

Staying ahead of the game: enhancing an existing social media presence.

Case: Viaplay Sport Finland

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<p>The subject of this thesis is enhancing existing social media presence. This thesis was commissioned by Viaplay AB, a subscription based streaming service that allows customers to watch series, movies and sports online. It focuses on the brands already existing Facebook page Viaplay Sport Finland. The main objective is to deepen company's understanding on social media marketing and outline what is required for business to be even more successful on Facebook.</p> <p>The theoretical part of the thesis includes generic information about social media and how it fits for business use. It also goes through the key factors of Facebook marketing and explains in detail what is needed to create engagement among other Facebook users.</p> <p>The empirical part analyzes the current state of Viaplay Sport Finland Facebook page and gives improvement ideas based on the theoretical part assembled for this thesis.</p> <p>The thesis ends with a segment for discussion where the main revelations are summarized and combined with ideas for improvement regarding the future of the company's social media marketing.</p> <p>Viaplay is already using Facebook effectively for marketing its sport content in Finland. They have an active social media strategy, high functioning profile page and capability to focus proper resources on social media marketing.</p> <p>The analysis states that company needs to invest more on the quality of the shared content to create more engagement among its followers. This could be done by using more variation in content, having more entertaining approach. Company should also interact more with other users. This could be done with more effective usage of hashtags and tagging.</p> <p>Facebook has still a lot to offer for Viaplay as a marketing platform. Putting more effort on the quality of shared content company can increase the engagement rate and brand awareness on Facebook.</p>	
Keywords Social Media, Facebook, Social media marketing, Content, Engagement, Viaplay	

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1 Introduction

Viaplay AB, the commissioning party of this thesis, is a streaming service located in Stockholm, Sweden that provides customers with access to a variety of series, films and sporting broadcasts via internet. They are the leading streaming service in the Nordic region and regularly use social media as one of their main marketing channels. (Viaplay 2017)

Social media channels provide interesting new possibilities for businesses to reach and engage with new people. It has become the standard marketing channel for companies due to its huge user rates and new role as an everyday necessity. (Enbacka 2017)

Facebook is the worlds biggest social media network and it is widely used among both businesses and private persons. Currently there are 2 million businesses using it to promote their products or services. The popularity of social media among marketers is pretty easily explained. Compared to the traditional medias like TV or radio, social media channels like Facebook are available 24/7, offer cheap or free advertising possibilities and have no limit how many people there is possible to reach. (Smith 2017.)

When used with a proper strategy, the possibilities that social media marketing offers for businesses are basically endless. There are already many social media success stories and basically this can be achieved by anyone with a decent enough product and innovation and know-how of social media marketing. (Enbacka 2017)

The thesis is written to analyze the current state of the case company's social media marketing on its sports-oriented Facebook page. Thesis covers the the theoretical approach to social media marketing and utilizes this on analysing the current state of the Viaplay Sport Finland's Facebook page. Based on the analyse, concrete improvement ideas will be cre-ated and presented for the case company to use. The thesis will also provide general in-sight on how to gain more engagement, visibility and improve the brand recognition trough the Facebook page in Finland.

The theoretical part of this study consists of general information about social media, social media marketing and Facebook as a marketing platform. It is highly recommended to read through the theoretical chapters with care to get a better understanding of the empirical and analytical parts of this thesis.

1.1 Background to the thesis

In the modern day business world, social media serves as a standardized marketing tool. A marketing tool that continues to expand as new channels are constantly being created but also a tool that is gaining more and more ground from traditional medias like TV, newspaper or radio.

Why has social media experienced growth at such a fast pace? First off, it is considerably more flexible and engaging than the traditional medias or so-called “mainstream medias”. A single person is able to share ideas, thoughts or content in various different ways like using images, text, video or even just audio. The digitalization has taken over our social lives and allowed people to express themselves in a way that suits them.

What’s it in for the businesses? The obvious reason is the amount of potential customers using different sorts of social media platforms on a daily or even hourly basis. As most things tend to do, it comes down to money as well. Social media presents an intriguing opportunity for companies, ranging from small one-man businesses to huge corporations, to make their product or service stand out and be noticed. Most importantly, it offers a more flexible way to do so than using the traditional media channels. It is doable no matter the size of the company and most likely for a very low cost. Of course, marketing on social media has the potential to end up a bottomless pit that just swallows money, but done with proper strategy and touch that appeals to the potential customer, it can give huge returns on input and investment.

This thesis is an opportunity for Viaplay to view things from a more objective stand point and discover the full potential the company could reach on its main social media channel; Facebook. Viaplay is the leading streaming service in the Nordics and as a modern service producer that relies on the internet to function, its customers are more anticipant on activity in more than just traditional media channels. The goal with all the company’s marketing is to achieve more active subscribers and social media provides that possibility with huge pool of customers in hand. The idea behind this thesis is to provide tools for that.

1.2 Case company presentation

Viaplay AB is a premium online video streaming service that offers international TV-releases, kids’ animation and a wide selection of sports. The company was founded in 2007 and is the leading streaming service in the Nordics, operating in Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. In addition to the SVOD features they also provide on-demand content

through an online rental store called Viaplay Store and TVOD sports packages. The content is available through multiple platforms like PC/Mac, Smart-TV's, game con-soles, mobile devices, Apple TV and Google Chrome. (MTG 2017)

Viaplay offers series and movies from big international operators like ABC Studios, Disney, Fox, Sony Pictures Entertainment and Warner Bros. Their library of sports content is vast as they are the official broadcaster of National Hockey League, Barclay's Premier League, Kontinental Hockey League, Ultimate Fighting Championship and many others. (Viaplay 2017)

Viaplay uses digital and traditional marketing as their marketing channels in Finland. The main channel for traditional marketing is radio commercials. On the digital side, the most common channels are email newsletters, paid advertising on webpages and marketing on social media. (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Youtube). (Enbacka 2017)

Viaplay's main digital channel for marketing is Facebook where it has a dedicated page for promoting sports content. The Facebook page dedicated to sport is called Viaplay Sport. It was the first social media channel for the company and has since then built up a steady fan base consisting of a wide selection of age groups. As can be expected, the company is eager to know how to utilize their Facebook channel to reach an even greater number of potential customers and sports interested people, but also to find the best possible strategy that works with the sports interested target groups. (Enbacka 2017)

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The structure of the thesis is quite straightforward consisting of introduction, theoretical section, what research methods were used, empirical part of the research and discussion concluding the results. The introduction will function as a more general approach to the world of social media marketing on Facebook, giving the reader a basic idea of how businesses can utilize it and what the situation is at the moment. The objective of the theoretical section is to bring forth the textbook approach of marketing on social media focusing especially on Facebook. The empirical part will focus on analyzing the current state of Viaplay Sport's Facebook account and compare it to the theoretical part and other competing companies using Facebook as their primary marketing channel. The thesis ends with a segment for discussion where the main revelations are summarized and combined with ideas for improvement regarding the future of the company's social media marketing.

1.4 Important concepts

Social media – "Social media provide the way people share ideas, content, thoughts, and relationships online. Social media differ from so called mainstream media in that anyone can create, comment, and add to social media content. Social media can take the form of text, audio, video, images and communities. The best way to think about social media is not in terms of the different technologies and tools but, rather, how those technologies and tools allow you to communicate" (Scott 2013, 54.).

Social media marketing – social media marketing is strategy driven interaction on social media channels to increase the provider's digital footprint and brand awareness. It can be used for example to advertise, reduce churn or encompass product development (Jaokar, Jacobs, Moore, Ahvenainen 2009, 12-13).

Facebook – "Since its inception in 2004, Facebook has grown to become the largest social network, with 1.59 billion monthly users globally as of the fourth quarter of 2015. Launched originally at Harvard University, it was then initially made accessible to other US universities. Facebook has now become the de facto platform for individuals to connect with friends and family. As a result of this focus, Facebook has also become an attractive channel for marketing. Organisations can create groups or fan pages as well as having the option to buy Facebook advertising to reach customers. Facebook is a mechanism for reaching new customers and engaging existing customers with new content. The platform enables easy setup of competitions as well as engaging in real-time interactions" (Heinze, Fletcher, Rashid, Cruz 2017, 199).

Twitter – "Twitter is a micro-blogging platform where users can post updates. Each user has a personal stream where he or she sees "tweets" from every user he or she follows. Tweets are the updates, and they can be (1) an original message, (2) a retweet – a repeat what someone else has tweeted, (3) a direct message to a user who follows you. Tweets can include mentions and hashtags that allow users to target their message more easily" (Schwarz, Hunter, Lafleur 2013, 300).

Content marketing – "Content marketing is the strategic process of creating and amplifying content for the purpose of informing, entertaining and/or building awareness of your brand, products or services within a target audience" (Heinze, Fletcher, Rashid, Cruz 2017, 214).

Engagement – This thesis covers engagement as the methods social media users can react with the content created and published on social media channels. Such as liking, sharing, commenting, tagging or retweeting.

Liking – "A Like is an action that can be made by a Facebook or Instagram user. Instead of writing a comment or sharing a post, a user can click the Like button as a quick way to show approval" (Stec 2016).

Hashtag – "A hashtag is a tag used on a variety of social networks as a way to annotate a message. A hashtag is a word or phrase preceded by a "#" (i.e. #InboundMarketing). Social networks use hashtags to categorize information and make it easily searchable for users" (Stec 2016).

Social Networks – "A social network is a social structure made of people (nodes) connected by different types of social interactions (such as communication, sharing similar interests, friendships etc). In other words, social networks depict how people are connected to each other. Social networks are everywhere where social interactions take place. This includes mobile communication, Facebook, online forums etc" (Jaokar, Jacobs, Moore, Ahvenainen 2009, 78).

Follower – Follower in terms of social media, is a user who decides to follow the content of another social media user by certain action. This action is for example liking a page or following an account. After choosing to follow a certain user they will see all posted content of this specific user in their content feed. The content might be likes of images, articles, posts or social media interactions and is usually the primary objective for businesses with a presence on social media. (BigCommerce 2017)

Social Media Measurement – Social media success is measured by metrics that are usually provided by the chosen social media channel. Metrics can measure for example how many people the published post has reached (reach), how many people have engaged with the content (engagement) or how much traffic your website gets because of the content that has been published (traffic). (Hunersen 2017)

1.5 Research problem

Social media plays a vital role for modern businesses as an effective marketing channel. It provides a unique opportunity to communicate with the already existing customers while

at the same time reaching potential new ones. Its effectiveness has been proven multiple times by various success stories. This thesis was commissioned to give the company in question a better understanding of the potential that resides within social media and how to improve their already existing marketing tactics. Furthermore, the thesis analyzes the current state of the company's social media marketing on Facebook to point out the existing good things in their strategy and to suggest improvements for the future.

1.6 Research objectives

The thesis is built around the following objectives:

- Create an understanding of social media marketing
- Research the possibilities of marketing on Facebook
- Analyze the general practises and approaches when it comes to marketing on Facebook
- Combine all the key factors of doing successful marketing on Facebook

1.7 Benefits of the thesis

An improved social marketing presence holds huge potential to increase the sales of a company, which is the ultimate goal for almost any business. Even though social media and its channels have been around for a while, it is evolving constantly and therefore requires up to date insight and managing capabilities to utilize in the best way possible. New channels, trends and features – created on a nearly constant basis – provide opportunities but also certain risks to be avoided. For a company that is highly active on social media, pinpointing the most effective practices to use is an absolute must.

Visibility is always important and marketing on social media is an appropriate strategy to increase brand recognition since it provides new channels to make people increasingly aware of your company's products and content. The amount of advertising on social media is increasing faster than anyone could have predicted due to the enormous, ever increasing amount of people connected with each other.

Another thing that is attractive about social media to most businesses is that it's very cost-effective. Compared to the traditional media, the social media channels are available 24/7 which means that content can be posted whenever and kept visible as long as desired. The reach, engagement and visibility achieved by proper social media marketing is basically unlimited and should serve as a proper motivation as to why social media offers a unique ground for marketing.

When used with a proper strategy, the possibilities that social media marketing offers for businesses are basically endless. There are already many social media success stories and basically this can be achieved by anyone with a decent enough product and a certain know-how of how it should be done.

The thesis is written to analyze the current state of the case company's social media marketing on its sports-oriented Facebook page. Thesis covers the the theoretical approach to social media marketing and utilizes this on analysing the current state of the Viaplay Sport Finland's Facebook page. Based on the analyse, concrete improvement ideas will be created and presented for the case company to use. The thesis will also provide general insight on how to gain more engagement, visibility and improve the brand recognition trough the Facebook page in Finland.

2 Social media marketing for businesses

This section of the thesis will focus on the theoretical part of social media marketing, from a business point of view. It will delve into how it should be used as a tool to reach and engage potential customers and eventually create more sales.

2.1 The importance of social media

The internet and the social media have changed the rules of marketing. Marketing is no longer a one-way interaction, a term that essentially means just advertising that appeals to the masses and is about selling products. Because of the World Wide Web and the possibilities that the internet offers, the old rules don't apply anymore. Marketing is now more about interaction, information, education and modern businesses have to be able to adapt to the new web-enabled markets. The skills and tactics that worked with older media channels like TV and radio are not valid when it comes to social media marketing. (Scott 2013, 18-19.)

Social media channels are among the most used channels when it comes to interaction online and consumers are spending more time than ever on the internet. Just Facebook alone had 2.07 billion monthly active users during the third quarter of the 2017 and 1.37 billion log on to their account on a daily basis. (Facebook 2017)

In addition to the fact that social media channels provide an inexpensive opportunity to reach a tremendous amount of customers, it is an efficient way to, for example, tell the story and promote the content of the company in a more humane way. This is just one of the many business goals that can be effectively achieved on social media. Such acts can have a huge effect on brand value and bring the company's social capital to another level. (Heinze, Fletcher, Rashid, Cruz 2017, 190-194.)

As Gurd (2017) states in his article there are a lot of positive and effective factors when it comes to using social media as a marketing platform. However, it can also do harm or consume resources while getting nothing in return. Creating a social media marketing strategy before getting involved in the actual marketing provides a framework for optimizing, planning, executing and measuring. This is the key factor to track success properly, reach the right target audience and provide the intended image of the brand. Lacking a social media presence with a clear strategy that is properly aligned with business goals can be a huge disadvantage if the competitors are strategy-driven and working smarter.

2.2 Benefits of using social media

The concept of social media's positive impact on businesses has spread far and wide in the corporate world. Today, there exists a strong belief that social media plays a crucial part in successful marketing and provides prosperous opportunities for all size of business-es. With the evergrowing popularity of social media and its more important role in people's lives it has almost become a demand for the companies to have a social media presence. (Olsson 2013, 240.)

One of the most important things about social media is that it works as a great tool for increasing brand awareness. This can be achieved by recognizing which social media channel the target audience is using and then focusing on content that gets their attention. Great content is something that catches the eye of the target group and brings them real value. Measuring the success makes it easier to focus to the right sort of content that engages the right target group. Dismissing social media as a channel to increase brand awareness also gives the competition open ground to influence and take over socially engaged parts of the markets. (Smith 2017.)

Due to digitalization and customers being online with greater frequency, a lot of data is available for businesses to utilize. Most social media channels offer built-in tools to track the customer data which provides an easy way to drive the marketing actions to an even higher rate of efficiency. Having a "data measurement"-based and "customer centric" approach towards social media marketing, makes it possible to create a better understanding of the existing customer base and identify the possible new customers with a relatively low effort. These data leads are called customer insights and they play a key role when creating content that will lead to customer conversion. (Digital Marketing Institute 2017.)

One of the main usages of social media is the process of directing traffic towards certain content. This is called customer conversion and usually includes getting the customer to visit a certain page, to sign up or learn more about a certain feature or event. It is usually done through publishing content or by using a profile page that has a call to action functionality. This is something that has proven to be efficient for the businesses and low effort demanding for the customer. It is an ideal way to direct the target group to find chosen content or to engage even more with the brand which can provide positive impact on sales. (Cisnero 2017)

2.3 Challenges of using social media

Using social media as a marketing channel offers a wide range of possibilities, but can also provide lots of challenges. One of the biggest ones is to keep the resources spent on a reasonable level that is in line with the strategy used. A balance between the goals of social marketing and the time consumed to reach those goals should be struck to make the outcome cover the resources spent. Social media marketing can, but doesn't have to be, a huge time consumer – especially when all the work phases are taken into consideration. Putting a lot of focus on it means, for example, hiring people to manage the presence and paying their salaries. (Enbacka 2017)

Taking care of business' social media isn't something that should be just handed to anyone that has experience using it. For a social media presence to be effective it needs to be handled by a qualified professional. A professional that knows the product that is being promoted and has an up-to-date understanding of the trends and functions of the channels used. This type of professionalism can be hard to obtain but highly recommended if the plans for using social media marketing are serious. Managing social media shouldn't necessarily be assigned to someone who has experience using it in their personal life or because a situation has arisen where there isn't anyone that can take care of it. (Kawasaki, Fitzpatrick 2014, 137.)

Enbacka (2017) also mentions in his interview that there can be a lot of challenges found when a company has several different countries as their targeted markets but at the same time wants to keep up a consistent brand image in all the channels utilized. Usually, each country targeted has their own particular social media channels and specific personnel managing them. Certain parts of the social media marketing are traditionally done centralized with the people managing it in different countries add their unique touch. This presents a set of challenges, mainly with maintaining the local touch yet still having a consistent brand that is recognizable throughout all the countries.

Having a consistent presence in social media can be done with a somewhat low-cost effort but this doesn't mean that there shouldn't be money spent on social media marketing. Most of the channels provide a "paid promotion"-option that includes the likes as paid ads. In general, this is a good thing since it offers the promoter the option to boost the reach of their content if wanted. Paid advertising has become the standard when it comes to social media marketing and is commonly used among businesses with planned social media goals and strategies. The tricky part is evaluating how much money there can be spent

and if the outcome meet the goals set. For a smaller company that has a limited social media budget this can be very challenging situation and they might be giving a competitive edge to their competitors. (Chaffey, Ellis-Chadwick, Mayer, Johnston 2009, 540-542.)

2.4 Creating engagement on social media

This subchapters' mission is to open up the meaning of "engagement" on social media and why it's important in social media marketing.

Simply put, social media engagement means getting users to respond to your content in some way. This can, for example, be click-activated reactions like liking, sharing or commenting. In a more general sense, it can be seen as the fundamental connection between the business and the customer. A connection that, from the business' point of view, can be created through activities relevant for the customer. (Evans, McKee 2010, 205-205.)

Engagement on social media is fueled by popularity, curiosity, necessity, trendlines and strategy. According to Solis (2011, 13-14.) there are multiple things businesses should take into consideration when creating customer engagement on social media:

- Give your brand a clear personality
- Assess how the brand is perceived
- Track where the content should be shared
- Become part of the community to get insight
- Find and utilize the influencers

People like to have experiences, especially good ones that bring up positive emotions. The thing to remember when creating engagement is that what really matters to people is their lifestyle and what they think of themselves. This is why products are being sold – to create experiences or express something on a personal level, not because of the product itself. A strong brand or a product can make obtaining engagement easier but that is not at the core of why people react and engage. (Fine 2010, 204-205)

The potential of engagement can be wasted if not measured and analyzed properly. The good side of social media is that you can measure and utilize the data other users leave, to improve your actions even more. The data analysis should always be executed while keeping the goals that are set for social media marketing, in mind. These goals can either be sales driven or site-traffic driven and they play a key role in justifying the resources used on social media marketing. (Zarella & Zarella 2011, 259.)

3 Social media marketing on Facebook

This chapter is focused on Facebook and how it should be used as a part of social media marketing. The key areas explored in this section are the possibilities of Facebook as a marketing channel, how to get the most out of it from a business perspective and what mistakes to avoid.

3.1 Facebook explained

Facebook is a social media platform that was founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg and it reached the position of being one of the biggest web sites in the world within just six years into its existence. It was originally intended as a communications platform for select Harvard students but then began expanding through various high schools and workplaces, eventually “taking over the whole world”. (Carlson, 2010.)

Facebook serves as a platform to connect with friends, relatives and acquaintances – even businesses – from all over the world. By creating an account, the user is able to engage with a variety of different content like photos, videos or updates. This is done through commenting, sharing or reacting. (Stec, 2016.).

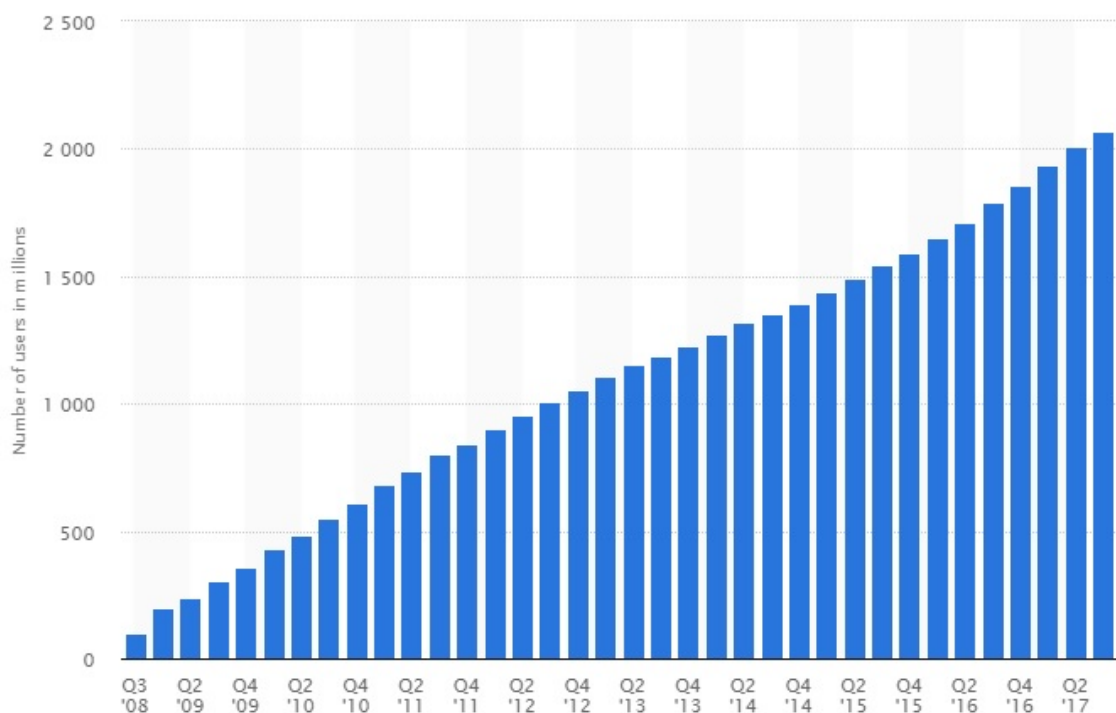


Figure 1. Number of monthly active Facebook users worldwide as of 3rd quarter 2017 (in millions). (Statista 2017)

Figure 1 above shows data gathered by Statista regarding the amount of Facebook month-ly active users. During the third quarter of 2017, Facebook had reached over 2 billion monthly active users.

Facebook can be used via web browser or as an app meant for mobile devices. There is also a specific app used for messaging purposes called Messenger. (Facebook 2017)

3.2 Marketing on Facebook

In a sense, the creators of Facebook changed history by redefining what it means to interact on a global scale. By doing this they created an enormous social graph of how the world is connected. They know what their users look like, enjoy and think because they are the number one photo, opinion and linking site in the world. It is completely possible that Facebook will one day become the worlds biggest advertising site. The fact that internet usage through mobile devices has increased significantly backs this argument even further. (Marshall, Meloche 2011, 2-3)

It is possible to sell almost any product or service on Facebook. Of course, some are natural fits to be sold in such channels and some are more difficult to turn into profit. Before you start marketing on Facebook, it is reasonable to consider how easy, or difficult, the product can be sold there. It should be a good fit if the product has certain qualities like being unique, creating experiences, sharing beliefs or it is being sold to consumers instead of businesses. (Marshall, Meloche 2011, 10-13)

There are many reasons why Facebook is an effective marketing channel. Currently there are 2 million businesses using it to promote their products and services and it is not difficult to understand why. Advertising costs less than it does on traditional media like TV, print media and radio and it is even possible to do the actual marketing for free if paid advertising isn't an option. The marketing on social media channels is constantly improving and even now it offers helpful and convenient tools like real-time performance analysis and targeted reach to maximize the efficiency. (Smith 2017.)

Facebook provides an effective platform to reach the right people, with the right information, at the right time. It's not dependent on customers being at a specific place and it is fully on the marketer's terms. (Facebook 2017.)

3.3 Facebook profile

A profile – a digital representation of the user’s self – can be seen as an extension of their personalities. It is the main channel to share things with connected groups, friends and various other social connections. For marketers, it is the base of operations where the content is being shared towards the customers but it also functions as a valuable source of customer information. Profile pages of the customers can share information like interests, hobbies, work or a favourite sports team. Being open with your profile page information is also something Facebook strongly encourages since it makes money off of giving businesses’ the opportunity to use the specific data that is shared. (Zarella & Zarella 2011, 9-11.)

A Facebook profile is the easiest way to tell your story, no matter if it is a private profile or a business one. People do not spend time studying profiles, they spend a few seconds gathering information and then make their decision. This is why the value of a good profile page cannot be underestimated. It should be optimized and presented in such a way that it offers a trustworthy, likable and competent impression within a short period of time. (Kawasaki, Fitzpatrick 2014, 2-3.)

The main goal of a profile page is to convince people to pay attention to your activities on social media. There are basic steps to consider when creating a profile for a business. The number one rule is to keep the information given consistent while keeping in mind how it appears for the customer. Name the profile in a simple and recognizable way, choose a clear and trustworthy picture as your avatar and cover picture and do it in an engaging way. It is also worth adding contact information and a short biographical text to ensure customers are sure they have found the right company and that they can contact you if required. (Kawasaki, Fitzpatrick 2014, 2-8.)

3.4 Publishing content

The fundamental idea behind publishing content on Facebook is to build an active and engaged fan base for your business. When people like a profile page they get notifications when new content is being published. This helps to reach even more customers and show them what what is being offered. (Facebook 2017.)

3.4.1 Anatomy

Content is the easiest way to differentiate yourself from the competition and can be seen as a core piece of successful social media marketing. The power of Facebook is its huge

user base, but this also leads to the fact that there is high volume of posts published every day. The key thing to realize when sharing content on Facebook is that to reach the potential customers and brand enthusiasts, the content has to stand apart from the rest. (Zarella & Zarella 2011, 151.)

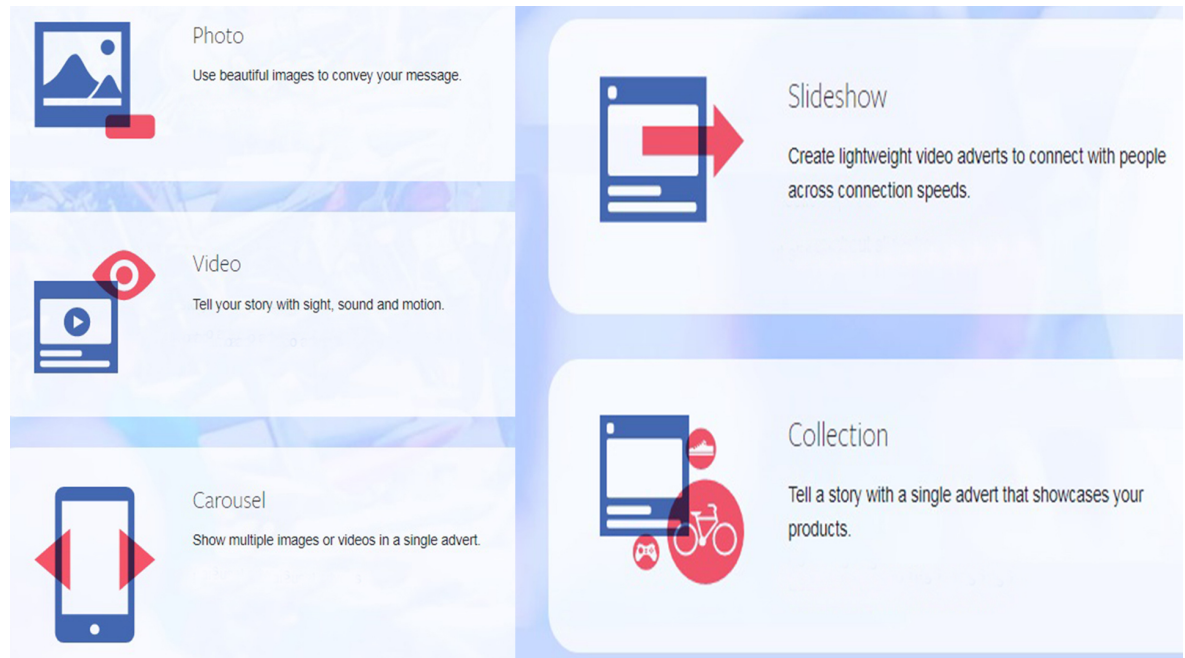


Figure 2. How should your story be told? (Facebook 2017)

As Figure 2 above shows, Facebook offers a variety of ways to publish content to match the strategy set for social media marketing. The anatomy of these posts is pretty simple. Facebook offers the possibility to publish text, pictures or video. The visual content should be relevant to your brand and have a connection with the targeted group so that it creates the right kind of engagement. You can increase its attractiveness and state the message even more clearly by adding a description to the post in question. (Facebook 2017.)

3.4.2 Hashtags

Facebook also provides an opportunity to add hashtags to content published. The idea behind hashtags is to maximize the possibility that the post reaches the right target group. Adding hashtags is done by attaching the number sign (#) to a specific phrase or topic. The preferred hashtag has to be written as a single word without using spaces. By clicking the used hashtag, the customer is forwarded to a feed of posts that include the same hashtag. Using hashtags can be an efficient way to reach people that aren't yet following your profile since the same hashtag feed can be found by using Facebook's search function. Users with certain interests can search content by using the hashtag and stumble upon your content. (Facebook 2017.)

3.4.3 Tagging

Tagging is a Facebook function that allows users to link other users that are targeted in specific posts or comments. Tagging someone creates a link to the intended target's profile page. (Stec 2017.)

Tagging is usually used to indicate someone being shown in a posted photo. It is a great function to notify another user of them being part of something. When tagging someone into a post they will get a Facebook notification which can lead for them to engage with the post in question. (Facebook 2017.)

3.4.4 Boosting posts

There are other ways as well to reach larger audiences with your posts. One of these is post boosting. It is a paid method of increasing reach with a targeted group of Facebook users. It provides the possibility to reach the friends of the users that already like your profile page or select a completely new audience based on age, interests or location. The process of boosting has been made to work quite simple and can be achieved through a couple of clicks to gain an extended audience for the content shared. (Facebook 2017.)

3.5 Publishing frequency

There isn't a "one true answer" to the question of how often Facebook posts should be published. This is completely dependent on how engaged the specific profile page's fan base is, what their social media habits are, plus their interests. As advertising on Facebook keeps getting more popular, news feeds for users fill up with more and more content. This leads to less visibility that diminishes the reach of the content published. (Kolowich 2017.)

The frequency in which to publish posts is dependent on the social media marketing strategy and what kind of product or service that is being offered. Still, the general rule is not to overwhelm the customers with content, but instead to focus and polish the quality of it. The goal should be to get as much interaction as possible from one post rather than posting multiple ones with lower interaction. (Kolowich 2017.)

Most Facebook users expect a page to post fresh content usually once a day and some may even prefer more. The thing to remember is that pleasing everyone is impossible. The top 10 most popular pages on Facebook post, on average, 1.7 posts per day. But these pages have a huge amount of followers which makes the demand for content differ-

ent. What is generally considered the bare minimum is to post once a day to maintain the activity amongst followers. (Zarella & Zarella 2011, 157.)

3.6 Attracting followers

Sharing quality content on Facebook that combines brand values and fun is the key to attracting likes and followers to your profile page. Kawasaki and Fitzpatrik (2014, 100.) state that 90 percent of the battle to get more followers is about sharing engaging content. The remaining 10 percent is merely just optimization.

Emphasizing the quality of the content leads to positive things like engagement, interaction and increase of the follower base. At its foundation, publishing content should be driven by the desire to create value for your followers. Kawasaki and Fitzpatrik (2014, 42.) present a list of valuable things to remember when it comes to posting quality content:

1. Be valuable
2. Be interesting
3. Be bold
4. Be brief
5. Be thankful
6. Be visual
7. Be organized
8. Be sly
9. Be found
10. Be active

As Enbacka (2017) stated during in his interview it is also important to interact with other users on Facebook. This can be done by following other users, commenting, tagging or asking questions. Interaction brings up the opportunity to improve the brands image and bring important customer insight. Interaction can also make a Facebook influencer with a lot of followers to engage with your content and provide it with even more reach.

It is important to understand that every fan base is different and it is fine to experiment to see what works best with certain types of people. It might offer some insight into what type of content form works, if the fan base is more entertainment- or information driven, not to mention what “time of publishing” creates most engagement. This sort of information makes it possible to create a more precise strategy for future content releases (Enbacka 2017.)

3.7 Facebook measurement tools

Measuring the results of social media post performance is a big part of having a successful presence on Facebook. It is the key to understanding the effectiveness of your social media marketing. When the success can be tracked, it is easier to link the social media's effect on the actual business on a more general level. (Evans, McKee 2010, 179.)

Facebook provides its users with a variety of options to measure social media success. The two main categories for audience outcome measurement tools are Ads reporting and Audience insights. Ads reporting is meant to analyze the business impact of paid advertising that is used on Facebook. Audience insights follows the reactions of your audience and provides an understanding on what sort of content works best. (Facebook 2017)

It is also possible to track Facebook's impact on the brand. Brand outcome tools are meant to measure ad and brand awareness, ad recall and the perception of the brand. Just pure engagement doesn't always give you the complete picture of how social media presence affects the brand. This can be tracked by Facebook-generated polls that measure the target audience's reaction to your content or with insight that is formed by measured recall of the advertising. (Facebook 2017)

3.8 Things to avoid

Creating a Facebook profile for a business is not a hard task, but building up a credible presence can be. The mistakes done on Facebook can leave a deep scar to the brand's image but are usually entirely preventable. (Kolowich 2017.)

Kolowich (2017) further states that most of the mistakes made are associated with sharing content. To keep up the interest of the user following your content it should be avoided to post too often, without creating any value or using too similar content. Facebook provides possibility to post for example videos, photos, photoslides and texts giving an easy approach to versatile content publishing.

Many companies have the urge to have a social media presence but are lacking the know-how on how to do it. This is where creating a proper social media strategy comes in. There should be properly set goals before starting to establish a serious social media presence. Things to take into consideration can be: what is the goal with your social media presence, is it used for selling something or for promotional purposes and finally, what sort of content should be shared to reach the goals? (Schwarz, Hunter, Lafleur 2013, 297).

Facebook is full of businesses trying to get their product or service noted. To stand out from the others, it is advised to approach the customers with a more humane style of communication. Communicating that you understand the passions, lifestyles and interests of the customers can be the best social pathway to build connections to your brand and product. It is a significantly more competitive road to try to build a community through a brand- or product driven approach – something that usually doesn't generate proper organic interest and engagement. (Evans, McKee 2010, 56.)

3.9 Summary

People all over the world are spending more and more time online and on social media and this requires businesses to adapt and change their approach towards marketing. Internet and social media have created various new opportunities for marketers to utilize. As always, new trends and techniques also presents challenges which highlights the importance of understanding social media and its capabilities.

There are many different social media channels out there for businesses to use and there are most certainly more to come. Facebook is the first and most traditional one that relies on its huge user base and highly developed platform to remain as the biggest player on the market.

The strength of Facebook is that it can be used to suit all sizes of businesses, has guaranteed large user base that is still growing and finally the fact that people are very familiar how the platform works. It has a versatile and "simple to use" functionality that makes it easy for businesses to adopt as an effective marketing platform.

Marketing on Facebook is driven by the content published. The better the content, the more visibility you gain for your brand. There isn't a standard regarding what sort of content should be published so having a personal touch that is in line with the marketing strategy tends to bring the best results. Being smart and flexible can be the cornerstone of success which means that you aren't required to have huge budgets or resources to triumph.

In addition, Facebook provides business users with built-in analytic tools to track the performance of their input. This is a valuable factor to maximize the potential of marketing efforts and create profit.

4 Empirical Research

This chapter sets out to demonstrate why the research was done, what the methods used were and what the goals and targets were.

4.1 Target of the research

This thesis was commissioned by David Nyström, the Head of Sport Content at Viaplay. Its stated goal is to improve the understanding of Facebook's role as a part of the company's social media strategy when it comes to sports marketing in Finland. The thesis also presents arguments as to why it should be considered a potential marketing platform on a general level.

Facebook offers Viaplay an effective way to reach a large amount of people for marketing purposes. It is also a cost-effective way to increase brand awareness and recognition by sharing engaging content or interacting with the customers.

The foundation of the empirical analysis is based on the theoretical section. The goal is to provide a solution to how the Facebook profile Viaplay Sport Finland could be used as more efficient marketing channel for the company.

An interview was conducted with Viaplay's Sports Designer and Project Leader Viktor Enbacka to gain better insight on how social media marketing was handled within the company.

4.2 Research method

The research method of this thesis is case study research. The foundation for the research is the theoretical part that consists of validated approaches on how to execute social media marketing on Facebook. The theory was gathered using relevant literature as the main source of information while backing that up with secondary sources like company web pages and professional blogs.

This case study research consists of the following steps (Farias 2017):

1. Research and planning
2. Strategic Execution
3. Presentation of Information

The case study research was used to find out how Viaplay Sport Finland Facebook page's current situation compares to the information collected and if there is something to improve.

4.3 Research process

The process began by trying to figure out an interesting yet useful topic that would serve the author professionally as well. The case company was found first and discussions eventually led to consensus on a topic that served all parties involved with the thesis. After the topic and case company were selected, "case study" was selected as the best option to handle the strategic execution of the thesis.

The goals of the thesis were set according to the commissioning party and the theory was build based around the desired outcome of the thesis. In the thesis' last phase, the results of the research were analyzed by using discussion.

4.4 Current situation

This chapter analyzes the current state of Viaplay Sport Finland Facebook page and provides some ideas for improvement based on the theoretical section assembled for this thesis.

As mentioned chapters 2.1 and 2.2, social media has changed the way global communication works and has become an important part of our everyday lives. Marketing-wise, it has created new opportunities that, if used correctly, can propel the company's profits and brand to new heights. Based on this, it has become somewhat of a standard for businesses to have a social media presence. When it comes to sports content, Viaplay is active on Finnish social media representing itself in all the biggest social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and Instagram). Even though Viaplay is active on various social media channels, it is not a highly recognized brand in Finland. Directing more resources to the social media marketing could change this by having an even stronger social media presence.

The chapter 3.2, focuses on Facebook's role in the social media era for both individuals and marketers. Viaplay's main channel for social media presence is Facebook where it shares most of its content and has the biggest fan base out of all the social media channels used. It has a centralized social media strategy that is being utilized on all the target countries. Having a strategy is the cornerstone of success when it comes to social media

marketing. The potential downside to this is the lack of “local touch” seeing as how all actions are directed from the head office in Stockholm, Sweden.

As discussed in chapter 3.2, Facebook provides Viaplay an opportunity to use it as an effective platform to reach the right people, with the right information, at the right time. Currently, Viaplay Sport Finland on Facebook is sharing a constant flow of content per day to their fan base, promoting the content broadcasted on the service. Content is released on the Facebook based on the date and starting time of the sport event broadcasted. Viaplay Sport Finland page is mostly using pictures to promote the sporting events and the reach could be improved by adding more variety to the content shared. In comparison to the Swedish equivalent Facebook page, the Finnish one is sharing far less videos for example. The pictures that are shared are mainly about providing customers with info about the up-coming matches. This is engaging to some extent but they could potentially improve the reach of its page and the reactions on it by having a more entertaining touch with the content.

In general, Viaplay has created a solid base for successful social media presence on Facebook. Even though the basics are in order, there are still improvements to be made and this analysis covers how these improvements can be implemented.

4.4.1 Profile page

Chapter 3.3 concentrates on the importance of Facebook’s ‘profile page’ being the base of operations for businesses as well as source of valuable customer insights. Viaplay Sport Finland’s profile page has almost 70,000 followers to this date (4th of December 2017) which is above average compared to the competition.

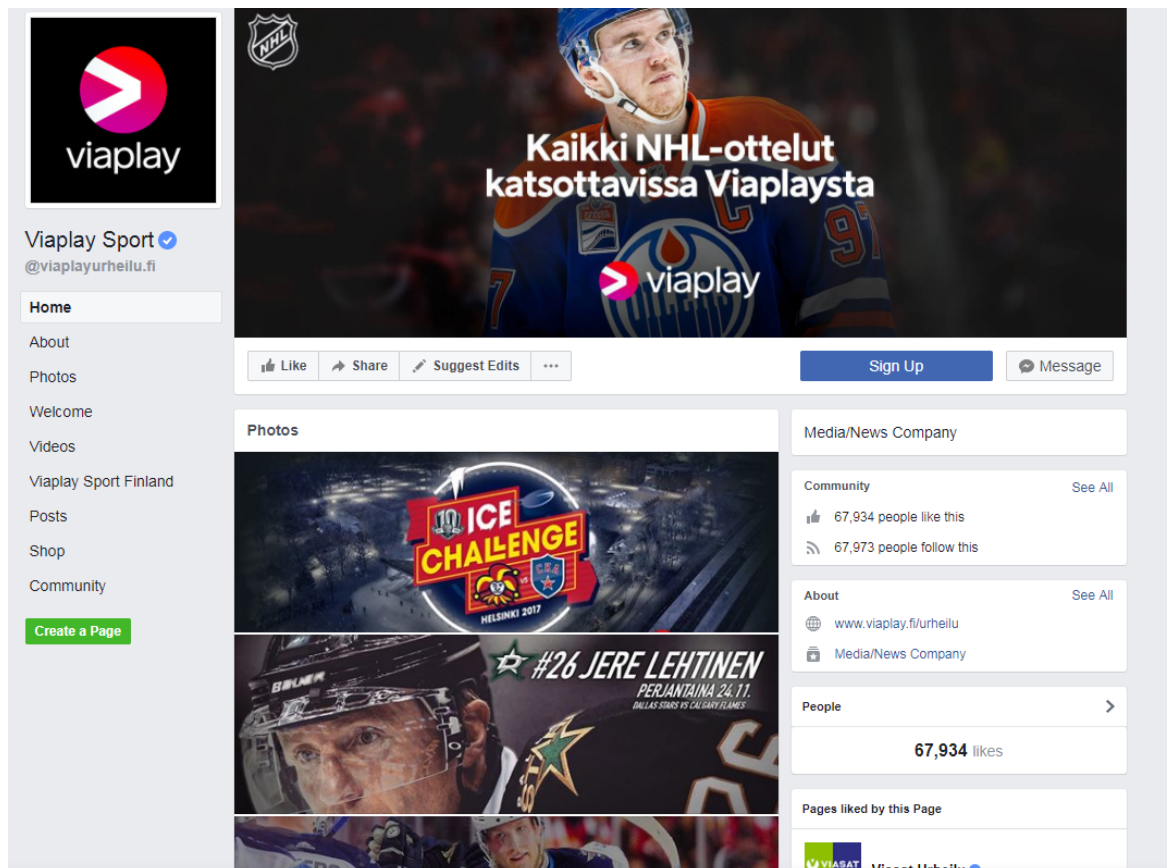


Figure 3. Screenshot of Viaplay Sport Finland's Facebook profile in December 2017.

When reflected with chapter 3.3, Viaplay Sport Finland's Facebook page does tell the story of the company, gives a certain sports oriented image and provides information that can be collected fast and effective. The name is simple and recognizable, the avatar holds the logo of the company and the page carries the information that it is a media/news company. Furthermore, customers are able find a short biographical text, a link directing to the company web page and finally contact info through the About -tab.

As the Figure 3. shows the tag (@viaplayurheilu.fi) doesn't match the name of the page itself and should be changed to keep the information consistent. Other than that Viaplay has created a succesfull profile page to back it's marketing efforts on Facebook.

4.4.2 Content

Chapter 3.4 explores sharing content on Facebook and using it to create an active and engaged fan base for Viaplay Sport Finland's social media presence.

Facebook offers the possibility to share content such as photos, videos and text. Viaplay Sport Finland's posts consists mostly of photos to promote sport events broadcasted by the service. Video is rarely used as an engagement method, approximately once a week.

In general, Viaplay shares content 1-3 times per day which doesn't seem to be too much for the followers of the page based on the amount of reactions. As stated in chapter 3.5, one post per day is the minimum to maintain the interest of fan base.

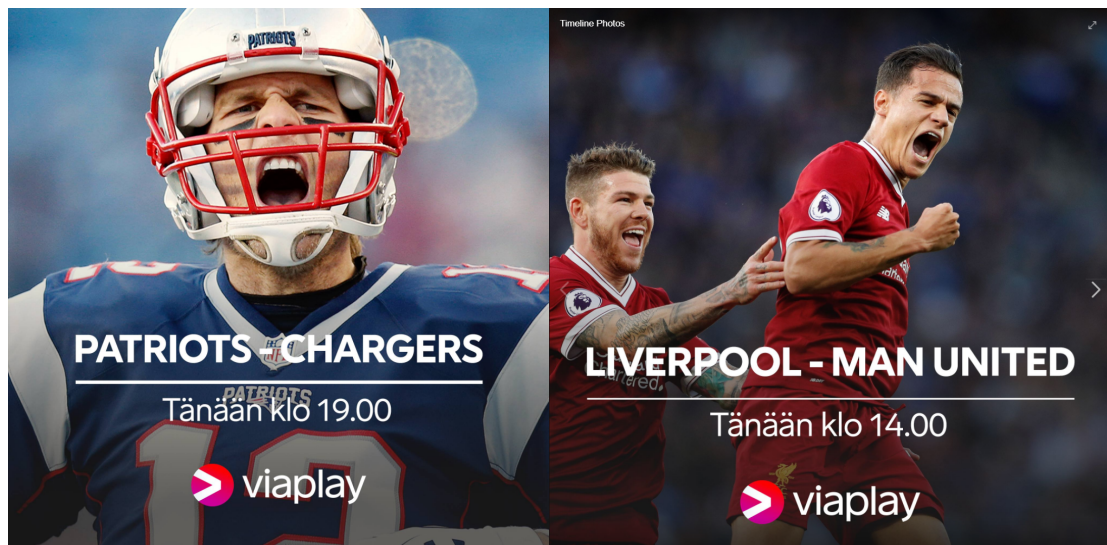


Figure 4. Screenshots of pictures shared on Viaplay Sport Finland's Facebook page in October 2017.

According to the chapter 3.4.1, content shared is the main factor to differentiate yourself from the competition and the core piece for successful social media marketing. Viaplay Sport Finland is posting high quality pictures about upcoming sport events that are engaging when not used too often. They have a consistent graphical layout throughout almost all of the content which makes it easier for customer to recognize and connect with the brand.

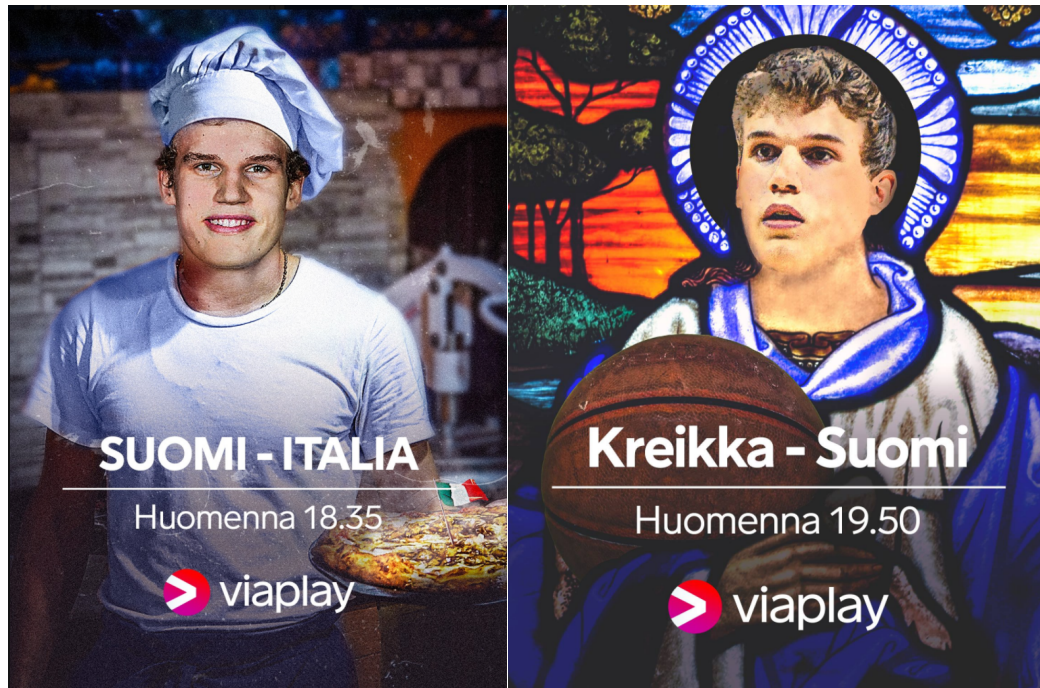


Figure 5. Screenshots of pictures shared on Viaplay Sport Finland's Facebook page in September 2017.

As stated in the chapter 3.6, sharing quality content that combines brand value and fun is a great way to attract more likes and followers to your page. Experimenting with different sort of content as seen in Figure 5 is an efficient method to obtain solid proof what creates engagement and what doesn't among the existing fan base. In the future Viaplay Sport Finland should focus more on experimenting and searching for alternative ways to engage the fans on Facebook.

4.4.3 Interaction

This chapter focuses on interaction – consisting of engaging fans, using hashtags and tags as well as interacting with other users.

Interaction and engagement are the results of sharing quality content on a Facebook page. They are key factors when it comes to measuring success on social media platforms. As chapter 3.7 states, Facebook offers a variety of options to track and measure social media success, whether it is Facebook advertising or sharing organic posts on your profile page. Viaplay is using paid advertising and has channel-specific goals for every quarter of the year. There is a department assigned to handle paid advertising that also tracks and measures success on all the social media channels used. Viaplay has invested in having proper resources to measure social media success and fulfill the social media goals set. Even the importance of social media marketing has clearly been noticed

but the information flow regarding the analysis should be improved. It seems that the personnel responsible for managing the social media accounts aren't getting enough information on if the goals are being fulfilled. (Enbacka 2017)

At the moment, the follower base of Viaplay Sport Finland is not that active based on the amount of followers and the reactions per post. Aside from improving the quality of shared content there are some other things that could work as a turning point for the lack of engagement.

As described in chapters 3.4.2 and 3.4.3, Facebook provides the possibility to enhance the interaction between users by using hashtags and tagging. Viaplay Sport Finland uses only generic hashtags when sharing content on Facebook and no tagging at all. Especially tagging works great on getting the attention of another user since they get notified whenever it is done. This should be taken into consideration in the future by tagging more people related to the shared content. Especially if they have attained a role of "influencer" on Facebook. This, combined with more thoroughly thought out use of hashtags, could result in a huge boost in post engagement and reach on Facebook.

4.5 Summary of the results

Viaplay Sport Finland has already done a lot of things right when it comes to social media marketing and influencing on Facebook.

The profile page of Viaplay Sport Finland has all the required information from the customer's point of view. The visitor has easy access to critical information like link to web page, short biography and contact details. The brand is also strongly present since the logo is visible on both the avatar and cover pictures. This combination allows the visitor to receive the information fast and efficiently.

Viaplay Sport Finland shares content to its fans on Facebook on daily basis. This is a key factor in maintaining the interest of the fans and to show engagement with them. There are still some things to improve when it comes to sharing content, which is the key factor in social media marketing. Viaplay Sport Finland's Facebook page is currently suffering from a low engagement rate and the content is way too homogeneous since they are mainly just sharing pictures promoting the upcoming broadcasts. A solution to this could be experimenting with new sorts of content that has more of a "fun and entertainment"-factor and adding variety by posting more video material. They could also use hashtags

and tagging more effectively to interact with other users and increase the engagement rates through those means.

5 Discussion

This chapter contains some discussion on the results of the thesis made for case company Viaplay. It also contains suggestions and development ideas that can be used for further research.

5.1 Summary and conclusions

Social media has changed the rules of marketing and has proven to be an efficient platform for businesses to build their brand or sell their product or services. The factor behind the huge growth of social media's impact on marketing is its ability to connect with people all over the world.

When Facebook blew up, it started the whole social media boom and has since held its grip as the key player on the scene. With its ever-increasing user numbers it still holds tremendous potential to businesses of all sizes.

The content plays a big role when it comes to executing successful marketing on social media channels. It is the key factor for gaining engagement and brand recognition and should be approached in a professional manner to get the most out of it.

Engagement works as the main measuring point on Facebook and it consists of liking, following and commenting. Engagement can be tracked with Facebook's own built-in tracking mechanisms to gain a better understanding of the user base's behavior.

Viaplay is already using Facebook effectively for marketing its sport content in Finland. They have an active social media strategy, high functioning profile page and resources to measure their success which is probably the reason behind the consistent level of social media activity.

Improvement ideas arose mainly around how the case company can make the quality of the shared content even better to create more engagement. This could be achieved by using more variety in when content is shared while trying to have a more entertaining approach to it. The engagement rate of the follower base is pretty poor, which tells us that the content isn't creating enough interest or emotion within the customers.

5.2 Suggestions for further research and improvement

Social media – Facebook included – evolve at a constant rate. The fast-paced evolution creates a demand for constant research measurements that create up-to-date information on social media.

There are already 2 billion businesses using Facebook for promotional purposes. The number of companies that are actively using social media channels for marketing purposes will most likely increase even more in the future. As competition tightens, this creates a niche for a more innovative approach when it comes to social media marketing.

5.3 Reliability and validity

The main concern regarding the reliability and validity of the thesis was finding reliable material that could be used as source. The problem was mainly created by social medias ever-constant evolution. New functions, trends and channels appear constantly and the information gets outdated really fast. This problem occurs especially with social media focused study books that can get obsolete in an instance.

Therefore, this thesis relied more on online sources since they contained the most current information available. The problem with web sources is that it is really hard to confirm the validity of the author, since the content can be basically written by anyone. To ensure the reliability of this thesis and the online sources used, there was a thorough background check conducted with all the sources used.

5.4 Reflection of thesis

The main goal, from a personal perspective, was to learn more about using Facebook in marketing purposes. Gathering information and diving properly into the world of social media was an interesting idea from the very beginning. It is hard to imagine that this learning experience doesn't prove to be valuable in my professional life as well.

This was the first project of this size that I made on my own. The lessons learned along the way were really eye opening. It gave me a better understanding on how to search trustworthy resources, how wide and complex social media is and how it works as a marketing channel. Many previous assumptions about the topic were properly corrected.

On a personal level, the project worked as a proper exercise to get better on time management and concentrations skills. Finishing the thesis required lot of planning, scheduling and dedication. It wasn't easy, but was definitely rewarding in the end.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview A.

Viktor Enbacka

Sports Designer and Project Leader

Viaplay Ab

Interview was done in person on 30th of October, 2017 in Stockholm.

Questions:

1. What are your responsibilities within the company?
2. What is your personal relationship with social media and what channels do you use?
3. Why businesses should use social media marketing?
4. How is the social media marketing being planned within the company at the moment?
5. What are the goals of social media marketing for Viaplay?
6. Which improvements have been done regarding company's social media marketing during the past year?
7. How are the responsibilities regarding social media delt within the company?
8. What are the main focuses for Viaplay regarding social media marketing?
9. What is the relationship towards social media within the company?
10. What are the opportunities social media channels create for Viaplay?
11. What is your opinion regarding Viaplay Sport Finland's Facebook page?
12. How would you improve the Viaplay Sport Finland's Facebook page?
13. How would you describe the content shared on Viaplay Sport Finland Facebook page?
14. Is the company's social media marketing being led centralized from one location?
15. What challenges operating on a multiple countries creates regarding social media marketing and its workflow within the company?
16. Do you think the current state of social media management within the company is sufficient? Could it be improved?