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## **Influencer Marketing Analysis of Recreational Shooting Market Segment**

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## Thesis abstract

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In this thesis, the current influencer marketing scene is analysed. It is defined what influencer marketing is, how to do it, what other actors in the commercial shooting industry are doing and how, with whom, what kind of material they are producing, and which target markets and target customers they seem to be trying to reach.

The thesis works as a basis for the further development of an influencer marketing plan for four Nammo commercial ammunition brands Lapua, SK, Vihtavuori, and Berger.

Influencer marketing can be seen as continuation to celebrity marketing, except that influencers may not be well known outside their circle of followers. Influencer marketing is also heavily linked to the social media platforms, which are needed in order that the influencer can be in touch with their followers.

As a result of the thesis, competitor benchmarking was done, and an influencer comparison chart was created for the further development of the influencer marketing processes. The comparison chart can be used when choosing potential influencers for marketing collaboration and to make the decision-making process more visible to the stakeholders.

<sup>1</sup> Keywords: Influencer marketing, social media, shooting sports, hunting

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## Opinnäytetyön tiivistelmä

Tutkinto-ohjelma: Degree Programme in International Business Management

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Opinnäytetyössä analysoidaan nykyistä vaikuttajamarkkinoinnin kenttää.

Vaikuttajamarkkinointi määritellään, miten sitä tehdään ja miten muut kaupallisen ampumatarvikekentän toimijat sitä tekevät, keiden kanssa ja millaista materiaalia tuottavat sekä mitä kohdemarkkinoita ja –asiakkaita näyttäisivät tavoittelevan.

Opinnäytetyö toimii pohjatyönä mahdollisesti myöhemmin toteutettaville Nammon kaupallisten brändien, Lapuan, Vihtavuoren, SK:n ja Bergerin vaikuttajamarkkinointisuunnitelmille.

Vaikuttajamarkkinointi voidaan nähdä jatkumona julkisuuden henkilöiden kanssa tehtävän markkinoinnin kanssa sillä erolla, että vaikuttajat eivät välttämättä ole kuuluisia oman kuplansa ulkopuolella. Vaikuttajamarkkinointi linkittyy myös vahvasti sosiaalisen median alustoihin, joita käyttämällä vaikuttaja voi olla yhteydessä seuraajiinsa.

Opinnäytetyön lopputuloksena toteutettiin benchmarking ja vaikuttajien arviointityökalu, jota voidaan käyttää markkinointiprosessien jatkokehittämisessä. Arviointityökalua voidaan käyttää valintaprosessin apuna päätettäessä mahdollisista yhteistyökumppaneista. Työkalun käyttäminen tekee päätöksentekoprosessista läpinäkyvämpää prosessin osallisille tahoille.

<sup>1</sup> Asiasanat: vaikuttajamarkkinointi, sosiaalinen media, ampumaurheilu, metsästys

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Thesis abstract .....	1
Opinnäytetyön tiivistelmä .....	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	3
Pictures, Figures and Tables .....	5
Terms and Abbreviations .....	7
1 INTRODUCTION.....	10
1.1 Objectives and research questions .....	11
1.2 Background .....	11
1.3 Ethical marketing of ammunition and marketing limitations.....	15
2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	16
2.1 Influencer marketing.....	16
2.2 Credibility .....	19
2.3 Channels and reach .....	20
2.4 Content.....	21
2.5 Framework for influencer marketing strategy .....	24
3 RESEARCH METHODS & IMPLEMENTATION .....	26
3.1 Constructive research .....	26
3.2 Benchmarking method .....	26
3.3 Brands chosen for benchmarking.....	28
3.4 Benchmarking the social media and utilization of influencers .....	30
3.5 Interview method.....	30
4 RESULTS.....	33
4.1 Current state of marketing actions relevant to influencer marketing.....	33
4.2 Benchmarking results.....	35
4.3 Interview results .....	42
5 FRAMEWORK FOR THE INFLUENCER MARKETING PLAN .....	44
5.1 Influencer comparison template .....	44
5.2 Budgeting, resourcing and reporting .....	46

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS.....	48
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	51

## Pictures, Figures and Tables

Picture 1. New Lapua logo, which was introduced in 2022..	11
Picture 2. The logo of SK rimfire brand. ....	12
Picture 3. The current logo of Vihtavuori smokeless gunpowder. ....	12
Picture 4. Walt Berger in 1954. ....	13
Picture 5. Logo of Berger bullets. ....	13
Figure 1. Content fatigue .....	23
Figure 2. Framework for influencer marketing strategy .....	24
Table 1. Social media competitor comparison chart based on Kananen .....	26
Table 2. Brands chosen for benchmarking Lapua .....	27
Table 3. Brands chosen for benchmarking SK.....	28
Table 4. Brands chosen for benchmarking Vihtavuori .....	28
Table 5. Brands chosen for benchmarking Berger .....	28
Table 6. The interviewees .....	30
Table 7. Interview questions .....	30
Table 8. The benchmarking results for Lapua brand .....	33
Table 9. The benchmarking results for SK brand .....	35

Table 10. The benchmarking results for Vihtavuori brand .....	36
Table 11. The benchmarking results for Berger brand.....	37
Table 12. Influencer cooperation potential chart .....	42

## Terms and Abbreviations

<b>Bullet</b>	Small, metallic projectile that is shot from a firearm. (Cambridge Dictionary. (n.d.-a)
<b>Benchmarking</b>	A continuous and systematic process to measure and analyze the performance of products, services and processes by comparing them to the best in the industry. (Tuominen & Niva, 2021, p. 5)
<b>Cartridge</b>	a small tube containing an explosive substance and a bullet for use in a gun. ( <i>Cambridge Dictionary</i> , n.d.-b)
<b>Celebrity marketing</b>	Marketing communication which is centered on the fame and personality of a celebrity. The brand wants to associate itself with the image of the celebrity. (Jackson & Shaw, 2009, p. 328)
<b>Centerfire</b>	cartridge fired by the striking of a hammer or firing pin upon a cap or primer at the center of the base, distinguished from rimfire (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, n.d.-a)
<b>Content marketing</b>	Marketing communication focused on creating and distributing content (articles, videos, photos, infographics...) to attract and retain a clearly defined audience to create profitable customer action. (Content Marketing Institute, n.d.-a)
<b>Customer</b>	In this work, customer refers to commercial, civilian end-users.
<b>CTA</b>	Call to action (Kananen, 2018)
<b>Handgun</b>	a firearm (such as a revolver or pistol) designed to be held and fired with one hand (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, n.d.-b)
<b>Influencer</b>	someone who affects or changes the way that other people behave: a person who is paid by a company to show and describe its products and services on social media, encouraging other people to buy them: (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.-c)



<b>Influencer marketing</b>	Marketing communication through individuals who have the power to affect the purchasing decisions of others because of their authority, knowledge, position, or relationship with their audience in a distinct niche, with whom he or she actively engages. The size of the following depends on the size of their topic of the niche. (Geyser, 2023)
<b>KPI</b>	Key Performance Indicator, a custom way of measuring a company's progress towards the goals it is trying to achieve. (Cambridge Dictionary. (n.d.-d)
<b>Niche</b>	(In marketing) a specialized market, a place, employment, status, or activity for which a person or thing is best fitted. (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, n.d.-c)
<b>Rifle</b>	a shoulder weapon with a rifled bore. (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, n.d.-d)
<b>Rimfire</b>	of a cartridge: having the priming distributed in the rim of the shell (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, n.d.-e)
<b>ROI</b>	Return of investment (Riabochkina, 2020)
<b>Smokeless gunpowder</b>	Explosive propellants that produce comparatively little smoke on explosion and consist mostly of gelatinized nitrocellulose (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, n.d.-f)
<b>Social media</b>	forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos) (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, n.d.-g)
<b>Sport shooting</b>	Term that is used in Nammo group marketing to sum up multiple competitive shooting disciplines.

<b>Target market</b>	Group of customers who are targeted with a marketing mix. (Jackson & Shaw, 2009, p. 349)
<b>Viral marketing</b>	Planned and innovative campaign, which relies on consumer enthusiasm and word of mouth around the internet. Marketing that spreads organically in web. (Jackson & Shaw, 2009, p. 350)

## 1 INTRODUCTION

“We cannot choose the game. We cannot choose the rules. We can only choose how we play.”

Simon Sinek

There has been a huge change in information distribution due to technological advancement. The previously passive audience has shifted towards reacting audience that participates as well in creation of information. This change can be seen in rise of the social media, the web 2.0. Everyone can be a source of new information all around the world. Anyone with access to internet can part-take, create, share and react. These tools can be used even to shake down existing power structures and to establish new ones. On the other hand, this revolution visualizes existing relations and connections like never before.

Hiding unpleasant things and controlling reputation has become harder but also creating reputation and fame has become more accessible than ever before. There is nothing new when it comes to recommending products, but the reach of these comments is something new. This reach makes it visible that companies do not fully own and control their brands. The brands have become more like shared experiences between the companies and customers instead. This has been the case previously as well, but the ideas of customers did not have the power they have now.

Older marketing techniques such as television advertisements have been expensive to produce and distribute and only big companies could reach these channels previously. Nowadays anyone with a smartphone can start live broadcasting right away and reach people all around the globe. This would have been expensive and extremely difficult or even impossible to execute before. This shift has created a massive need for creative skills and marketing content in business fields. Any company can get international.

According to Geyser (2023) influencer marketing means communication through individuals who have the power to influence the purchasing decisions of others. This is because of their authority, knowledge, position, or relationship with their audience in a distinct niche, with whom they actively engage.

Belanche et al. (2020) found that influencer marketing had become a powerful online tool in customer persuasion and in the survey; they found that more than 800 brand managers estimated that their investment in influencer marketing grew from US \$1.7 billion in 2016 to US \$6.5 billion in 2019. In a short period, influencer marketing has grown dramatically and become a significant part in any brand's marketing strategy.

## 1.1 Objectives and research questions

The goal of this thesis is to

- 1) **Analyze the current influencer marketing scene.** In this thesis, it is defined what is influencer marketing and how to do it. What others in the same field are doing and how, with whom, what kind of material they are producing, which target markets they have and which seem to be their target customers.
- 2) **Create base work for further development of influencer marketing plan** for four Nammo commercial ammunition brands: Lapua, SK, Vihtavuori and Berger.

The ultimate goal of this thesis is to give answers to what to take in consideration when doing B2C influencer marketing successfully in recreational shooting market segment. The framework of the thesis is to give an overview of current situation and position of Nammo commercial brands. The thesis is the base work for further development of modern marketing solutions in the commercial ammunition segment.

## 1.2 Background

Nammo Group is one of the leading providers of specialty ammunition and rocket motors. The headquarters are located in Raufoss, Norway. There are 2 700 employees, 28 production sites in 11 counties.

Nammo Group was founded in 1998 through a merger of ammunition businesses of three Nordic countries: Norway, Sweden and Finland, but Sweden later left the group. Nammo is

owned by the Norwegian Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries and the Finnish state-owned Aerospace and Defence company Patria Oyj, each owning 50% of the company.

Most of the business inside the group is business to government (B2G) type of business but there are four commercial brands, which are targeted for recreational shooters: sport shooters and hunters. These four commercial brands are Lapua, SK, Vihtavuori and Berger. (Nammo Group, n.d.-a).

The Lapua brand gets its name of the factory site location in the town of Lapua, Finland. The cartridge factory was founded in 1923 in Lapua, Finland, as Valtion patruunatehdas (State Cartridge Factory). Later the brand name was changed into Lapuan patruunatehdas (Lapua Cartridge Factory) and later shortened to Lapua.

The products, which are sold nowadays under the name Lapua, include centerfire and rimfire cartridges, centerfire cartridge components: cases and bullets. Lapua dominates highest biathlon competitions. In the last Winter Olympic Games 2022, the competitors who used Lapua rimfire cartridges got 86 % of all the medals. Lapua is a popular choice in long distance and high-accuracy oriented shooting hence it dominates also benchrest shooting, multiple different long distance shooting disciplines and Olympic / ISSF rimfire shooting disciplines. The logo of the Lapua brand is presented in Picture 1.



Picture 1. The new Lapua logo, introduced in 2022.

Lapua centerfire cases are world-known for their durability and incredible consistency. They are in favor of reloaders. Reloading means reconstructing already shot cartridges. Primer, gunpowder, case and bullet are put together again. In this way it is possible to alter attributes of the cartridge to be the best suitable possible match to the wind and heat conditions, rifle characteristics and distance at which to shoot. Bullets can be used only once, but cases can be reloaded and shot at their best even for about hundred times.

Lapua bought an ammunition factory in Schönebeck, Germany, after the collapse of DDR in 1992. Louis Sellier and Nicolaus Bellot founded the factory in 1829 and during their history, they have been producing anything from cannon balls to Trabant steering wheels. The production of rimfire cartridges was moved from Lapua to Schönebeck in the 1990s. SK is one of the brands that the factory have had during their long history. Lapua later became part of Nammo Group. The factory of Schönebeck in Germany produces all Lapua and SK rimfire cartridges. SK products include rimfire cartridges. (SK Ammunition website, n.d.-a)



Picture 2. The logo of the SK rimfire brand.

Vihtavuori gunpowder factory was founded in 1922 in Laukaa, Finland. Its original name in Finnish was Valtion Ruutitehdas, the gunpowder factory of the state. Nammo Group bought the factory in 2014. Vihtavuori produces smokeless gunpowder (nitrocellulose). Vihtavuori brand caters individual hand reloaders as B2B customers as well. Vihtavuori powders are known for their incredible lot-to-lot consistency and are in favor of accuracy-oriented competitive centerfire shooters. Vihtavuori does powder for larger applications as well such as missiles and hand-grenades. (Torikka, 1992) The logo of Vihtavuori is presented in Picture 3.



Picture 3. The current logo of Vihtavuori smokeless gunpowder.

Walt Berger (see Picture 4) started making his own bullets in 1954 when he was not satisfied with the existing variety available then. The accuracy of those bullets was not good enough in his needs in competitive benchrest shooting. The Berger brand holds his last name. The current logo of the brand presented in the picture 5. The products of Berger include bullets and cartridges. "Berger produces the highest-grade bullets and ammunition commercially available today" is stated on Berger's website.

Nammo Group purchased Berger Bullets in 2017 and Capstone Precision Group was founded to keep producing Berger bullets and distributing other brands to US. The factory site of Berger bullets is located in Mesa, Arizona. (Berger Bullets website, n.d.-a)



Picture 4. Walt Berger in 1954.



Picture 5. Logo of Berger bullets.

### **1.3 Ethical marketing of ammunition and marketing limitations**

The products that this thesis concerns are, after all, lethal. They can cause severe harm if not handled, stored or transported properly.

There are ethical guidelines and laws that limit the marketing of ammunition and propellants. The laws differ around the world that concern everything from package design details to distribution, transportation, sales permits and marketing. Nammo does not sell commercial ammunition directly to end-user customers but uses distributors and dealers in different countries.

Many online platforms have their own ethical guidelines that limit the visibility of material concerning ammunition or have ban of paid advertisement of firearms related products. For example, Facebook states about content about firearms that: “we restrict visibility to adults 21 years of age and older”. (Meta, 2023) Most of the social media platforms have similar kind of community guidelines which concern often about firearms and related products, drugs, gambling, nudity and adult content. There is still a lot of content that is breaking these rules but administrators are not deleting it either so their ethical guidelines in practice are different than what they actually follow.

There are also issues of strategical and national safety that need to be taken in consideration. The largest part of revenue for Nammo group comes from B2G business. Public organizations such as police forces and militaries use products of Nammo group as well. The global political situations do have an effect on the business, and it has to be taken in consideration to some extent when doing marketing. This thesis does not cover B2B or B2G business, and it is focused on commercial, recreational sport shooting and hunting customers only where the end-customer is a civilian.



## 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Influencer marketing

Geyser (2023) defines the influencer marketing as communication through individuals who have the power to affect the purchasing decisions of others because of his or her authority, knowledge, position, or relationship with his or her audience in a distinct niche, with whom he or she actively engages. The size of the following depends on the size of their topic of the niche.

Forsgård and Frey (2010, pp. 26, 9697, 115) state that the key roles in social media are with people who have something to say, the ability, the will and the permission to say things. The finding of these key people is essential to be successful in social media. It is important to define the roles (personal, professional, representing a business/organization), how to partake in social media, which information is confidential and what can be shared. Clear guidelines are needed how to take part in social media. Denying the use is not a good strategy. It is better to state how to use the social media and what is allowed to do and what are the things that needs to be considered.

If the organization does not take its place in the internet, someone else will take it if there is a demand for it and will create an unofficial fan page for example. Who is responsible if the unofficial representative does something? (Forsgård & Frey, 2010, p. 123-124)

Forsgård and Frey (2010, pp. 78, 136) state that in order to create real impact and connection on your online audience, you need to have names and a faces. It is good to have a thought who is the most suitable in presenting the company. Is it the CEO or someone else who is maybe more familiar with the tools of social media? It is less tolerated how organizations act online than individual persons because organizations can choose who represents them. People are more forgiving for individuals.

Jackson and Shaw (2009, p. 328) state that influencer marketing resembles previous celebrity marketing, which means marketing communication centered on the fame and per-

sonality of a celebrity. The brand wants to associate itself with the image of the certain celebrity.

Hughes et al. (2019, p. 78) found that consumers are relying on peer-to-peer communications more and more. In order to meet this need, influencer marketing has continued to grow in importance and has even become a key component of firms' digital marketing strategies. Most of the marketers today are using influencers to spread word of mouth (WOM) about their products and brands on social media.

The study of Tsen and Cheng (2021, p. 238) found that consumers show greater identification with influencers than with celebrities because influencers seem more similar to consumers, who therefore trust influencers more than celebrities. The illusion of a face-to-face relationship with an online influencer makes consumers more susceptible to the influencer's opinions and behavior.

Who are these influencers then? Influencers are specialists in their own community, and they have established trust and two-way communication with their followers (Folkvord et al., 2019, p. 79). In social media communication, online influencers are "people who built a network of followers and are regarded as trusted tastemakers in one or several niches" (Tsen & Cheng, 2021, p. 238).

Folkvord et al. (2019, p. 78-79) state in their study that influencer marketing has become important part of the social media strategies. In 2018, marketers spent over \$500m on influencer marketing, which is likely to increase to \$5-10bn in the upcoming next five years.

Haenlein et al (2020, p. 5) found that influencer marketing can be hugely successful when done correctly. They give as an example the campaign of Gucci, which they did in 2019 by name Gucci Bloom. "Gucci collaborated with 23 artists on Instagram to create highly creative content of the artistic interpretation of the floral universe around the fragrance. The campaign managed to create significant awareness with 135 pieces of content created, reaching nearly 750,000 followers. Gucci even used some of the resulting content on its website and Facebook channel."

Haenlein et al (2020, p. 7-8) give multiple key pieces of advice in their article to execute influencer marketing successfully. First, they highlight the need for understanding that each platform has its own user culture and language. For example, a picture that works well in a print advertising may flop on Instagram. Too polished material may feel unreal and unrelatable. Secondly, they recommend integrating influencer marketing into other forms of marketing communication across different channels creating multiple exposures for the same campaign.

Their third recommendation is choosing the right group of different kind of influencers to reach slightly different groups of people (Haenlein et al., 2020, p. 10). They also recommend avoiding managing and briefing influencers too much. Excessive control reduces the creative freedom and may make content irrelevant for its platform or audience. The better way is to give guidelines for the content and have approval process before publication in order to avoid misinformation and legal liabilities but ditch the strict control, because successful influencers are skilled professionals in their niche and should be trusted in their craft (Haenlein et al., 2020, p. 11).

No briefing can create impressive results. For example, Swedish watch company Daniel Wellington created massive growth and buzz around their products relying solely on influencer marketing. Their only brief was to ask influencers show the watch on their wrist on their feed. (Haenlein et al., 2020, p. 15)

Haenlein et al (2020, p. 17-18) underline that choosing the right person (or even becoming an influencer in the first place) seems like a hopeless task when comparing numbers of social media users and their followers. Both companies and future influencers tend to forget that influencing is hard and demanding work and not everyone is ready for what it takes. It is more than taking nice pictures and it is not realistic to think that fame can be created overnight. Influencers need to be willing to share a major part of their personal life with the world and set the limits for which parts they are leaving out of their personal life and what they are including.

From a company's perspective, this implies that it is vital to identify those influencers who are willing to put the effort required, are in the industry for the long game and are authentically passionate about their topic. The content they create should be genuinely authentic, unique and obtain high levels of engagement and exposure. (Haenlein et al. 2020, p. 18-19) Influencers should be picked based on their presence in the wanted platforms to create cross-platform strategy (op. cit., p. 20).

Heller Baird and Parasnis (2011, p. 30) state "Actually, most do not engage with companies via social media simply to feel connected. It turns out, customers are far more pragmatic. To successfully exploit the potential of social media, companies need to design experiences that deliver tangible value in return for customers' time, attention, endorsement and data."

Consumers are willing to interact with businesses if they believe it is to their benefit, feel they can trust the company and decide social media is the right channel to use to get the value they seek. That value could be in the form of a coupon or specific information. (Heller Baird & Parasnis, 2011, p.33)

## **2.2 Credibility**

Stokes et al. (2019, p. 95) define credibility as something how trustworthy and legitimate something looks. It is important when trying to persuade customers online that they feel that they are dealing with legitimate representatives of a brand rather than scammers. The factors that increase said credibility are for example professional graphic appearance, contact details and background stories, which can be found easily, credible third-party references and links, fresh and up-to-date content and no spelling errors. Grammar errors easily create an unprofessional appearance.

Nosi et al (2021, p. 1) found that the online brand trust is significantly influenced by trust in all investigated nonbrand-owned touchpoints. Both offline and online brand trust positively influence buying intention. They state that marketers should monitor and influence the online touchpoints that are partially under or totally out of their control. Some of these touchpoints such as brand websites are brand-owned, totally designed and managed by

the company but others are partner-owned or handled jointly with a partner. Some are instead completely out of the brand's control, as they are dominated by individual customers or under the influence of social/external elements such as peer influence and the environment. These external brand touchpoints are for example blog texts of user reviews.

Attractiveness, familiarity, trustworthiness and expertise have turned social media influencers into extremely persuasive opinion leaders capable of affecting consumers' beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, feelings, intentions, and behaviors (Nosi et al., 2021, p. 4).

Wiedmann and von Mettenheimthe (2021, p. 707) state in their research paper 'Attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise – social influencers' winning formula?' that the most important requirement for an influencer is trustworthiness, followed by attractiveness and surprisingly, the relevance of expertise is practically zero.

## **2.3 Channels and reach**

This chapter presents and explains the outlets or channels which can be used for influencer marketing. Older marketing channels can be used as well as new digital platforms, but who those channels reach, has to be taken in to consideration. An influencer might not be known at all outside of their bubble.

There are many popular social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter and so on. The platforms come and go. These formerly popular platforms are for example MySpace and Finnish Irc-Galleria, which both still exist, but they have lost the majority of their former users. MySpace is concentrated on music nowadays.

Different channels and different types of content reach different kind of audiences. TikTok has larger following than the newspapers (STT Viestintäpalvelut Oy, 2023). A long and detailed article might require a relatively high-level of knowledge before it can be read and completely understood, so it is not the best form of content to start if you want to reach people who are beginners with that niche.

Shahbaznezhad et al. (2020) tell that Facebook has become the most popular social media platform by a monthly active user rate of 2,375 million in April 2019. The number of monthly active Instagram users has increased also hugely from 90 million in January 2013 to 1,000 million in June 2018. These are among the biggest platforms to reach very different segments of people.

The most time is used in platforms, which are based on video format such as TikTok and YouTube. Average adult user from United States spends 55.8 minutes in TikTok and in YouTube 47.5 minutes daily (Insider Intelligence, 2023).

## **2.4 Content**

In this chapter it is explained what kind of content is needed for certain platforms and how the same material does not work everywhere.

Short, vertically shot videos have become the hottest trend of the content format. TikTok, YouTube, Instagram and even Facebook support that format. TikTok doesn't even allow any other type of material. Previously the most popular type of content was a good picture with a short text and possibility to leave comments below the photo. Different social media platforms have different preferred sizes for photos, which might prevent using the same material over the different platforms, or they need resizing or other type of editing.

Eberle et al. (2013) found that an increase in perceived interactivity in CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) messages on online media leads to higher-message credibility, which also boosts CR (Customer Relationship) and WOM (Word of Mouth). They concluded that using online media to communicate CSR initiatives can improve CR.

WOM is a source of information among consumers that involves people sharing information about their own evaluation of experiences through oral communication, which, according to marketing researchers, has an impact on consumers' attitudes, judgements, and choice behavior. One of the reasons why WOM is such a crucial concept for companies is that it represents a free form of advertisement or promotion.

The distinctive feature of WOM is that the communication is usually unbiased, given that the source of information does not get anything in return from the receiver, which is probably why information spread by consumers is perceived as more reliable than the same delivered from a company. They showed that WOM sources were generally considered more reliable and influential than other sources of information.

In analyzing outcomes of CSR, they found consumers' willingness to talk positively about companies that are engaged in CSR activities. There is a positive association between customer-based CR and WOM, i.e., companies with a positive reputation have a greater probability that their customers act as company advocates. CSR motives and message credibility modulate the willingness to spread electronic WOM (e-WOM). This willingness is higher when the message combines value and performance-driven CSR motives. (Dalla-Pria & Rodriguez-de-Dios 2022 p. 544-545)

Ferguson found (2008, p. 179), that well-placed, calculated and provocative campaign can spark a firestorm of buzz that sometimes can be effective for years in non-terminal new mediums like the internet. This kind of campaigns can produce hefty returns for brand awareness but their quantitative ROI measurements can be hard to set. The results of the study by Shahbaznezhad et al. (2020, p. 47-48) reveal that the effectiveness of social media content on users' engagement is moderated by content context. Very few studies have considered the role of content format, e.g., picture, video, etc. and the relationship with the choice of social media platform (e.g., Facebook vs. Instagram) on predicting users' engagement behaviour.

“Just relying on words may not be enough to make your content stand out any more than your competitors. If you are not already, you should be using visuals, audio, and video in your content mix. That means infographics, podcasts, video tutorials, photos, interactive content, or anything capable of providing your audience with a variety of ways to access your information will keep them coming back for more. In fact, creating unique content is one of our top three things every content creator should focus on.” (Zion & Zion, 2018)

Content mix means the blend of different types of marketing content created in order to promote certain products or services. These types can mean blog posts, videos, podcasts

or any other type of material created for your audience. The content created should be balancing between being informative and entertaining while supporting a larger company strategy. Hanbury (2011) states that each piece of content should have only one clearly defined purpose such as to entertain, to teach something, to persuade, to start a conversation or share an industry knowledge. If the piece of content has more than one purpose, it will most likely fail in those. She also states that the best content mix is all about the proportions. The foundation of your content might be in educating your audience through informative articles but you might want to also entertain with funny cartoons related to your niche so they have something fun to share as well.

How much content is enough? There can be too much content too. Fishkin (2014) explains that “8,765 hours is all that any of us have in a year. And while the time spent on social media, or mobile gaming, or watching online videos, or consuming infographics, or reading blog posts may go up, it is inherently limited. Every new activity cannibalizes another.” In figure 1 by Zion & Zion (2018) it is visualized how much content is too much and when the exposure for the content marketing grows too big it becomes overwhelming.

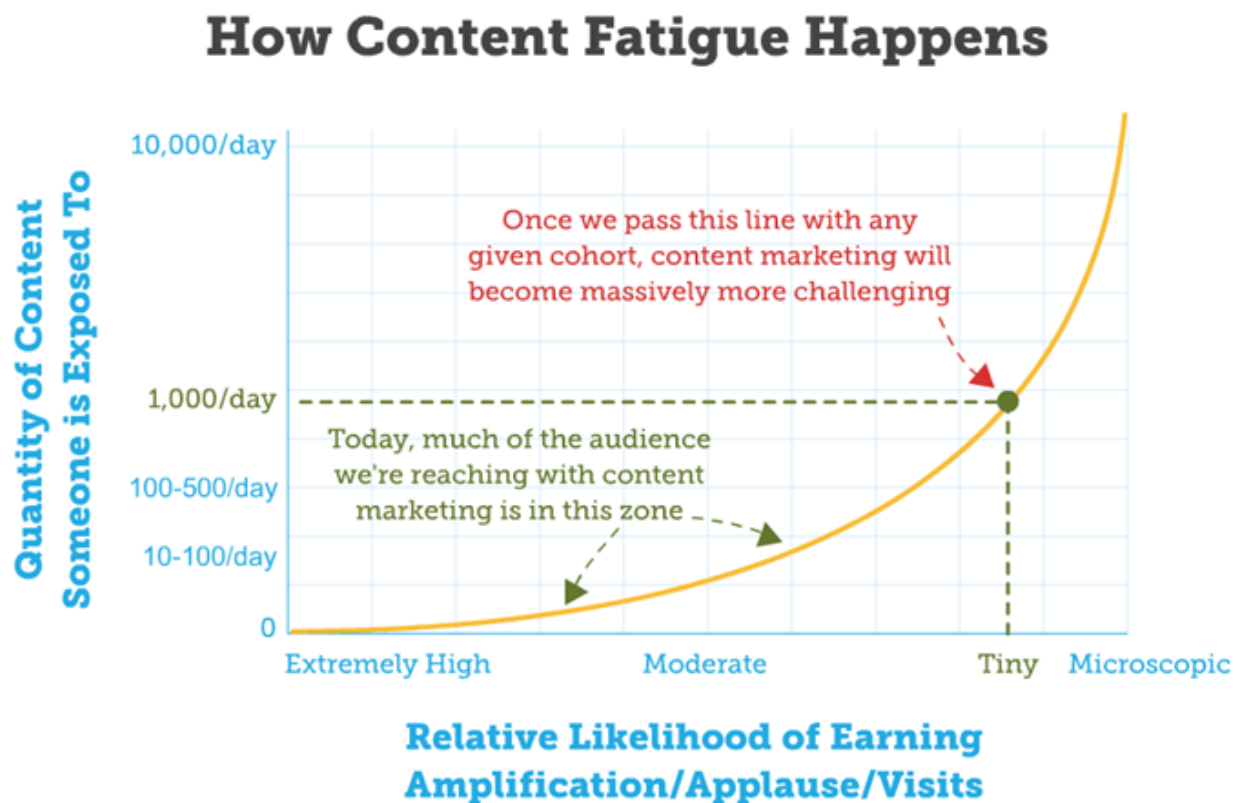


Figure 1. Content fatigue. Zion & Zion (2018)



## 2.5 Framework for influencer marketing strategy

The framework of Elizaveta Riabochkina (2020), which she had created in her master's thesis, is a good starting point for creating an influencer marketing strategy. Her framework is presented in figure 2.

Riabochkina (2020) starts the framework by appointing the responsible person or team. Each step should have a named person who is responsible for the said actions. If the task is not given to someone, there is a high risk that it will not be taken care of.

The second step is to determine clear goals and objectives and then create KPI's (Key Performance Indicators). She recommends then identifying the influencers and analyzing them, for example, for how well they align with the brand, their competence and authenticity of their followers and prior experience. Think about risks and backup plans for the collaboration.

Then the next step is the collaboration itself and planning of the campaign. A contract, which defines all relevant aspects of the collaboration, should be made too. Then the planning phase moves towards executing and monitoring campaign performance. The results should be measured in order to estimate the success of the campaign actions and the measuring should follow the previously set goals, objectives and KPI's.

After the campaign, there should be feedback given to all parties, and connections should be maintained if the influencers are utilized again for some other project.

These steps are relatively similar in all influencer collaborations and could be used as a framework when creating organization's own influencer marketing processes. Riabochkina's framework answers practically to the question how to do influencer marketing step by step.

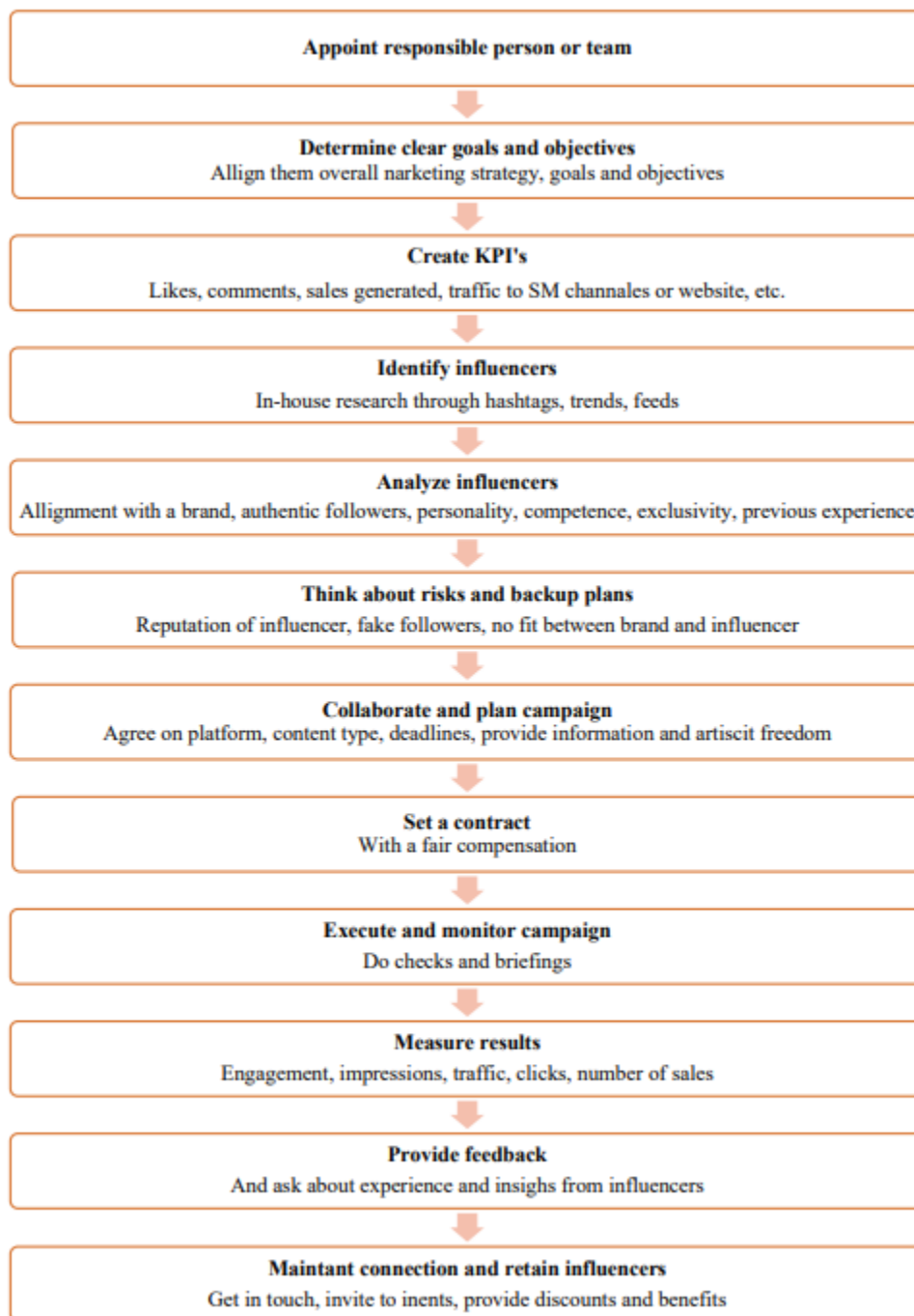


Figure 2. Framework for influencer marketing strategy. Riabochkina (2020)

### 3 RESEARCH METHODS & IMPLEMENTATION

#### 3.1 Constructive research

The constructive research approach is systemic approach that is used to define problems and create purposeful methods and tools to solve these problems. It can be characterized as applied studies and it often results new normative applications. (Oyegoke, 2011 p. p. 578)

The two goals of this thesis are to analyze the current influencer marketing scene and secondly to create base work for further development of influencer marketing plan for four Nammo commercial ammunition brands: Lapua, SK, Vihtavuori and Berger. The thesis fits well under the umbrella of constructive research since it aims to create methods and tools to tackle the relative new issue of influencer marketing.

#### 3.2 Benchmarking method

Tuominen and Niva (2021, p. 5) define benchmarking as a method of continuous and systematic process to measure and analyze the performance of products, services and processes by comparing them to the best in the industry. Benchmarking can be internal or external.

Kananen (2018, p. 23) presents a basic social media competitor comparison chart which will be used as a starting point in this thesis for benchmarking the competitors and their social media marketing. The original comparison chart has been modified from the one that Kananen presents to be more relevant. Comparison chart used in this thesis is presented in table 1.

The idea of the chart is to compare one media or channel at a time. He lists followers (quantity, quality) as one factor to compare. Type of the posts and the content of the posts as other factors to compare. Fourth column is for feedback or reactions to the posts, which means, depending on the platform, for example flikes and comments. Some platforms such as Facebook allows nowadays more expressions than just likes of the posts.

Other factors in the original chart were the gaps in content or deficiencies and posting schedule. There is a possibility to stand out by doing something else than what the competitors are doing. Posting schedule tells how active the competitor is and how often they share content on their social channels.

The modified chart used in this thesis for benchmarking lists followers, (notable) differences, content of posts, use of influencers in their own channels, possible target customer groups and possible target market. The chart is presented in table 1.

Table 1. Social media competitor comparison chart based on Kananen (2018, p. 23).

	Competitor 1	Competitor 2
Followers		
Differences		
Content of posts		
Use of influencers in their own channels		
Possible target customer groups		
Possible target market		

### 3.3 Brands chosen for benchmarking

These competitors may offer slightly different products with different price points and quality but their reach / target customer groups might be at least partially the same. The following tables from 3 to 6 present the brands chosen to be used for benchmarking their social media presence and influencer marketing. The brands chosen for comparison may not be equal when it comes to the target markets, price points, quality or other product related qualities but they do sell same type of product, for example, smokeless gunpowder, so their social media marketing and presence can be seen relevant. They tackle with same kind of issues and at least partially with same kind of markets and their rules and regulations.

Only the most recent posts are analyzed in this benchmarking process. The competitors may have changed their strategies in content or influencer marketing in the long run but only the most recent material is taken in comparison, so it is not visible in this thesis. The competitor brands chosen for each brand are presented in Tables 2-5.

Table 2. Brands chosen for benchmarking Lapua.

Brand name	Products	Country of origin
Norma	Centerfire rifle cartridges, shotgun shells, rimfire cartridges, reloading components, air gun pellets and propellants	Sweden
RWS	Centerfire rifle cartridges, rimfire cartridges, air gun pellets and reloading components	Germany

Table 3. Brands chosen for benchmarking SK.

Brand name	Products	Country of origin
CCI	Primers, rimfire cartridges and handgun cartridges	USA
Eley	Rimfire cartridges and air gun pellets	UK

Table 4. Brands chosen for benchmarking Vihtavuori.

Brand name	Products	Country of origin
Hodgdon	Propellants	USA
Winchester	Winchester produces rifles, centerfire cartridges and components by themselves but the propellants are produced by Hodgdon.	USA

Table 5. Brands chosen for benchmarking Berger.

Brand name	Products	Country of origin
Federal	Shotshell, centerfire, and rimfire ammunition and components	USA
Sierra	Bullets and centerfire cartridges for handguns and rifles	USA

### **3.4 Benchmarking the social media and utilization of influencers**

In this chapter it is compared how the competitors utilize social media and influencers in their digital marketing. It is not taken in consideration how large the competitor brand is when compared their revenue or production amounts. Their marketing budgets and other resources are not compared either. The brands have a very different history and some of them focus more heavily on civilian, commercial products than others. These elements are not considered either in this thesis.

The channels chosen for benchmarking are in English. Many of the brands do have channels and differentiated marketing made for certain market areas but not all. The data for benchmarking was collected in July and August 2023.

Visual and textual material, which is referred as content in this thesis, is analyzed as well. It is important to know what kind of content others are doing and what they are not doing. It can be utilized as differentiation: how to stand out in the flood of content.

The content does have a goal that a marketer wants to achieve with. The goal of the content can be to inform or to teach, to present professionalism, to entertain, to challenge or even to provoke. There may be found 'a call to action', shortened as CTA. It can be as simple as go and buy our product, answer this questionnaire, send us your photo, enjoy your day, support your local shop or something similar. It clears out what is wanted from the person after seeing the content. In the end, the ultimate goal of any marketing is to bring revenue.

### **3.5 Interview method**

The method chosen for this part of the thesis was semi-structured, qualitative interview. Study Smarter –website article (n.d.) highlights the interview as a method, which allows researchers to collect rich and detailed data that captures the complexity and nuances of participants' experiences, attitudes, and perspectives when compared to any quantitative method. The interview method can provide valuable insights into the research topic.

A qualitative interview was done for this thesis through e-mail. It was discussed previously face to face or in Teams video call with the interviewees that the thesis process is ongoing and there is a need for certain discussions and if the interviewees could give their time to help. Interviewee 1 and 2 were chosen because of their role in the company. Influencer marketing is relevant niche of marketing for both in their position. The interviewees have positions in the company in which they have to make decisions regarding influencer marketing. Basic information of the interviewees presented in the Table 6. Questions created for the interview are presented in the Table 7 below.

In Question 1 there is a quote from Forsgård and Frey (2010, pp. 78, 136) who state that in order to create real impact and connection on your online audience, you need to have names and a faces. It is good to have a thought who is the most suitable in presenting the company. The thoughts of the interviewees were wanted as an answer to this question.

The requirements for sponsored shooters is a hot topic inside the company so the Question 2 takes that in discussion. Nammo has done sponsoring previously and its processes are far more familiar in the company.

The Question 3 aims to get commentary of the influencers who interviewees find successful in their game. These influencers may be used later in benchmarking or maybe they should be contacted for further collaboration.

The Question 4 covers the topics of content marketing. The answers may make it clear what is the practical outcome wanted from the influencers and what channels the interviewees find relevant.

Table 6. Interviewees.

Reference	Title	Country
Interviewee 1	Brand Manager	USA



Interviewee 2	Team Lead of Marketing	Finland
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Table 7. Interview questions.

Question 1	'In order to create real impact and connection on your online audience, you need to have a name and a face'. It is good to have a thought who is the most suitable in presenting the company. What are important factors in your opinion, which we should take in consideration when choosing online representatives?
Question 2	Do we need different strategy for sponsored shooters when compared to influencers? Should their online presence matter when choosing which ones we sponsor?
Question 3	Which brands or influencers are doing it 'right'?
Question 4	Do we want the influencers to produce material for our channels or their own accounts? Which channels you find the most potential? What kind of content we should focus on?

## 4 RESULTS

In this chapter, the results of the thesis are presented. First, the current state of our marketing actions, which may be seen relevant towards influencer marketing, are presented to set a starting point for benchmarking results. Secondly, the benchmarking results are presented and the third section of the results is about the interview.

### 4.1 Current state of marketing actions relevant to influencer marketing

All four brands have their own accounts on Facebook by names: Lapua (Ammunition), SK Ammunition, Vihtavuori Powders and Berger Bullets. These 'brand channels' are in English. There is also Lapua France –account in try-out process aimed for French speaking customers and the content is in French.

Facebook restricts the visibility of firearms related products to 21 years old and older and does not allow paid advertisement of those products so the paid advertising cannot be done of the shooting related products but most likely promoting for example shooting related t-shirt would be allowed. (Meta, 2023)

All four brands have their own accounts on Instagram by names: @lapua\_ammunition, @sk\_ammunition, @vihtavuori\_powders and @bergerbullets. The language of the channel is English.

Instagram is also in test run for recruitment marketing. There is an account in Instagram by handle @lapuan\_patruunatehdas. It is targeted for Finnish-speaking local people in order to make factory site more known for possible job applicants.

All four brands have their own Twitter/X-accounts: @LapuaAmmunition, @SK\_ammunition, @Vihtavuori\_ and @BergerBullets. The platform seems to be not so popular among customers since any of the account do not get many likes, comments or shares there and amount of followers are quite small. There has been many changes in use of Twitter since Elon Musk purchased the platform so the future of the platform may be quite unclear now.

All four brands do have their own YouTube accounts. The content of these channels is mostly brand videos or similar videos and the language used in those is English or other language with English subtitles.

LinkedIn is a social media platform aimed for professional connections. Vihtavuori and Lapua have their own LinkedIn page since they are their own factory sites as well and they go by the business names Nammo Lapua Oy and Nammo Vihtavuori Oy. Those LinkedIn-accounts have material in both Finnish and English, depending on the target audience whether it would be local or international.

Schönebeck factory (SK and Lapua brands) does not use LinkedIn or is not included in Lapua's LinkedIn content because it is not so popular to use LinkedIn in Germany, at least not yet. Berger Bullets does not have their own LinkedIn account either. The company that runs the brand is named Capstone Precision Group and it doesn't have own LinkedIn – page

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the only way to increase visibility in Google without paid increase in visibility.

The most popular way to do digital advertising now is through Google. Google advertising does not allow advertisement of gun related products. "Guns, gun parts, & related products. -- Ads for any part or component, whether finished or unfinished, that's essential to or enhances the functionality of a gun. Examples (non-exhaustive): Ammunition, ammunition clips, silencers, tripods and bipods for guns, stocks, conversion kits, gun-grips, scopes and sights, bump stocks." Google does allow the advertisement of promotional goods such as t-shirts. Currently, the paid advertising is not done. (Google, 2023)

Different global companies own social media platforms after all. They have the power to shut down any account and any audience there will be lost. It is good to have some own channels as well in order to keep some way of communication if the account is shut down. All of the four brands have their own websites. All the brands have their own newsletters and all the websites have the possibility for joining the mailing list.

Nammo commercial brands have in total three own mobile phone applications, which are Vihtavuori Reload, Lapua Ballistics and the newest addition to the pack is Lapua Hunt – application. There is also application notification service built in the apps, which can be used as a communication channel, but there are limitations in the use of the notifications.

All the brands do traditional advertisements too for example in shooting or hunting related magazines. Previously the photos of successful athletes have been used there too but not often. Influencers can be used in that context too but it would be the most beneficial if they are well recognized in the shooting scene. It then falls into the celebrity marketing category.

People's faces have been utilized in the packaging during the years and resemblance of the sport shooters or influencers could be utilized in such manner as well. The current Vihtavuori reloading powder packages and some of the Berger packaging do have a human face on them but the models are not a well-known personalities.

## 4.2 Benchmarking results

The benchmarking results are presented in the Tables 8-11. Most of the compared brands have larger following and they have started their social media accounts earlier than Nammo's commercial brands. Different target groups such as certain sport shooting disciplines or geographical target markets can be noticed. In general, recreational shooting market seems to follow the trends of influencer marketing in slight delay.

Table 8. The benchmarking results for Lapua brand.

Lapua		
	Norma	RWS
Followers	Norma Ammo Facebook page has 26 000 followers, which is the exactly the same number as Lapua	RWSSport Instagram account has 9239 followers and RWSHunting has 63,7t.

	<p>Ammunition Facebook page has.</p> <p>In Instagram their page has 42,6 t followers which is the double than Lapua_ammunition has.</p> <p>Norma Ammo YouTube channel has 7 240 followers and 158 videos as Lapua Quality Ammunition YouTube channel has 1520 followers and 27 videos. They have established their channel in 2011 where as Lapua's channel was founded in 2015.</p>	<p>RWS Hunting in Facebook is available in German and French, so it is not taken in comparison. RWS Sport-munition in only in German.</p> <p>RWS Hunting &amp; Sport in YouTube has 4250 subscribers. They have 78 videos, which are mostly available in both English and German.</p>
Differences	<p>Norma's social media marketing materials are more towards hunting themes than Lapua's. Game meat recipes are more typical content in hunting magazines than in social media since their reach may be global and the game animals can be very localized.</p>	
Content of posts	<p>Product information (EcoStrike lead free ammunition, Norma Ballistics App)</p> <p>Product and lifestyle photos.</p> <p>Game meat recipes.</p>	

Use of influencers	<p>Mette Karin Petersen, a passionate hunter from Denmark demonstrating lead free ammunition.</p> <p>Educational content under the name Norma Academy. Possibly influencers used as educators.</p> <p>Ambassador Cecilia Lindberg's success mentioned. She is a practical (IPSC) handgun shooter.</p>	
Possible target customer groups	Mainly hunters	German and French –speaking hunters and German sport shooters
Possible target market	Sweden, USA, countries that are moving towards banning use of lead (EU)	Europe; German and French-speaking areas

Table 9. The benchmarking results for SK brand.

SK		
	CCI	Eley
Followers	<p>@cciammunition has 27t followers and it was founded 5 years ago. @sk_ammunition has 3196 and was established seven years ago.</p> <p>SK Ammunition has 202 subscribers and 8 videos. CCI Ammunition has 3590</p>	<p>Eley Facebook has 125t followers and Instagram @eley_ltd has 14,7t followers.</p> <p>Eley does not have YouTube channel on their own.</p>

	subscribers and 53 videos since 2012.	
Differences	Rimfire pistol shooting in spotlight.	Merchandise products and testing service highlighted clearly.
Content of posts	The content includes packaging photos, range photos and squirrel hunting.	The content consist of a lot of sport shooting success stories, event photos, product photos, photos of medals, promotional items such as shooter towels.  The tag #teameley is used.
Use of influencers	Fan content reposting: "Use #CCIAmmo for chance to be featured."  The most visible one seems to be 22plinkster, named as CCI Ambassador.  Own internal knowledge is used. The product director interviewed.	British Shooting and Women's Sports Alliance in collaboration to present the story of Ruth Mwandumba.  Competitive shooters such as Hungarian Istvan Peni, British Sam Gowin, paraolympian Richard Bray can be seen in the feed.
Possible target customer groups	Recreational, low-budget shooters, "A little Sunday funday plinking with nothing but #CCIAmmo"  Small game, varmint hunters such as squirrel hunters	Rimfire sport shooters, ISSF / Olympic shooters
Possible target market	USA	European ISSF / Olympic shooters

Table 10. The benchmarking results for Vihtavuori brand.

Vihtavuori		
	Hodgdon	Winchester
Followers	<p>HodgdonTV YouTube channel has 3,21 t. subscribers and 27 videos.</p> <p>Hodgdon Powder Company has 23,400 followers in Instagram</p>	<p>WinchesterAmmunitionOfficial YouTube has 42,9 t. has subscribers and 683 videos.</p> <p>@winchesterrepeatingarms has 313,000 followers</p>
Differences	Some of the posts have religious themes.	Not posting often, once a month in Instagram. Winchester or other brands by Hodgdon are less marketed in social media. Some of the brands do not even have their own channels and Hodgdon main channel is tagged instead.
Content of posts	Event photos, merchandise product promotion	In Instagram the powders are not visible at all.
Use of influencers	<p>Small following influencers such as Andrew Yoder - Competitive Shooter, Richard Robert (bearded.ricky.bobby), Shane &amp; Jaclyn Bryan, long distance shooters, can be found.</p> <p>Large following influencer Ultimate Reloader is being utilized.</p>	



Possible target customer groups	Sport shooting and hunting reloaders	Hunters, sport shooters
Possible target market	USA	USA

Table 11. The benchmarking results for Berger brand.

Berger		
	Federal	Sierra
Followers	<p>@federalpremium Instagram account has 317,000 followers.</p> <p>Berger Bullets Instagram account has 42,600 followers and YouTube 5740 subscribers with 43 videos.</p> <p>Federal Ammunition YouTube account has 56,800 subscribers with 611 videos.</p>	<p>Sierra Bullets Facebook page has 154,000 followers</p> <p>@sierra_bullets Instagram account has 46,9t followers</p> <p>YouTube has 553 subscribers and only one video.</p>
Differences	The use of self-defense as a marketing sentence.	Not focused on video material. Self-defense used as well.
Content of posts	<p>Sponsored shooters success stories. The tag #teamfederal used.</p> <p>Hunting success stories in US; turkeys, sandhill cranes being hunted.</p>	<p>Fan content reposting and hunting success stories.</p> <p>Same brand photos over and over again with different texts.</p>

Use of influencers	Influencers used in the brand channels as well.	The following influencers spotted: @mountaingoatpauly @brandonsoutside
Possible target customer groups	Hunters, sport shooters, hand gun users for personal defense	Sport shooters, hunters “Competition, defense, hunting —what are your reasons for feeding your rifle Sierra?”
Possible target market	USA	USA

In general, many of the competitor brands have started their social media accounts years ahead of our brands but they have not been social media marketing pioneers either. In the earlier days of the many social media platforms, it was easier to gain organic visibility and in order to increase their advertising income; the platforms have made it a lot more difficult to gain unpaid visibility than earlier.

On the other hand, many of the competitor brands have larger product portfolio and they do have different types of products as well. Nammo commercial ammunition brands are more specialized on only one or two product types.

Squirrel hunting and self-defense are not much used sales points in our marketing so they stand out in comparison. Self-defense means practically handgun ammunition, in which any of the Nammo commercial brands is not specialized.

Many of the brands benchmarked are from the United States of America and it is most likely their main target market as well, so they benefit from their location. It was noticed during the benchmarking process that for example Italian ammunition manufacturer Fiocchi's YouTube has only about 2000 subscribers with relative high amount of videos (66). The channel is partially in English and in Italian, which may confuse both Italian and English-speaking customers if they are not skillful in both. Our brands have the same issue

that the workforce and the production site locations are located in the three different countries and language areas: Finland, Germany and USA. This is a difficulty but an asset as well.

### 4.3 Interview results

The first part of the interview was to answer to this question: 'In order to create real impact and connection on your online audience, you need to have a name and a face'. It is good to have a thought who is the most suitable in presenting the company. What are important factors in your opinion, which we should take in consideration when choosing online representatives?

Interviewee 1 and 2 shared their views about many of the factors that influencers should have. They should for example "present themselves professionally" and they should not give out any political or religious opinions. They should already have an established following and "proven record of an ability to influence our core customer in the customer segment we want them to represent us in". Interviewee 2 pointed out that the influencers should be able to share us the measurable results of their efforts and that they should be able to follow our guidelines. Interviewee 1 stated that the influencer is a "brand" of their own: "Their brand and our brand must align well in messaging for the partnership to be successful."

Both interviewee 1 and 2 thought that there is a need for separate strategies for sponsored shooters and influencers but there are similarities in both groups. Interviewee 1 stated that "for an influencer, we need to partner at a deeper level."

Interviewee 2 sees that "a competitive shooter who has no social presence may still be a significant influencer in their own field at competitions. We should try to utilize our sponsored competitive shooters as influencers as much as possible, as some of them are natural promoters and have large audiences and followers."

Interviewee 2 pointed that the "key issue with all partnerships is a good foundation on our side to monitor, manage and develop these partnerships in a structured manner with clear

targets, no matter which category they belong to” and the interviewee 1 commented that also the pre-planning requires work.

Both interviewees think that the influencers should produce the material for their own channels in their own style.

“Potential channels depends on the influencer, but in today’s digital world, I would prefer YouTube, Instagram, especially video content and podcasts. We should also have partnerships with influencers who are active in relevant Facebook groups, online discussion forums and events,” said the interviewee 2.

Interviewee 1 believed that influencer marketing is the best way to reach a large potential customer pool of new generation consumers. “Our core customer demographic is older and less media savvy. We must replace our aging consumer base with new potential buyers!”

The interviewee 2 wanted to raise discussion about “the ever-changing rules and regulations of marketing and advertising on various platforms. While the influencers business is a great way to create desire, the team involved need to be aware of any possible issues or challenges that may arise from regulations and other juridical aspects.”

## 5 FRAMEWORK FOR THE INFLUENCER MARKETING PLAN

One of the outputs of this work is the comparison chart tool for influencer comparison. It is not an easy task to compare different influencers since a lot of their charm is based on their personalities, which cannot be measured easily. The results of interview influenced heavily the section named Criteria of the company. Most of the criteria is picked up from the interview results presented in the chapter 4.3.

### 5.1 Influencer comparison template

As a result of this thesis, it would be recommended to create and use custom-made comparison chart tools that you can use to compare different influencers or other similar type of marketing collaborations or sponsorships. The comparison chart would make decision making easier, which influencer collaborations are done and it would make decisions justified and consistent.

Decision-making is always subjective but using some tool for comparison can make it more open for discussion and it makes the desired parameters visible. (Alaja & Forssell 2004, p. 106)

There is definitely a need for creating an influencer marketing plan before the comparison template can be in a final form. Before the plan, there needs to be a lot of discussion so all the relevant aspects are included. There might be a need for multiple comparison charts depending on the target customer group or market niche. Some parameters may not work and testing will be needed as well.

Alaja and Forssell present Sponsorship cooperation potential calculation chart (2004, p. 106) which is used as a starting point for the chart presented in table 2. The chart can be used as a reference when creating the comparison tool for Nammo. The point of the chart is to help decision-making for choosing sponsorship and marketing collaborations. Business strategy can be used as a starting point to set the criteria of the company so the collaborations that they fit the brand image and over-all strategy whether that would be to increase sales, awareness or to reach new target markets.

In the table, if the influencer meets the criteria, they will get one point. If the criteria is not met, it equals as zero points. In the end, the total sum of the points is calculated. The original chart had an unnecessarily complex formula for creating points and it is radically simplified in the table 2. The importance of the criteria can be altered by adding higher multiplier.

Table 12. Influencer cooperation potential chart

The criteria of the company	<i>Importance multiplier</i>	<i>Influencer candidate 1.</i>  (yes=1, no=0)	<i>Influencer candidate 2.</i>
Professional presentation, credibility	1x	1	1
The reach of 10 000 or more	1x	1	1
Credibility (knowledge in their field and follows laws, regulations and safety procedures)	3x	1 (=3)	1 (=3)
Established distribution channel in the market area where the influencer is located	3x	1 (=3)	0
No political or other controversial opinions	1x	1	0
Busy comment section	2x	0	0

Relevant for the wanted target group (relevant shooting discipline etc)	1x	1	1
Presence in the wanted platform	1x	1	1
Total points		11	7

In this example, the influencer candidate 1 gets higher points. Established distribution channel is a good thing when generating the influencing into revenue. It may not be needed if the strategy is to establish a new target market and starting to create a need for the product may be done by opening the market by doing influencer marketing first.

Sponsorship marketing has its risks and it requires systematic risk management. There should be estimations done before the collaboration but also during and after the sponsorship period. It depends on how successful the sponsorship is, how well the overall collaboration goes between the contract parties. It is a message itself, which people or organizations are chosen to be sponsored. The general image and values of the collaborator do have an impact on the message that is pursued through the sponsoring. (Alaja & Forssell 2004, p.38)

## 5.2 Budgeting, resourcing and reporting

Influencer marketing can be very cost effective and costs may be low but on the other hand, only the sky can be the limit and the costs rising for professional collaborations. There is a need for defining and budgeting the costs of the collaboration. Even though the influencer is an external resource, the communication and the management of the said marketing actions do require internal resources as well and they need to be considered. For example the research the follow-up and even payment processes do require internal work. It needs to be stated who owns the process and what are the responsibilities for each step.

External reporting should go through an online form on website so for example no reporting e-mails will not get lost if the staff changes.



## 6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The thesis analyses the current influencer marketing scene and especially recreational shooting market is looked into. The thesis defines what influencer marketing is, how to do it, and looks at what other actors in the commercial shooting industry are doing and how, with whom, what kind of material they are producing, and which target markets and target customers they seem to be trying to reach.

Geyser (2023) defines the influencer marketing as communication through individuals who have the power to affect the purchasing decisions of others. Influencer marketing can be seen as continuation to celebrity marketing, except that influencers may not be well known outside their circle of followers.

Influencer marketing is also heavily linked to the social media platforms, which are needed in order that the influencer can be in touch with their followers. Influencers can be utilized in many ways in the marketing. They may be used as educators for example instead of the company personnel.

Recreational shooting influencers seem to be in general outdoors people. The influencer in this branch needs practical knowledge of the field to be credible and competitors seem to think the same way. The ideal influencer could have a background as firearms instructor, hunter, former or current athlete or maybe former military or police personnel. If the influencer is on the active duty, there may be issues in commercial collaboration.

The content the competitor brands are sharing in the social platforms include for example product and lifestyle photos with very little text to extensive videos where influencers educate hunters about lead-free ammunition.

The content that is going to be published outside the brand channels should not have branded graphic materials such as animated logo video transitions so it will not be mixed with direct company communications and it stays clear that is the influencer-made material and when the company or the brand officially states something.

A content plan is needed for each influencer and there needs to be defined approval process of those content plans and discussion about how freely the influencers can work and how and when the content is approved or disapproved. Since the product is lethal, any carelessness may cost lives or serious injuries. Haenlein et al., (2020, p. 11) recommend avoiding managing and briefing influencers too much but in this field of business the briefing and managing are needed more than in clothing for example since the damages may be fatal. If their followers ask hard technical questions, who is responsible for answering and in charge of correct answers? Who is the responsible if the advice causes for example damages?

There has to be an exit plan for each collaboration too. The duration of the collaboration must be set. The length of the contract must be set and the content plan created to define, how the influencer is going to promote the brand(s). There has to way to stop collaboration too if the content does not meet the pre-set requirements, or if there is some kind of incident that demands crisis management actions. Influencers are people too and mistakes can happen. These situations must be thought beforehand and they must be included in the agreements. It should be determined that who are responsible of each step of the procedures.

The goal of the thesis was to analyze the current influencer marketing scene and to create base work for further development. The first goal was met by benchmarking potential competitors and hopefully this work in general can be used as reference point when developing influencer marketing plans. As one of the results, the influencer comparison chart was created. The comparison chart can be used when choosing potential influencers for marketing collaboration and to make the decision-making process more visible to the stakeholders.

Who are the people that the brand is wanted to be associated with? What are the qualities wanted from a marketing collaboration? There are many questions that need thinking and decision-making. Communication and clear internal processes are needed for any marketing actions, influencer marketing included, being successful. Systematic evaluation and development are important factors.

The thesis works as a basis for the further development of an influencer marketing plan for four Nammo commercial ammunition brands, or Lapua, SK, Vihtavuori, and Berger. After the thesis, the work continues. The social media is in a constant state of rapid change but it is there to stay. Channels and platforms will change but the development of marketing will not take turn back to the old days. Whether it is liked not, there will be discussions and other content online of the brands and there is no control over that unless the process is participated in.

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