisation to uplift your ranking in the search result. Last, it is vital to know how much budget and resources (people and tools) you can establish before launching your strategy. (Storm 2020.)

3 Three pillars of digital marketing

3.1 The definition

Kwok (2018) explains that technological innovations have made it easy to measure the efficiency of marketing campaigns through digital dashboards, such as Google Analytics, Google Data Studio, and Adobe Analytics. Every user's interaction within a business produces its own set of data that enabling the marketer to portion the data and understand each touchpoint contributes to the sales or conversion. Besides, it grants marketers to review ad campaign performance and quickly adopt changes by optimising ad creatives to develop audience engagement. Furthermore, it reaches out broadly toward targeted audiences and potential audiences too. Nowadays, many social media platforms allow business to aim ads to specific audiences, such as demographics, interests, behavioural patterns, etc.

There are three pillars of digital marketing that businesses could focus on, user journey, digital marketing tools, and content marketing.

3.2 Customer journey

In general, there are many ways of customer journeys. One of them is ROPO, which means reviewing online purchasing offline. Some customers like to review and find out the features of a product through an online platform. After that, they prefer to visit the physical shop to purchase it. Generally, it gives an idea to them about the product before their purchase. Different customers obtain different journeys. For instance, they use different channels to purchase the same products. The said channels include display ads, paid search, email, partners/affiliates/blog links, online PR, social media platforms, etc. (Chaffey & Smith 2017,115.)

Here is what you can imagine in an ideal world - the journey that the customers become faithful customers: view your product, purchase your product, utilise your product, and repeat the whole cycle, again and again. However, in reality, the user journey is often beyond like a sightseeing tour, with stops, explore, and some discussion before making their final decision. Mapping your customer's journey can help to stay on the overwhelming moments. It can grant you a better understanding of how your customers are currently relating and engaging with your brand. Besides, it helps to illustrate how your products and services fit into their purposes, schedules, aspirations, and so on. However, before starting the journey mapping, writing down the business goals is vital. (Hogg 2018.)
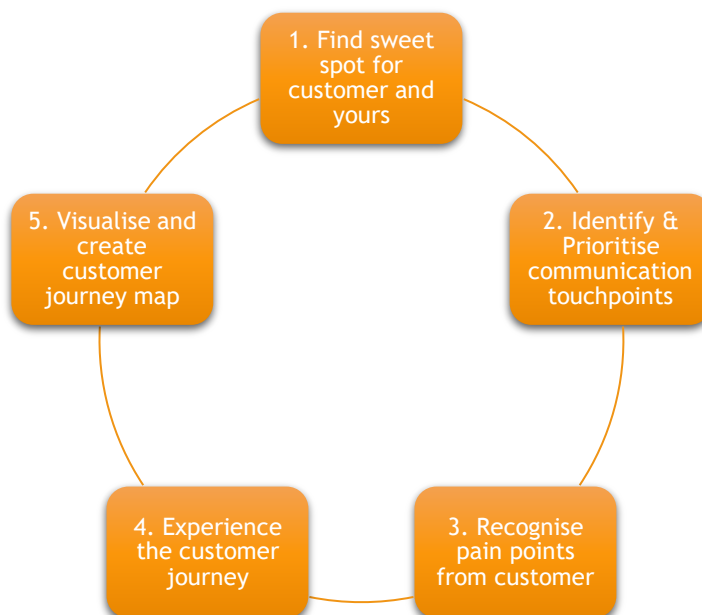
Figure 6. Customer journey mapping (Hogg 2018)

There is a total of five steps to begin the journey mapping. First, to locate the sweet spot where your customer's goals align with yours. By helping customers also help yourself to reach your goal. Second, to identify and prioritise all of the communication touchpoints in your customer's whole journey. Third, to recognise pain points, such as negative experiences and moments of delight from the customer. Forth, to experience the customer journey yourself, by doing it can uncover much-needed insights. Last, to visualise and create your customer journey map, this could organise your views and collaboratively breakthrough new ideas for changing and evolving. Needless to say, the journey mapping process can be intensive fairly but, it could have a massive impact on your business. Customer's behaviour and taste are changing all the time. During the new technology era, your brand evolves, as well the customer journey. It is vital to do journey mapping at least once a year and to evaluate what communication touchpoints are still working for business. (Hogg 2018.)

3.3 Digital marketing tools

Digital marketing tools are helping marketers to get their job done. From social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram to analytics tools such as Google Analytics, these allow marketers to generate, examine and measure the performance of their campaigns to launch and trial run campaigns rapidly and efficiently. There are different types of digital marketing tools, for this instance, search engine marketing (SEM), search engine optimisation (SEO), ads, social media marketing (SMM), email marketing, affiliate marketing, mobile marketing, and content marketing.

3.3.1 Search engine marketing (SEM)

WordStream (2021) illustrates that SEM relates to paid search marketing. It is a system, where business pay Google to show their advertisement in the search results. Most industries are using the paid advertisements to appear on search engine results pages (SERPs) because of its most efficient methods to grow the business in this aggressive marketplace. The highest potency is to offer the advertisers the chance to put their ads in front of enthused customers who are ready to purchase at the designated instant upon they are prepared to make the purchase.

The ads, such as pay-per-click ads, is having different formats. Some are text-based ads, which are more visual, and product-based advertisements that enable customers viewing important information at-a-glimpse, for example, cost and reviews. The foundation of SEM is the keywords. When a customer enters keywords into search engines to find products or services, they see your ads. There is total four types of keywords that can be used in the SEM campaigns. There are wide-ranging match keywords, phrase match keywords, exact match keywords, and negative keywords. (Alexa blog 2020.)

Chaffey & Smith (2017) quote search engine marketing in their book as follow:

> *"Search engine marketing is arguably the most important digital marketing channel for customer acquisition."*

The paid search ads usually appear up at the top of the SERPs (Figure 7). To promote your website on the paid search ads results on the Google platform, it requires signing up the Google Ads account and run with digital marketing strategy, which also known as search engine marketing (SEM) (Kwok 2018).

3.3.2 Search engine optimisation (SEO)

The practice of SEO is to increase both the quality and quantity of website traffic, by exposing to the product through non-paid search engine results, which is also identified as an organic search engine. Optimising your website will provide better information to search engines so that the content can be indexed and showed within search results. Thus, search engines are answer appliances, which wash out billions of pieces of content and assess thousands of elements to define which content is the most likely to answer your question. Search engines discover and catalogue all available content on the internet, for instance, webpages, images, videos, etc., to match the query. (Muller et al. 2021.)

People now naturally turn to a search engine when seeking a new product, service, or entertainment. However, for a well-known brand, users will navigate directly to the site via

entering the memorable web address (URL) into the browser address bar. However, people will first use the search engine to enter the brand name's uniform resource locator (URL) or product to conduct further activities. (Chaffey & Smith 2017, 368.)

Figure 7. Organic search and paid search results in Google search engine page

Kwok (2018) explains that people are using search engines for many reasons varying from research, entertainment, and shopping. Ranking a website on the upper of the organic search engine result pages (SERPs), marketers do apply digital marketing strategy which is recognised as search engine optimisation (SEO). With Google platform alone, it handles over 40 000 queries per second, with total sum up about 3.5 billion search requests per day.

Figure 8. Search engine market share in Finland (StatCounter 2021)

Figure 8 shows that dated February 2021, Google was the most popular search engine in Finland, with close to 95% of the market share. It means that out of a hundred people, ninety-five people are using Google to search for all kinds of stuff.

3.3.3 Ads - display ads and Google ads

Ads are short-form for advertisements. The ad locations appear on webpages when users glance the internet. Having your ads appear on website locations, you can begin with Google Ads or from a demand-side platform. People try to promote products or services by creating ads to push campaign works. Ads appear in a channel. For instance, YouTube, Google search, inside apps, or on websites, etc. The advertiser pays a certain amount to the content publisher, such as website owner, app developer, or search engine. (CodeFuel 2019.) The very first display ad presented through internet in October 1994 on HotWired. The ad was promoting AT&T internet, that offered visitors a virtual tour of a museum. (Muhammad 2020.) And there are several platforms for the ads, such as Google Ads, Facebook/Instagram Ads, Bing Ads, etc. The below will illustrate display ads and Google Ads. Google Ads is one of the leading online advertising platforms.

Display ads

Whatley (2019) explains that display ads are the advertisement made through website, social media platform or other digital mediums to attract the audience to take a particular deed. Often, the ads devised by text-based, image or video advertisements that encourage user/visitor to click through to the land page and take further action, such as making a purchase. He continues explaining that most display and online advertising campaigns have charged on a cost per click basis, also known as CPC. It means that every time a user on a search engine clicks on your ad, you will get charged a specific amount based on your overall bidding strategy. Figure 9 shows the most commonly used size for the display ads.
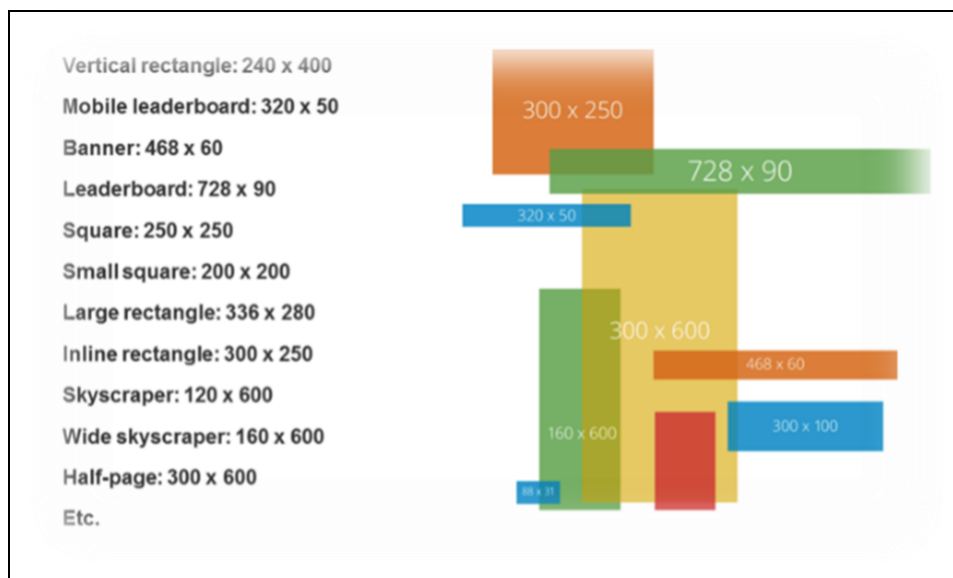
Figure 9. Display ads sizes (Muhammad 2020)

There are few forms of display ads. For instance, the banner ads, interstitial ads, rich media, and video ads. Banner ads are one of the oldest and traditional forms of advertising. It usually appears at the top of websites in a 'banner' format. The interstitial ads appear as web pages have shown to users before directing them to the original page they requested. The rich media consist of interactive elements, for instance, video, audio, and clickable elements such as opt-in form. The video ads platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook, allow you to reach your audience and connect with them at a particular level.

Google ads

Google ads, which used to be Google Adwords, is one of the leading online advertising and a pay-per-click (PPC) online advertising platform. It allows advertisers to display their ads on Google's search engine result page. It helps business influence customers across the world and also to develop their business. Since this platform runs as PPC advertising, the business only has to pay when a visitor clicks on its ad. Its' marketplaces work as an auction where people bid for clicks. However, the highest bid will not always win, as Google considers the quality score to ensure that people clicking on the ads have the best doable knowledge. Hence, the definite ad location is defined by two aspects, which are maximum bid multiply by quality score. Figure 10 shows the steps of how to utilise AdWords. (FreshBooks 2021.)
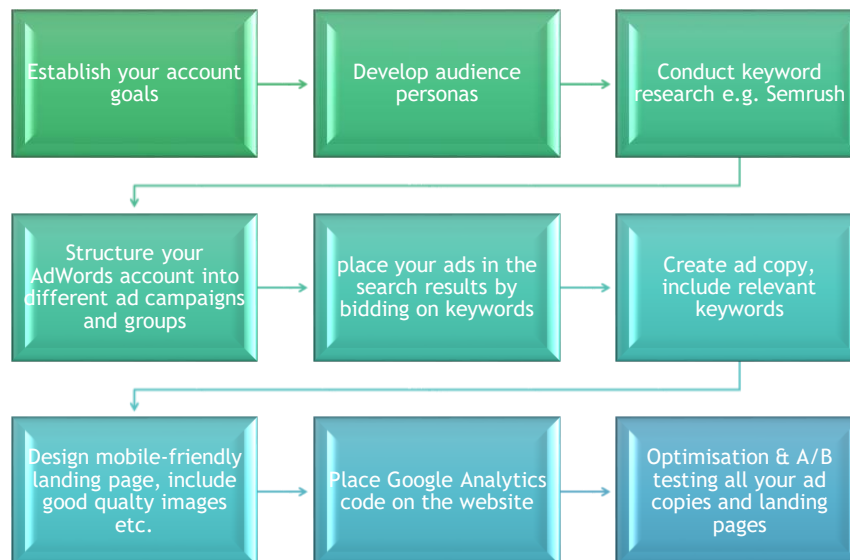
Figure 10. The steps of utilising AdWords (FreshBooks 2021)

The first step is to establish your account goals. After that, grow audience personas by defining who are the ideal customers, what are they searching, for what purpose of the searching, etc. Subsequently, use keyword tools to conduct keyword research to discover and volume for the search terms at every phase. The fourth step is to structure your Ad-Words account into dissimilar ad campaigns and groups. After which, once you have planned the keywords relevant to your business, you can position your ads in the search results by bidding on the keywords. (FreshBooks 2021.)

The sixth step is to create the ad copy. In this step it must be ensured that you include related keywords, a clear call-to-action and ad extensions. The seventh step is to plan a mobile-friendly landing page that including decent feature images, a form and a clear call-to-action. To place a Google Analytics code on the website for alteration following is the eighth step. Lastly, optimise and A/B test all your ad copies and landing pages if they are working fine. Then, measuring the variation performance. (FreshBooks 2021.) A/B test, also recognised as split test, is the test by comparing two different versions of a webpage, an email, or other marketing assets (Daily's Eggspert 2020).

3.3.4 Social media marketing (SMM)

Hayes (2018) explains that social media marketing (SMM) uses social media and social networks for advertising a company's products or services. SMM provides companies with a way to engage with existing customers and reach out to new ones. It allows them to promote their desired culture, mission, or tone to the targeted audience. It has purpose-built data analytics tools allowing marketers to track the success of their efforts.

There are several platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc. Business begin to use these sites to further their interests through SMM because the sites can change consumer behaviour. Many social networks allow users to provide detailed geographical, demographic, and personal details. It enables businesses to tailor their messages to what is most likely to resonate with users. Whatman (2020) explains that there are main differences between each of the major social media platforms. For instance, Instagram prioritises images and video, Twitter is for real-time updates, and Facebook is fast becoming an all-purpose platform. However, there are also similarities between all of them. Thus, a social media plan with a special tweak is required for individual platforms. People use social media every day to keep up-to-date with news, bond with friends and family worldwide, view products, and find ideas. Business is using social media to reach out potential customers by engaging them directly. There are various social media marketing tools that business able to find out the customers' needs and interests. By doing so will help business better tailor the content to better engage with the targeted audience.

Figure 11. The popular social media channels of Finland (Pönkä 2020)

Figure 11 shows that WhatsApp, YouTube, and Facebook are the most popular social media channels in Finland, with about three million active users. Besides, Instagram has about two million active users whereas Twitter has about a million users. It tells that a person could use more than one platform, such as owning an account of Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc., for different purposes.

3.3.5 Email marketing

An email is a form of communication that can make the customers on your email list aware of new products, discounts, follow-up, and other services. It is one of the most common tools for marketing campaigns.

Tankovska (2021) states that there were about four billion email users as of 2019. This number of global email users is growing, approximately 4.48 billion users in 2024. The email channel is still one of the most popular mediums business use to connect with each other nowadays.

It is a form of direct marketing that uses email to promote your business's products, discounts, or other services. It makes your customers aware of your latest items or offers by integrating them into your marketing automation efforts. Additionally, it can also be a softer sell to educate your customers on the value of your brand or keep them engaged between purchases. Besides, it plays a pivotal role in your marketing strategy with lead generation, brand awareness, relationship build-up or engagement of customers through different types of marketing emails. (Mailchimp 2021.)

3.3.6 Affiliate marketing

It is the method of earning a commission by promoting other business's product or services. You locate a product or service, promote it to other and earn a certain commission for each sale that you make. You can recommend the product or service through your website, a podcast, or even on social media, by making money as an affiliate. (SPI Media, LLC 2020.)

According to Patel (2021), affiliate marketing is profit partaking. If you have a product and want to market additional through different channels, you can offer promoters a certain commission through an affiliate program. Conversely, if you have no product and would like to earn some income, then you can promote a product that you find that it is worthy and could earn an income. Thus, if you generate a sale from this product, you get paid. However, if you don't generate a sale, you do not get paid. There are few popular affiliate networks, such as Clickbank, Shareasale, Hotmart, Ads 4 Dough, Amazon Affiliate Program, eBay Partners Program, etc.

3.3.7 Mobile marketing

It is a multi-channel that aim at reaching a target audience on their smartphones, tablets, and/or other mobile devices, via websites, email, SMS (short message service) and MMS (multimedia message service), social media, and apps. In recent years, marketers create true omnichannel engagement since customers are shifting their attention to mobile. The uniqueness of mobile marketing is that it reaches people in real-time right where they are. From email, pay-per-click (PPC), search engine optimisation (SEO), content marketing, and social media marketing, this mobile marketing channel able to reach every part of your audience where they are most comfortable. (Marketo 2021.)

According to SendPulse, mobile marketing has several significant benefits. For instance, text messaging is easy and comparatively cheap compared to other forms of marketing. People do check their phones more often and never ignore messages. Moreover, local companies can easily tell their loyal customers about hot deals, the latest arrivals, special offers, etc. Customers will not miss out on any of your offerings.

3.4   Content Marketing

3.4.1   The definition

Didner (2011) argues that content is king and creative is queen. It is all about how you keep the king and the queen in the whole game. These two are part of the marketing strategy, thus, it is good to explore content and creative development early in the strategy development phase. Creatives could come in the form of ad banners, video advertisements, text ads, etc. Content could be in the form of visual graphics, text, videos, blog articles, etc. (Kwok 2018.)

This is the proven practice to generate interest in a business and its products or services by increasing value for customers through engaging and informative content. Customers are caring for themselves. They are paying attention to what you could offer them to satisfy their need or wants. Therefore, content marketing is about generating interesting information, that the customers are passionate about so they will ultimately notice you.

> *Content marketing is the marketing and business process for content and distributing content to attract, acquire, and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience – to drive profitable customer action (Pulizzi 2014).*

The Marketing Eye (2016) argues that instead of focusing solely on your products or services, the idea is to provide relevant content to your prospects at all stages of the buying lifecycle. Since now all are in the era of self-serve information, 24/7 information are available to be accessed. Besides, it saves time and money.
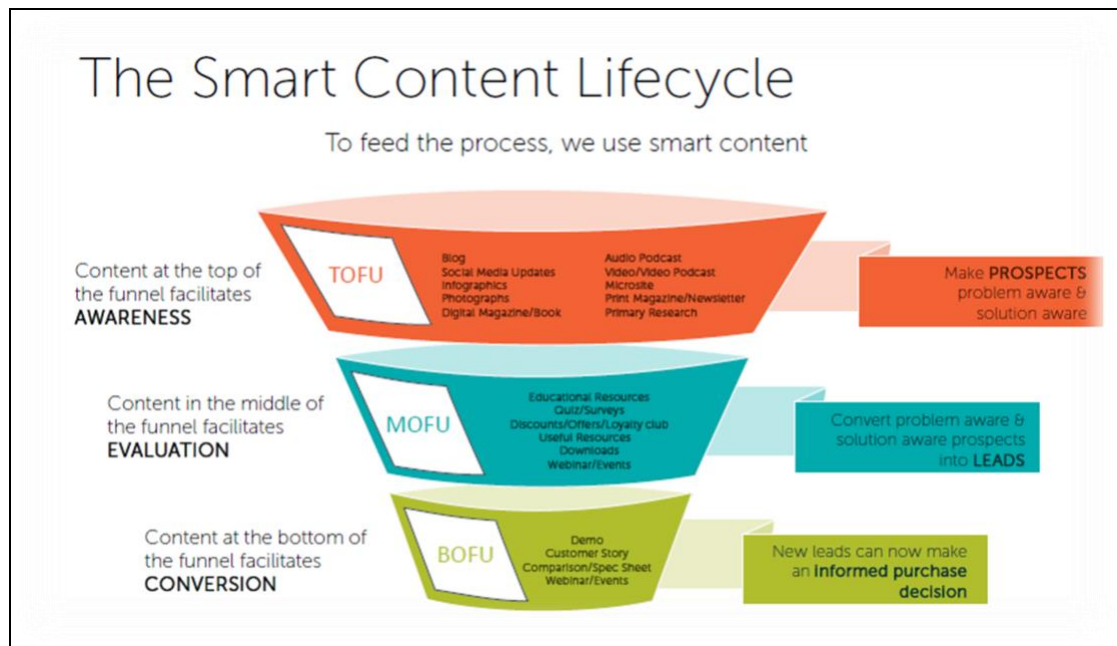
Figure 12. The Smart Content lifecycle (The Marketing Eye 2016)

The current situation is no longer a pure promotion of a product or service. It is a shift of reality that, all about providing information. Figure 12 shows that the role of content marketing has three stages in a funnel lifecycle. The first stage is the top of the funnel (TOFU), and the second stage is the middle of funnel (MOFU), and the last stage is the bottom of funnel (BOFU).

TOFU

The aim is to facilitate awareness and make prospects' problem and solution aware. Generally, the prospects are unaware of your solution and often unaware of their problem or opportunity. Therefore, content at this stage needs to be available freely, and it must aim to educate, entertain, or inspire prospects. Blog posts, podcasts, social media updates, and infographics are good examples. (The Marketing Eye 2016.) Lilyquist (2020) explains that a prospect is a potential customer who has qualified as fitting the specific criteria outlined by a company on its offerings in the marketplace.

MOFU

The aim is to move prospects from awareness to assessment, which convert the 'problem aware' and 'solution aware' prospects into leads. At this stage, use free content to encourage the prospects to submit their contact information and opt-in to receive future marketing communications. The content that you yield requires to acts as a lead magnet. Case studies, white papers, surveys, webinars, and events are good examples. (The Marketing Eye 2016.) A lead magnet is a marketing term. It means to give away a free item

or service to gather contact information from the prospects. Upon a customer signs up for a trial version or provides a name and other details for a free sample, they exchange their details as a lead magnet. (Kenton 2019.)

BOFU

The aim is to convert leads into paying customers. A crucial question will be - what types of content do your leads need to make an informed purchase decision? You require to underpin all of your buyer personas – who they are and where they are, think about their needs and wants – now and future. By doing this will assist you in creating the necessary content for each audience. (The Marketing Eye 2016.)

3.4.2 Content marketing strategy

Hurley (2020) argues that without the right content marketing strategy, tactics, and tools, you will get no way. It is like driving a car without GPS that probably end up wandering around aimlessly, frustrated, wasting time, and money.

3.4.3 Set out the mission and goal

The mission for content marketing is a brief statement; of who your audience is, how they will be in touch, what they will gain from your content. Here is a formula you can use to create your content marketing mission: We provide [target audience] with [type of content] to help them [business goals]. (Hurley 2020a.)

Pulizzi (2014) explains that finding content goals that eventually drive your business can be an intensely painful procedure. It requires passion, determination, and some soul searching to truly determine what kind of content you need to create that will have an effective impact on your customer. The below could be numbers of possible goals you can have.

According to WebFX, strong content consents you to show your customers who are you, and what is your brand all about. Brand awareness is vital because consumers are likely to purchase from brands they recognise and trust, as well as the unique qualities that your brand offers.

3.4.4 Define the audience

Justesen (2018) argues that high-quality content will naturally attract an audience, but it will not necessarily attract the best audience for your brand. Hence, defining your ideal audience will help you focus on creating effective content based on the needs of your target market, establish you as an authority in your industry, and increase sales. Thus,

understanding the basics facts, such as gender, age, occupation, income, family status, and geographic location about your audience is a good starting point. After that, narrow down and learn more about their needs by asking what are they liking and disliking? What are they searching? Reviews, comments and other forms of customer feedback can be a great source of insights, thus, taking the time to read these opinions can accelerate the relationship with audiences. Once your content hit the right note, mostly the audience will share your content, follow you on social media and connect with you. They will likely become loyal customers.

3.4.5 Plan the content process

It is vital to have a plan for the process, especially ask yourself these few questions: 'Who is in charge of creating content?', 'What about maintaining and updating content?', 'What resources do you require? Schedule?', 'Who has the final content approval?' and the last question is 'What your content production workflow is?' After throwing out all the questions, now start to narrow down the answers. First, to allocate the roles, who is in charge overall, and who is responsible for delivering individual content items, according to their expertise. Besides, to figure out your potential producers, they might be in-house content creators, specialists, and free-lancers. Second, create a content calendar on each of the platforms you want to use. Google Calendar could be a useful tool for it. (Hurley 2020b.)

3.5   Content marketing tactics

Bhattacharya (2019) explains that some content marketing tactics basically accomplish better performance than others. These are the ones that you need to favour to create supreme consumer engagement.

3.5.1 Question-based titles

The first thing people see when scrolling through social feeds and scanning search results are the titles. Utilising question-based titles can help your website rank as a featured piece in the organic search results of Google, such as how-to, why, what, etc. Besides, utilising a keyword research feature like 'Answer to Public' to get question concentrated content ideas. Also, you can refer to Google's 'People also ask' segment to find the most commonly enquiries and generate content over them. (Bhattacharya 2019.)

3.5.2 Website

It is the business's key elements of digital marketing to reach out to customers in various methods. An excellent website should take good care of its customer, know who they are, how they usually react towards the company. Besides, the website should contain the knowledge that the audience may find useful. Nowadays, people are more impatient, that everything they want is fast, safe, and simple. Therefore, the clear, simple and data well-protected function of the website eventually making the whole process easier. Furthermore, the website should be able to use on both desktops and mobile devices upon access to the internet. Currently, people prefer using mobile due to the convenience. Hence, mobile optimised websites are more and more important compared to before. A website gives your business's online presence with your customers/prospects (Aguila 2020).

3.5.3 Guest blogging

Hurley (2020) emphasises that guest posting is an excellent way to build brand awareness because the content you post on other site is telling new audiences about you. After that, the new readers may visit your site or landing page, which means that guest blogging helps you attract a new audience. It also builds trust. Hence, a few vital things need to be taken care of, such as finding sites to contribute to, form a connection with the site owner, make your pitch, be responsive, write more guest posts, track success, and so on.

3.5.4 Content curation

Newberry (2020) explains that curated content is the content created by others and you select to share with your audience. It could be a valuable blog post from a company, expert advice from a relevant thought leader, or something else that you think your audience will appreciate and enjoy. There are several benefits of content curation. For instance, it fills gaps in your content calendar. It provides value to your audience. It establishes yourself as a thought leader. It builds your network. There are a few crucial questions to ask yourself before sharing them. For this instance, remember to ask, 'Why would this help them?', 'Is this unique and worthy of sharing?', and 'Is this a trustworthy source?' After that, fact checks the content to ensure you understand it and it is true. After which add your take, the reason is your audience wants to know what you think about the resource you have shared. Just one or two short sentences to explain your thought about the content is valuable, and add your unique insight would be a plus point. Furthermore, content curation is all about sharing the content and, it is not stealing. Thus, when you share content from others, ensure you link to the source and tag their social accounts.

3.6   Content marketing tools

Influencer Marketing Hub (2020) states that 28% of B2C (Business to Consumer) marketers say that content marketing technology and tools increased their sale. 67% of the most successful B2B (Business to Business) content marketers say their organisations are advanced and expert in the use of content marketing technologies. 56% of marketers say that it helps them better understand audience preferences and behaviour.

There are some tools available online nowadays. Some of them are free of charge, some of them required a monthly/annually subscription fee that assists with the maintenance and services.

Tools	Purpose	Strengths
Semrush	Build strategy	Handle all technical requirements for SEO, schedule posts, find the best content etc.
BuzzSumo	Generate brilliant content ideas	Provide in-depth insights on how a certain piece of content is performing (shares, engagement, links).
Hubspot CMS	Personalise content	Create and edit blog posts, landing page, site pages, and emails. Its' A/B testing help to personalised with smart content.
Uber-suggest	Discover profitable keywords	Identify the most searched keywords in your industry along with search volume and level of competition. To discover some great keywords, optimise your content, to gain visibility in SERPs.
Evernote	Organise ideas	Take notes and capture ideas in one place so can organise them effectively. It allows you to save articles, images, webpages, and PDFs, so that can easily access them whenever required.
Canva	Create eye-catching visuals	Visual content will drive more engagements, Templates such as presentations, blog banner, social media posts, email header, and more.
Copyscape	Check for plagiarism	Run a search for similar content across the web to avoid duplication issues.

Table 1. Content marketing tools (Influencer Marketing Hub 2020)

Table 1 shows few content marketing tools, their purpose, and their strengths. The purpose of Semrush is to build a strategy for you. It is handling all technical requirements for SEO,

schedule posts, and find the best content. It is a paid service. Its' price ranges from a hundred euro to four hundred fifty euro and is used by companies worldwide, from small-medium businesses to enterprises. It finds themes that resonate with your audience, review and progress content according on real-time metrics, also track brand mentions and content spread. (Semrush Inc 2021.)

On the other hand, the purpose of Ubersuggest is to discover profitable keywords. It is a paid service too, however cheaper than Semrush, from twenty-nine euro to ninety-nine euro monthly. It identifies the most searched keywords in your industry along with search volume and level of competition. To discover some great keywords, optimise your content, to gain visibility in SERPs. (Ubersuggest 2021.)

4   Domestic Tourism and Asikkala

4.1   Domestic tourism

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, tourism in 2020 only focused on domestic tourism. According to Foreigner.fi (2020), between May and August of 2020, Finnish residents made 10.8 million trips in total. Out of it, it had 9.7 million domestic trips with overnight stays which include both trips with overnight stay and same-day trips. The month of July was the most popular month for travelling during the summer season, and the rented-cottage were extremely popular. Conversely, overnight stays at hotel were not that popular.

4.2   Asikkala

Asikkala is located in the southern part of Finland. Vääksy is the vivid centre of Asikkala, which is located between two lakes – Vesijärvi and Päijänne. Asikkala municipality was established in the year 1848. The current population is about 8300 inhabitants. The whole area of Asikkala is 756km², which consists of 192km² of water surface. The shoreline is 581km. It is one of the famous places for summer cottages in Finland. During summers, it attracts thousands of summer residents from all over the places to reside here by enjoying the lovely sceneries and sound of silence. (Asikkalankunta 2021.)

4.3   The findings on Asikkala current digital activities

From the finding through online that the municipality has a home webpage. It contains a lot of information in Finnish.

Figure 11. The homepage of the municipality of Asikkala (Asikkalankunta 2021)

Figure 13 shows that it consists of information about tourism and culture, which include sights and attractions of Vääksy and Asikkala, Päijänne House, Pulkkilanharju Ridge, Päijänne National Park, accommodation, annual event, and Douzelage. In addition, the homepage also has the event calendar, municipal election for 2021, coronavirus latest information, public transport, Asikkala operations, library services, etc. However, there is very little information in English. For instance, it only has tourism and culture, a brochure for tourists and some photos of places in Asikkala. Besides its home webpage, the municipality also has social media channels, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, blog, and YouTube. At below, the author presents the posts from Asikkala municipality during the month of April 2021, concentrating especially to the last three days of the month, which is 28th till 30th of April.

4.3.1 Posts in Facebook

The municipality has its own Facebook page. Most of the activities and updates of the municipality are posting on its page. The page was created in December 2015. Till now, there is a total of 2 152 followers following the municipality's page. The page contains the message from municipality to public, contact details such as email address, contact number, the link to homepage, and also Messenger. The benefits of the function are allowing people to comment, give suggestions for improvement and even critical opinions. Some ongoing or upcoming events, special news or broadcast, urgent information, greetings message during special celebrations, also photo and video materials have posted to the page.
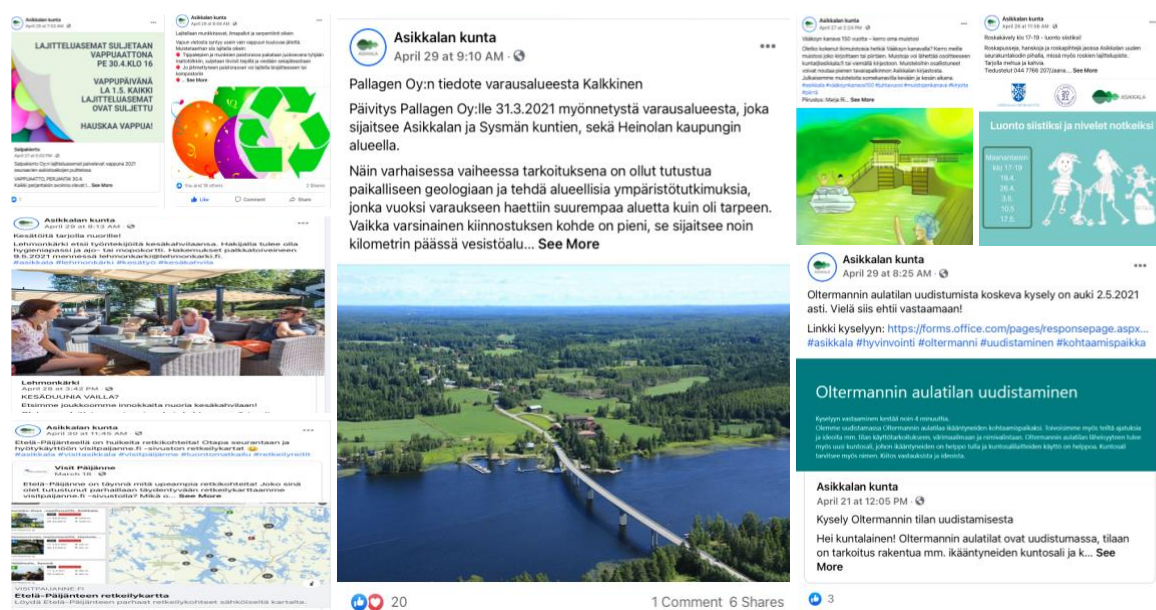

Figure 12. Posts in Facebook page by the municipality of Asikkala (Asikkalankunta Facebook 2021)

Figure 14 shows some of the posts during the period of 28 till 30 April. There were several posts posted on the page. The highest number posts were posted on 29 Apr, at total of six posts. The posted-contents were about the construction information in Pulkkilanharju, the questionnaire about the renewal of Oltermann's lobby space, update on the booking area that granted for a company, summer job for young people, how to sort out the oil after frying the doughnut for labour's day, Salpakierto Oy's opening hour during 30.4, etc. (Asikkalankunta Facebook 2021.)

4.3.2 Posts in Instagram

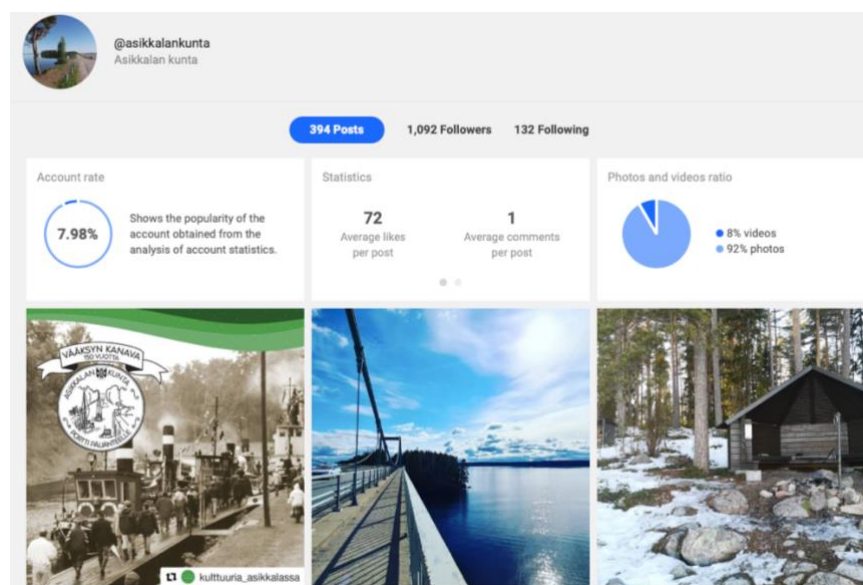The municipality's Instagram account is followed by 1 092 people.

Figure 13. Instagram account for the municipality of Asikkala (Asikkalankunta Instagram 2021)

There was an analytical tool from Instagram – Gramho, which analyses the account. It analyses the account rate, gives the statistics. For instance, the account rate for the municipality of Asikkala is at 7.98%, per post it has an average 72 likes and one comment. All in all, there was 92% of photos and 8% of videos (Figure 15). During the period of 28 till 30 April, the author could not locate any post from the municipality. However, the last post before the said period was posted on 25 April. The content was a photo about the beauty of Pulkkilanhaju, with the scenery of long bridge. (Asikkalankunta Instagram 2021.)

4.3.3 Posts in Twitter

The municipality's Twitter account was created in March 2019 and it has 301 followers.
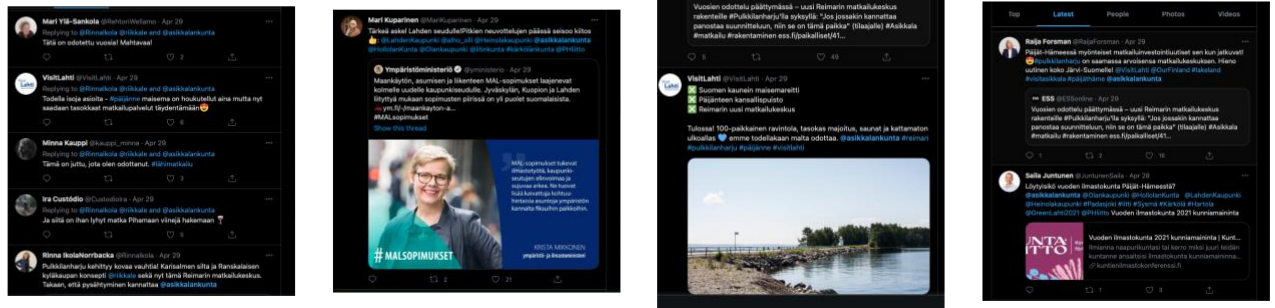
Figure 14. Users of Twitter used @asikkalankunta for the municipality of Asikkala (Asikkalankunta Twitter 2021)

The function of Twitter is for real-time updates. The last reaction that the municipality conducted was retweeted someone's tweet in January 2020. The author checked the activities of the municipality during the period of 28 till 30 April and found out that there was no new post. However, some of the users of Twitter have been actively tweeted the posts related to the municipality, for instance, figure 16 shows that there were numbers of posts posted during the said period with tweeting @asikkalankunta. (Asikkalankunta Twitter 2021.)

4.3.4 Videos in YouTube

McFadden (2020) states that YouTube is one of the most famous video and main distribution platforms on the internet. It has an average 500 hours of video content are uploaded to YouTube in every minute.
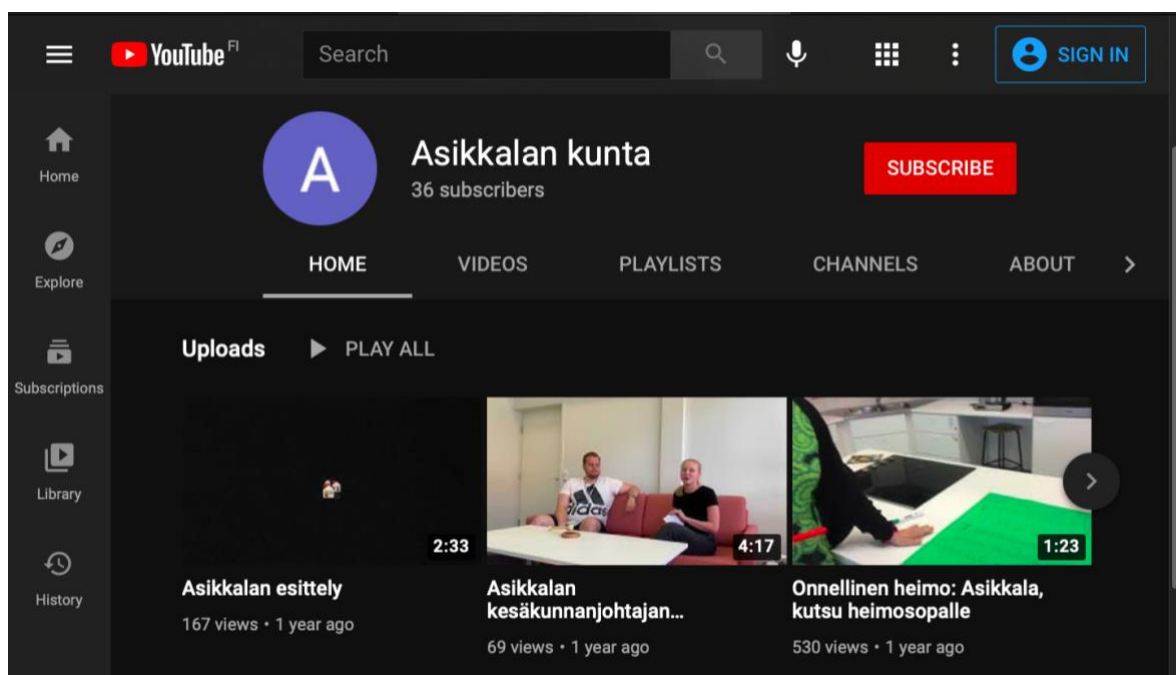

Figure 15. YouTube for the municipality of Asikkala (Asikkalankunta YouTube 2021)

The author could not find any latest video uploaded by the municipality during the said period. However, figure 17 shows that the last video had posted in 2020, and the content was about the introduction of Asikkala. Till now, the video itself has collected 167 views in this video. (Asikkalankunta YouTube 2021.)

4.3.5 Update in blog

Minaev (2021) explains that blog needs to be run and supervised. It requires tools to make the process of writing, posting, linking, and sharing content much easier on the internet. Generally, blogs are different compared to websites that require updating more frequently. He continues to illustrate that the core purpose of a blog is connecting to the relevant audience. In addition, it is to boost the traffic and send quality leads to your website. It allows you to showcase your niche authority and build a brand. The reader can find out the ideas about the discussion platform that municipal's welfare services or other parties strive to support the well-being of the residents (Voi Hyvin Asikkala 2021).

Figure 16. Blog for the municipality of Asikkala (Voi Hyvin Asikkala 2021)

Figure 18 shows that the last post in the blog was posted in 2018. Thus, the author could not locate any recent activities in the blog, especially during the said period.

From the author's perspective, the municipality is actively using the Facebook platform among all the social media platforms. Furthermore, the municipality is not so much in promoting the destination. However, it is rather more about broadcasting or sharing information to the residents through the Facebook page. Moreover, it posts photo into Instagram account, however, is not every day. And it seems like the Twitter platform is for discussion by personal account who would tweet with the municipality.

5   Empirical research and data analysis

5.1   Design and formulation of empirical research

This part of the study covers empirical research and data analysis. Empirical research is research-based on the researcher's observation and evaluation of phenomena. The gathered data, also known as the primary source, to be compared against a theory or a hypothesis (secondary sources). However, the results are according to the present time involvement. The methods such as experiment, survey, case study, ethnographic, grounded theory, and action research are conducting in empirical research. (Emerald Publishing 2021.)

This research is using the mixed method that combining quantitative and qualitative data. The qualitative part of the research is carried out by sending an online survey form to the selected participants. This group of participants are the adult learners of LAB University of Applied Science, Lahti and Lappeenranta. According to Statistics Finland (2020), overnight stopovers in domestic destinations increased obviously among young people aged 15-24, specifically to people of working age at 25-64-year-old. In the year 2020, these age groups have increased from 12% to 17% compared to the year 2019. Thus, the adult learners group has been chosen carefully as the target group for this study because it represents potential visitors to domestic destinations.

The purpose of the survey is to find out how potential domestic visitors are using digital channels and content when searching for information about domestic destinations to visit. The aim is to learn about their digital behaviour. The survey was sent to 1189 people and there were 70 responses. It consists of twelve questionnaires: nine questions with multiple choice given whereas three questions are 'open'. The language was in English and can be retrieved in the appendix section.

The qualitative part of the research is carried out by conducting an email interview through four selected residents who are living in different towns of Finland. During the interview, the participants are asked to freely express their opinion to the four 'open' questions about how they use digital channels and search for content about domestic destinations. On 15 April, the author had reached out four selected people via text and voice messages. However, two people agreed to take part the interview immediately, one turned down, and one did not reply. On 19 and 21 of April, the author managed to reach out other two people acting as participants. Therefore, there were total four participants in this email interview.

After the conversation, the participants received the designated four questions by email. Two out of four participants started to ponder right after they received the email. On the next

day evening, the answer had received from these two participants. Furthermore, one answer was received on 20 April via email, and the other one was received via audio in Mandarin Chinese on 25 April.

5.2 Data collection

Figure 19 shows the timeline of forming the theoretical work, data collection secondarily and primarily, and analysis for the data.

Theoretical information	Secondary Data collection	Primary Data collection	Data Analysis
•January - April	•March - May	•15-30 April	•May

Figure 19. Timeline of the data collection and analysis process in this study

Generally, the first step is the most challenging part of the whole thesis. It is choosing a topic, fine-tuning the research questions, and getting in touch with a case company if there is any. Once this step has finalised, the work will carry out. For this study, there is no case company involved. However, the author has chosen the case example, Asikkala, as the benchmark for this study. After much brainstorming, theoretical information has collected from January till April. The author collected secondary data from the online system from March till May. At the end of March, the author started designing questions for survey and interview and managed to send them out to the respective correspondents in week 16 and week 17.

The survey form was created through the Google Form platform. The link was sent via email to the adult learners of LAB University of Applied Science, Lahti and Lappeenranta and was only opened for 10 days. At the end of April, the survey link was closed. All in all, there was a total of 70 responses had received. For the interview, the author sent the questions via email in the middle of April and received all the responses from the participants within a week. After collecting all the data, analysis needs to be analysed before submitting the final report.

5.3 Data analysis

This sub-chapter presents the data analysis that was collected from the empirical research by conducting the interview and the survey.

5.3.1 Interview

Data from interview will be analysed like other qualitative data. Four participants' names are kept confidential during the analysis. Hence, the author named the participant as follow, Participant #1, Participant #2, Participant#3, and Participant #4. The language of the questions was in English, which the author sent to all participants via the email channel. However, the response from Participant #4 was returned via audio in Mandarin Chinese while the rest returned in English via email. The questions can be retrieved from the Appendix 1. The audio from the Participant #4 was copied into text and translated into English. Below is the summarisation of interview by four participants.

All of them would use Google search engine page to find out the location of Asikkala beforehand. The content such as history, area built-up, attraction places, places of interest, unique places, accommodations, nice restaurant or café, weather condition, and traffic condition, were major part of their search. Only one of them would visit to Asikkala homepage, whereas the rest would visit to Google search engine page to retrieve all the information they want. For the accommodations, the participants would find the place to stay overnight through Booking.com, Airbnb, hotels.com, Tripadvisor, and tori.fi. Besides of that, two out of four would read comments from other people about Asikkala, if there's any from social media platform. Google map will be used by all of them if they were required to travel.

Participant #1 was surprised that a number of information of Asikkala are able to be found in English. In normal situation, one can find the local website only contain Finnish with Swedish language. Participant #2 wished there would be more English information provided and more social media shared by real person. Participant #3 commented Google map is not always 100% accurate, hence sometime visiting the route according to Google map might be tough. Participant #4 was struggle that too much word information provided by its homepage that one couldn't continue to glance through at once and give up searching via the homepage.

All in all, the homepage of municipality can be modified as an asset to promote Asikkala, if insert some attractive pictures and short videos as part of content. In addition, the information in English can be obtained more to attract the potential visitors who are not understanding Finnish completely.

5.3.2 Survey

The survey was conducted during the period from the 20th to the 30th of April 2021. Survey questions were designed specifically to find out the potential visitors' digital behaviour. The approximately 5 minute survey included 12 questions in total. The survey link was sent to the adult learner of LAB University of Applied Science, Lahti and Lappeenranta and collected 70 answers.

The first two questions were demographic questions, that to find out what age the potential visitors they could be and gender information. Third question to eighth question were about digital channels, time spent on channels, information to retrieve from. At the same time, respondents were asked to give their insights on the content they would like to retrieve. Nineth question and tenth question were to find out if the respondents are following any influencer. This question tends to find out what kind of influencer the current trend is. The last two questions were related to the respondents whether been to Asikkala.
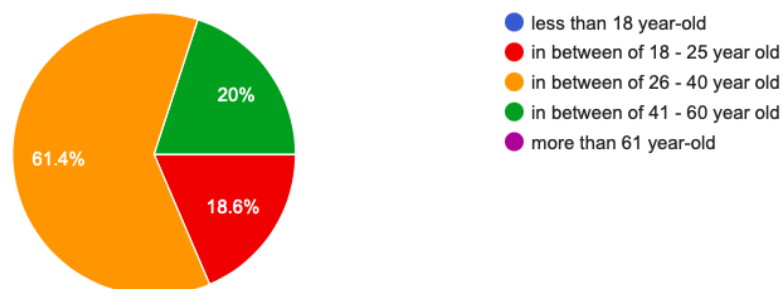
1. What is your age?

70 responses

Figure 20. Question 1: Age

Figure 20 shows the age group of all the respondents. Most people who responded to this survey were people aged between 26-40-year-old, who represented 61.4%, or 43 out of the total 70 respondents. The age group of 41-60 and 18-25-year-old were similar, which consisted of 14 respondents (20%) and 13 respondents (18.6%) respectively. There was no respondent whose age under 18 or above 61.

2. Your gender

70 responses

● Female
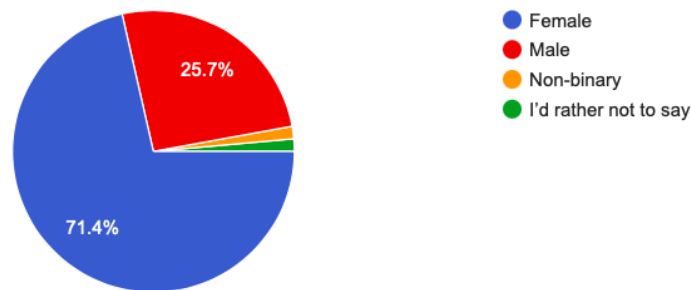● Male
● Non-binary
● I'd rather not to say

Figure 21. Question 2: Gender

The second question is to find out what kind of gender the target group. Data show that the female was the dominant gender group, which consisted of 50 respondents (71.4%). There was a total of 18 males (25.7%). However, there was one respondent (1.4%) who belong to the non-binary, whereas there was another respondent was preferred not to tell about gender in this survey.

3. What digital channels are you using nowadays?
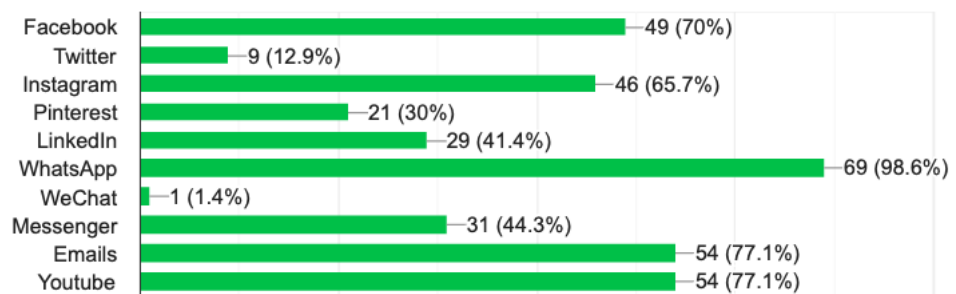
70 responses

Figure 22. Question 3: Digital channel

The third question is a multiple selection questions, which means that one person can select more than one answer. For instance, one person uses WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram for different purposes. Data shows that Whatsapp was the most popular channel, with a total of 69 respondents were using it. Emails and YouTube were the second popular channel, there were 54 respondents for each. Facebook and Instagram were the third popular channel, there were 49 and 46 respondents respectively. The least respondents were using Kik, reddit, and Viber, there was one respondent for each mentioned channel.

4. How often are you using the digital channels?
70 responses

- ● Less than an hour per day
- ● One to two hours per day
- ● Three to four hours per day
- ● More than five hours per day
- ● Not everyday
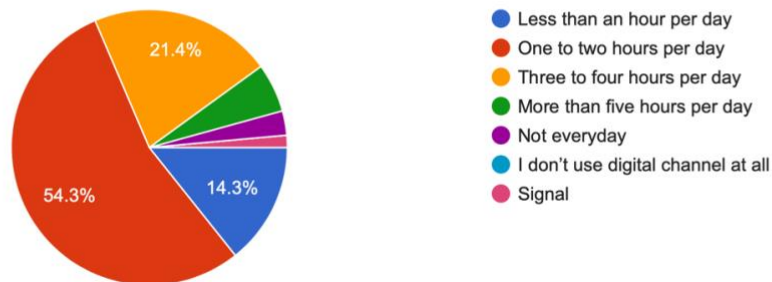- ● I don't use digital channel at all
- ● Signal

Figure 23. Question 4: The time spent in digital channel daily

Most of the respondents were using digital channels within one to two hours per day, a total of 38 respondents (54.3%). There were four respondents spending more than five hours, 15 respondents were spending three to four hours, 10 respondents were spending less than an hour, whereas two respondents would not use it in every day. One respondent would use as and when there was signal available. Data shows none of the respondents replied that they do not use digital channel at all.

5. When you are searching information related to a domestic destination to visit, how you use the channels below?
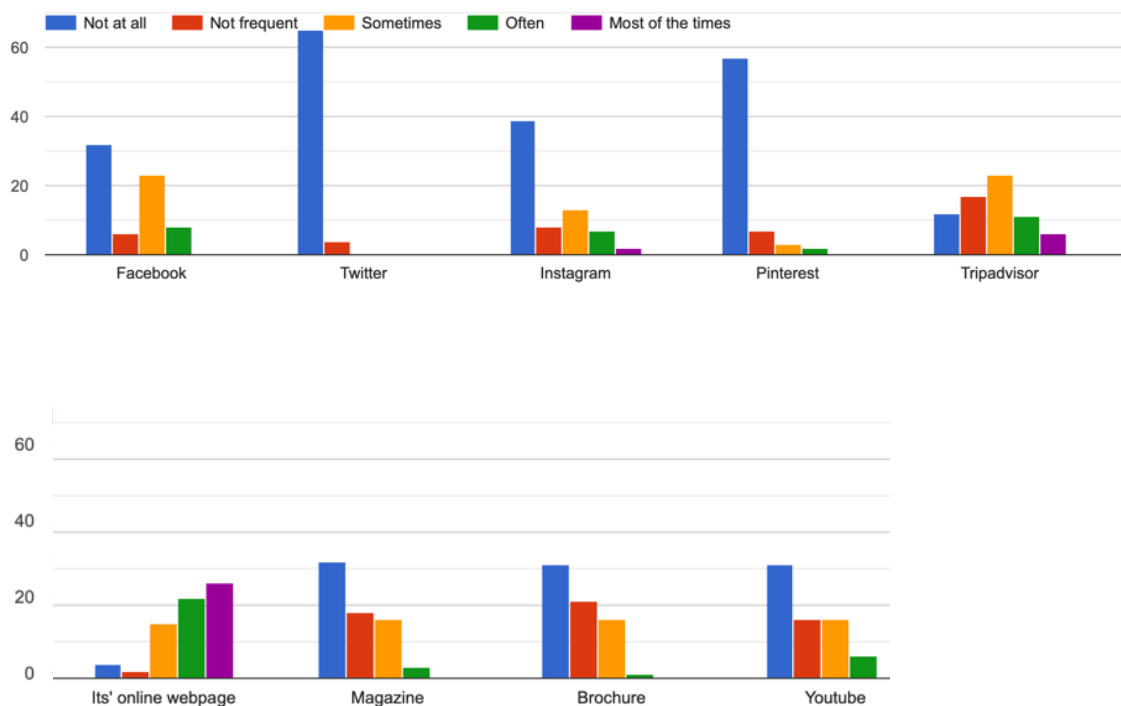

Figure 24. Question 5: Channel to retrieve information of a destination

Data seems to show that the most respondents were using the homepage of a domestic destination to retrieve related information, a total of 26 respondents. Followed by the Tripadvisor, at six respondents. Also, there was eight respondents often using Facebook whereas seven respondents often were using Instagram to retrieve information. Twitter and Pinterest were the least channels that respondents would visit upon retrieving the information.

The sixth question is an open question, in order to find out what other channels respondents use. It was a total of 25 responses. More than half of them used Google search engine page to search related information that they want, for instance, blog, homepage, articles, etc.

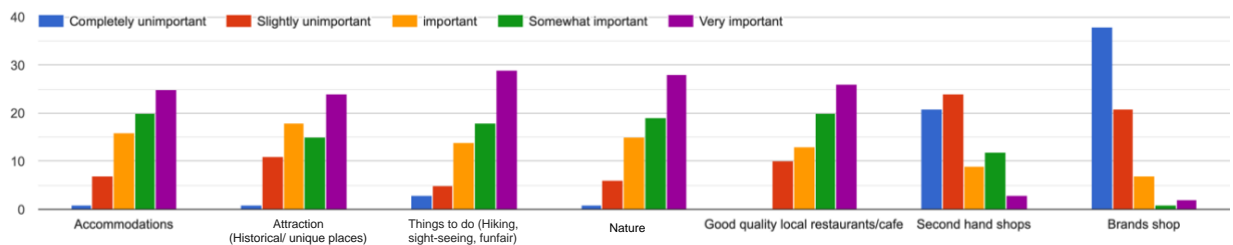7. What kind of information you are searching for?

Figure 25. Question 7: Types of information

Data seems to show that the information about things to do, accommodations, attraction, nature, quality of restaurants or café were very important, at an average of 26 respondents on each section. Conversely, the information about brands shop was the least important whereas the secondhand shops were the second least important.

The eighth question is an open question, in order to find out what other information respondents would like to find out. It was a total of 19 responses. Data seems to show that the search on transportation was the highest. Follow by the spa facilities, local culture, beaches, attraction along the way, weather forecast, paths for exercise were the search range that the respondents would like to find out.

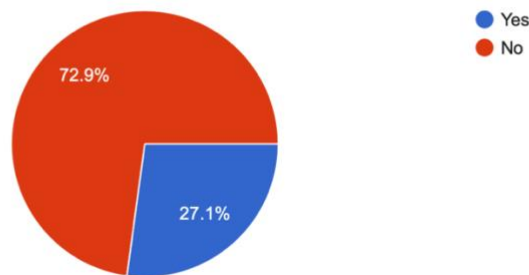9. Are you following any influencers of Finland?
70 responses

Figure 26. Question 9: Influencer

Figure 26 shows that a total of 19 respondents who were following influencers of Finland, which represented 27.1%. And 51 respondents who were not following any influencer, represented 72.9%, who would skip the tenth question.

The tenth question is an open question. The purpose of this question is to find out who are the current influencers that influence people now. It was a total of 13 responses received. Data seems to show that the influencer who was into food, nature, music, athletes, practical knowledge, beauty/cosmetic, would attract people to follow them.

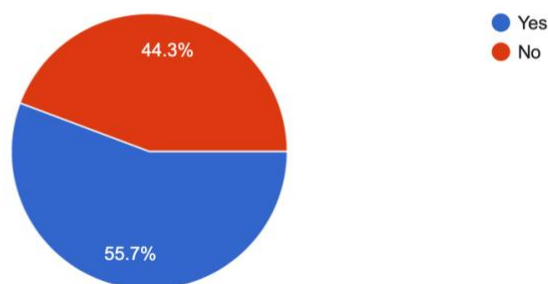11. Have you been to Asikkala?
70 responses

Figure 27. Question 11: Check how many have been to Asikkala

Data seems to show that more than half of the respondents have been to Asikkala, a total of 39 respondents. However, 31 respondents have not been to Asikkala before.

12. From where you know about Asikkala?
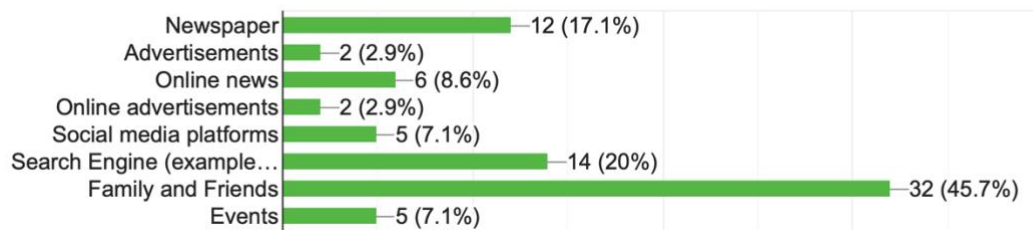
70 responses

Figure 28. Question 12: From where get to know about Asikkala

The twelfth question is a multi-choice selection that finds out if the respondents know about the location of Asikkala. Data seems to show that there were 32 respondents' family and friends who live in Asikkala knowing the location of Asikkala, which was the highest, at 45.7%. 14 respondents know the location of Asikkala through the search engine page (such as Google search, Bing, Baidu, etc.), which represented 20%. There were 12 respondents who know the location through the newspaper, at 17%.

6   Conclusion

6.1   Answers for research questions

This thesis aims to develop ideas for Asikkala, to utilise digital marketing and promote it as a domestic destination. The main research question, "How can Asikkala utilise digital marketing to promote it as a domestic destination?" will be answered after presenting sub-questions with responses.

Sub-questions

How is Asikkala using digital marketing currently?

From the author's finding, it seems the municipality of Asikkala is actively using its homepage as the primary channel to reach the audience. Besides that, it is using Facebook actively to broadcast and share information to the residents. However, the account of the municipality of Asikkala on Twitter is kind of inactive and active in two different ways. By itself, the municipality is not actively posting any update. On the other hand, other users of Twitter are tagging @asikkalankunta with the municipality, also tag to the account of employees of the municipality, as and when something is happening to them or some discussion related to Asikkala. Thus, the employee of Asikkala would use their own Twitter account to respond by tagging @asikkalakunta. Hence, it shows that people are actively mentioning its name on Twitter. On Instagram, the municipality has picked up the pace to upload some posts recently, after having a break for few weeks. On YouTube, the municipality uploads videos whenever there is a meeting, ever since the year 2020. Apart from the meeting recordings, there was no other video related to promoting Asikkala since 2020. On the blog platform, the municipality is inactive. Therefore, overall, the municipality is moderately active in using digital channels.

Based on the analysis, the homepage is including basic information such as tourism and culture, event calendar, municipal election for 2021, coronavirus latest information, public transport, Asikkala operations, etc. All the content belongs to passive content which is liable to spot. This kind of content would be helpful to visitors upon searching for information. On the other hand, amongst the social media platforms, the main channel for the municipality is the Facebook page. Its main purpose of using Facebook is to broadcast and share the information with residents.

What kind of content do people like to explore further when searching information about domestic destinations?

In this digital era, most people are using Google search engine page to search for all kind of relevant information. Generally, most people prefer to search for related information when planning a trip. From the findings through the empirical survey and interview conducted for this research, most people would use digital channels within one to two hours per day. The information such as history, accommodation, attraction, things to do, nature, quality of restaurants or café, weather forecast, and public transportation are the main search content upon searching places to travel.

Main question

How can Asikkala utilise digital marketing to promote Asikkala as a domestic destination?

Table 2 is the SOSTAC® plan designed by the author for the municipality.

Situational Analysis Where is the municipality now?	Strength: Great content in words	Weakness: Fewer pictures/videos
	Opportunity: 1) Explore visual content in videos/picture format - Canva 2) Develop the homepage – user-friendly	Threat: Readers difficult to digest all the information provided by homepage
Objectives What are the purpose?	• To attract more visitors to visit Asikkala	
Strategy How does the municipality get there?	• To make a decision which channel to be the main channel for visitors and potential visitors • To promote actively in designated digital channels	
Tactic It is usually a short-term and flexible process.	• To engage with the influencer to advertise, in video or picture format • To engage with guest blogger to visit Asikkala and write about the personal experience, so that can share the review on both homepages	
Action	• To create a checklist which includes the schedule when to create the post and upload into platforms, who are the people to cooperate with, what content are about, etc. • Weekly check on the performance of each platform.	
Control	• Monitor how many visitors visiting by filing up the entry form	

Table 2 SOSTAC® plan designed for the municipality in this study

First of all, analysing the situation of the municipality toward the digital realm with SWOT. From the author's perspective, the homepage of the municipality has great content in words. However, having certain content in visualisation is very vital, especially for the municipality, a place where gather and provide information for residents and visitors. Thus, the municipality could explore further in visual content such as picture and video about the topics that visitors are interested in, for instance, history, culture, food, things to do, etc., when they are searching information through its homepage.

Generally, the visual content will drive more engagement. Thus, to utilise Canva by creating eye-catching visuals to attract people to view the content. Furthermore, the homepage could be developed to be more user-friendly, especially for the visitors.

The objective of this plan is to attract more visitors. Hence, deciding on which channels will be the main channels for promoting and informing visitors about Asikkala. Currently, it seems that the municipality is actively using the Facebook page to broadcast and share information with the residents. However, the activities of the municipality's Instagram and Twitter account are inactive overall. Thus, it is vital to decide a designated channel for promoting purposes only. By doing so, it will make the whole process clearer easier for the municipality. After that, promote by posting actively in the designated channel by engaging third parties, such as influencer and guest bloggers through both designated channels and third parties' homepages will build up the reputation for both.

Besides that, it is vital to have a checklist about the activity tasks to be carried out, such as what kind of contents are all about, when the post need to be posted, etc. Furthermore, weekly check on the performance for each platform to ensure all comments are read and answered. Last, monitoring the whole process by checking if visitors are visiting Asikkala. The municipality could offer all visitors a cup of coffee in one of the local popular cafés by filing up the entry form electronically in order to calculate how many visitors are visiting Asikkala.

The municipality could consider setting a certain budget for the plan. This budget includes manpower, time, and money, which could get the homepage and social media platforms into further development of the digital era by servicing the residents and visitors.

Table 3 shows the key findings for the research questions.

Research questions:	Key findings:	
How can Asikkala utilise digital marketing to promote as a domestic destination?	• Content in website (include English) • Guest blogging, influencer • SOSTAC ® plan	
How is Asikkala using digital marketing currently?	• Overall moderate active in social media platforms (Not all the social media platforms are updated/posted, less videos about Asikkala in YouTube, not much post in Instagram and Twitter, but active in Facebook) • Active in its homepage	
What kind of content do people like to explore further when searching information about domestic destinations?	• Accommodations • Things to do • Nature • Nice restaurants / café	• Weather forecast • Attraction places • Public Transportation • History

Table 3 Research question and key findings for this study

When there is sufficient manpower, time and money, it is easier to get the plan worked and done. Table 3 shows that the content on the homepage and social media platforms are vital. The content to be more visualised, which include some pictures, short video clips, and language – English, on its homepage and social media platforms. In addition, cooperating with guest blogger and influencer would be extra help to advertise and promote the place rapidly nationwide.

6.2   Validity and reliability

This research aims to find answers to the research questions. The primary data was collected from an interview with selected people and a survey from a target group. Whereas the secondary data was collected from literature, for instance, reliable internet sources. Thus, this research gathered both data primarily and secondarily. The aim was to find out how the target group's digital behaviour, so that to develop ideas for Asikkala utilising digital marketing and promoting as a domestic destination. The total number of respondents from the survey was 70 plus there were four participants in the email interview, which is good to draw conclusions and make this research reliable. Hence, according to the facts given, this research is valid and reliable.

6.3 Suggestions on further research

This study solely focuses on digital marketing, and the target group is from Finland in this critical moment – COVID-19, regardless of the nationalities. Furthermore, the benchmark is purely for a small municipality in Finland. Thus, to gain more comprehensive results, further research on digital marketing and a specific group of people, such as remote workers, is suggested. In addition, collaborating with the municipality to gain deeper insights on how they promote through digital marketing is highly suggested. This kind of study would be vital and offer beneficial information for the municipality upon involving into digital realm.

7 Summary

The research aimed to develop ideas on how to utilise and promote a domestic destination. The goal was to find out the 'how' and to answer the research questions of how Asikkala utilise digital marketing to reach potential visitors of Finland itself.

At the beginning of this study, the author introduced basic concepts of digital marketing. After that, the author wanted to expose the people's digital behaviours of exploring information upon planning a trip domestically. For this reason, empirical research has conducted on the target groups via survey and interview.

The final part of the research was to conduct key findings for Asikkala and to develop ideas on how to utilise digital marketing to reach out the potential visitors. The findings of this study found out that in order to reach out to potential visitors, promoting through the designated channel solely for visitors, the content on its homepage and social media platforms, as well as the activities perform on social media, are the key roles. In addition, developing its homepage to be more user-friendly for visitors is vital. Moreover, cooperating with third parties could be extra help to promote and advertise the place rapidly nationwide.

During this pandemic period, travel internationally is more restricted, and travel within Finland is allowed if health and safety procedures are followed according to the government's guidelines. Thus, the demand for travelling to domestic destinations will be rising in the country itself. In addition, people are impatient reading words nowadays. Hence, the visualisation of content can help people to be more responsive. It makes the whole process easy for people upon searching for information related to domestic destinations.

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Appendix 1. Interview

You are going to have a holiday. A domestic destination has been chosen for you – Asikkala.

Here are the questions:

1. How are you going to plan the trip? From the beginning till the end.
2. What information do you need about a destination before departing?
3. Where will you find the information from? (please specify the source, e.g., Google, its homepage, etc.)
4. From the channels you have browsed through, any further suggestion / recommendation for improvement? Any challenges you face upon searching the information?

Appendix 2. Survey

1. What is your age? *

- ⬭ less than 18 year-old
- ⬭ between 18 – 25 year old
- ⬭ between 26 - 40 year old
- ⬭ between of 41 - 60 year old
- ⬭ more than 61 year-old

2. Your gender *

- ⬭ Female
- ⬭ Male
- ⬭ Non-binary
- ⬭ I'd rather not to say

3. What digital channels are you using nowadays? *
   Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ Pinterest
- ☐ LinkedIn
- ☐ WhatsApp
- ☐ WeChat
- ☐ Messenger
- ☐ Emails
- ☐ Youtube

Other: ☐ _____

4. How often are you using the digital channels? *

○ Less than an hour per day

○ One to two hours per day

○ Three to four hours per day

○ More than five hours per day

○ Not everyday

○ I don't use digital

○ channel at all

Other:

_____

5. When you are searching information related to a domestic destination to visit, how you use the channels below? *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Not at all	Not frequent	Sometimes	Often	Most of the times
Facebook	○	○	○	○	○
Twitter	○	○	○	○	○
Instagram	○	○	○	○	○
Pinterest	○	○	○	○	○
Tripadvisor	○	○	○	○	○
Its' online webpage	○	○	○	○	○
Magazine	○	○	○	○	○
Brochure	○	○	○	○	○
Youtube	○	○	○	○	○

6. What other channels do you use?

_____

_____

7. What kind of information you are searching for? *
Mark only one oval per row.

	Completely unimportant	Slightly unimportant	important	Somewhat important	Very importar
Accommodations	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
Attractions (such as historical or unique place)	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
Things to do (such as hiking, sight-seeing, funfair)	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
The nature	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
Good quality local restaurants/cafe	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
Second hand shops	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
Brands shop	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭

8. What other information you would search for?

9. Are you following any influencers of Finland? *

⬭ Yes

⬭ No, *Skip to question 11*

10. Who are they?

11. Have you been to Asikkala? *

○ Yes

○ No

12. From where you know about Asikkala? *
Tick all that apply.

☐ Newspaper

☐ Advertisements

☐ Online news

☐ Online advertisements

☐ Social media platforms

☐ Search Engine (example Google, Bing, Baidu, etc)

☐ Family and Friends

☐ Events

Other: ☐ _____