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Marketing Nature Trails in the Municipality of Soini

Social media marketing approach

Thesis

Autumn 2023

Bachelor of Business Administration, International Business



SEINÄJOKI UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Thesis abstract

Degree Programme: International Business

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Title of thesis: Marketing Nature Trails in the Municipality of Soini: Social media marketing approach

Supervisor: Cory Isaacs

Year: 2023

Number of pages: 35

Number of appendices: -

The Municipality of Soini has multiple nature trails available for public usage. The trails vary in length and style; some have also been made available for people with mobility impairments. Soini is at the moment not a too well-known destination, that is why the objective of this study was to find out the best social media marketing platforms for them to use in order for Soini to start social media marketing and to raise awareness of Soini and the nature trails they have available.

The theoretical framework of the study consists of marketing, more precisely, social media marketing and event marketing, as well as of the nature trails in the Municipality of Soini. As for the methodology used, qualitative and quantitative methods were combined. A survey was conducted as part of the study, and its questions were mainly structured, but some were also semi-structured. The survey was conducted online, and it gained answers from 63 different people in different age groups. The main question to find an answer to was what social media platform the respondents used and on what platform they found the most interesting new content. The secondary focus was on finding out if the respondents were already familiar with the Municipality of Soini and if they moved around in nature in their everyday life, and if yes, how long distances they covered at a time.

The research results were positive. The study could provide answers to the questions, and after analysing them, it was concluded that Instagram would be the most valid platform to start social media marketing on. YouTube and TikTok are secondary options. When it comes to more elderly people, Facebook was proven to be the best option. The results can be used by the Municipality of Soini when starting to plan their social media marketing.

¹ Keywords: Nature trails, marketing, social media marketing, event marketing

SEINÄJOEN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU

Opinnäytetyön tiivistelmä

Tutkinto-ohjelma: International Business

Tekijä: Eetu Riistama

Työn nimi: Marketing Nature Trails in the Municipality of Soini: Social media marketing approach

Ohjaaja: Cory Isaacs

Vuosi: 2023

Sivumäärä: 35

Liitteiden lukumäärä: -

Soinin kunnalla on kaikkien vapaasti käytettävissä useita luontopolkuja. Polut ovat eripituisia ja -tyylisiä, ja jotkin ovat esteettömiäkin. Soini ei ole vielä tällä hetkellä kovin tunnettu matkailukohde, minkä takia tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli selvittää parhaat sosiaalisen median alustat kunnan käytettäväksi, jotta se voisi aloittaa markkinoinnin sosiaalisessa mediassa sekä nostaa tietoisuutta Soinista ja kunnan luontopoluista.

Tutkimuksen teoreettinen viitekehys koostuu markkinoinnista, tarkemmin sanottuna sosiaalisen median markkinoinnista ja tapahtumamarkkinoinnista sekä Soinin kunnan luontopoluista. Tutkimusmetodologiassa yhdisteltiin laadullista ja määrällistä lähestymistapaa. Tutkimuksen osana suoritettiin kysely, jonka kysymykset olivat pääasiassa strukturoituja, mutta osittain myös puolistrukturoituja. Kysely suoritettiin nettikyselynä, ja siihen saatiin vastauksia yhteensä 63:lta eri henkilöltä eri ikäryhmistä. Pääkysymys, johon haettiin vastausta, oli mitä sosiaalisen median alustoja vastaajat käyttivät, ja miltä alustoilta he löysivät eniten uutta, kiinnostavaa sisältöä. Toinen kysymys, johon etsittiin vastausta, oli, olivatko vastaajat jo ennestään tietoisia Soinin kunnasta ja liikkuivatko he luonnossa, ja mikäli kyllä, miten pitkiä matkoja kerrallaan.

Tutkimustulokset olivat positiivisia. Tutkimuksella onnistuttiin löytämään vastaukset kysymyksiin, ja niiden analysoinnin jälkeen tultiin siihen tulokseen, että Instagram olisi kaikkein sopivin alusta aloittaa markkinointi sosiaalisessa mediassa. Toisia vaihtoehtoja ovat YouTube ja TikTok. Vanhempien ihmisten kohdalla Facebook osoittautui parhaaksi vaihtoehdoksi. Soinin kunta voi hyödyntää tutkimustuloksia aloittaessaan sosiaalisessa mediassa tapahtuvan markkinoinnin suunnittelua.

¹ Asiasanat: Luontopolut, markkinointi, sosiaalisen median markkinointi, tapahtumamarkkinointi

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Municipality of Soini is a small municipality located in the eastern part of South Ostrobothnia. Its population is around 2 200 inhabitants, and the municipality was founded in 1868 (Turisti-info, 2023). Soini is a perfect place for nature enjoyers, its landscape consists of forests and swamps filled with different types of waters; Soini has around 160 different lakes and ponds, as well as five major nature trails available for public use (Soinin kunta, n.d.-b). They also have two shorter trails available for people with mobility impairments (Soinin kunta, n.d.-c). Soini is not yet so well-known destination for nature traveling and their marketing has been operating on a small scale so far. It is important for them to find out the best possible social media marketing platforms to use in order to start more efficient marketing in social media and this way gain more visitors.

Social media has a big role in today's marketing. It is a huge part of almost everyone's daily life and browsing through all of the different social media platforms have become a part of everyday life. Social media has also become a major platform for marketing. One of the great advantages of social media marketing is its cost-effectiveness. Social media offers multiple different platforms and multiple different ways to get to your marketing target groups, it can be as easy as successfully creating one viral sensation to get everyone online talking about you (Sociable Media, n.d.).

The commissioner of this thesis was the Municipality of Soini. Moving in nature is one of my hobbies, so it was easy to grab onto this topic. I have also visited the nature trails in Soini before, so the subject truly is close to me.

2 THE RESEARCH AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The theoretical framework of the thesis consists of marketing and the nature trails that the Municipality of Soini has to offer. Marketing will be more specifically looked at from the social media marketing and event marketing aspects.

The primary focus is to find out which social media platforms the Municipality of Soini should use in marketing. This is important as in order to reach as many potential visitors as possible for the municipality, marketing is needed. A survey is being conducted as a main research method to find an answer to the question that which social media platform Soini should use for social media marketing. The survey also includes other questions that aim to find out if people are familiar with the Municipality of Soini already and how much people move in nature in general. The survey targets all types of people with all types of backgrounds including international people living in Finland.

To efficiently market the nature trails in the Municipality of Soini, it is important to know the best methods. As the focus is on social media marketing, finding the right channels is the most important aspect. For this reason, the survey focuses on people's social media usage, mainly on which platforms they use daily and where do they usually find interesting new content that they have not heard about or seen before. As the Municipality of Soini is not too well-known yet, it is important to know where people easily find new content while browsing on social media so those channels can be used for efficient marketing.

The secondary focus is to find out if people have already heard about the Municipality of Soini and how much and how long distances at the time they move in nature. It is important to find out how known the municipality already is to see where their current level of awareness is and how much people move in nature and the distances to know which kinds of trails would be the best to focus the marketing on.

3 RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Combining qualitative and quantitative research methods

I will be combining qualitative and quantitative research methods in the making of this research. According to Mcleod (2023), qualitative methods seek to read non-numerical data and are all about observing, when quantitative methods do the opposite and gain numerical data and are more about measuring.

Qualitative research methods will be used in the theoretical framework on the research when talking about marketing and the nature trails in Soini. In the other hand, quantitative research methods will be used when conducting the survey as its goal is to gain numerical data.

3.2 Survey

Main part of the thesis is to conduct a survey. The survey is being conducted as a Google Forms survey and will not be guided towards a specific target group; the idea is to gain a general image from the public. A wider number of different kinds of people's answers is valuable in this case. Answers will be collected from all kinds of people in different age groups.

3.3 Analyzing the survey answers

When analyzing the survey answers, the main point is to get the general image without dividing people into groups as the target audience for the Municipality of Soini's nature trail marketing is anyone and everyone currently.

However, as part of the analysis, the respondents will also be divided into different groups based on their age to gain more accurate data. When divided by age, can be found out which age groups use which social media platforms as the usage percents between platforms may vary by age. This information gained is viable when, for example, organizing different kinds of events in the Soini area targeting a certain age group.

4 MARKETING

4.1 What is marketing?

We all know that in order to efficiently sell your product or service, you need marketing. According to Staff (2023), the base of marketing consists of three different things; comprehending your target market, offer creation, and creating attractive customer experiences to gain loyalty. Staff continue that the purpose is to gain customers as well as keep them as customers by meeting the requirements for their wants and needs. When these two key things have been understood, different kinds of marketing activities can be generated such as advertising, social media presence, and publicity gaining (op. cit.).

For successful marketing, target audience, competitors, and the whole industry need to be researched (Brown, 2023). Brown continues that marketing research can be divided into two parts which are primary market research and secondary market research. Primary market research is all about understanding the target audiences' wants and needs while secondary market research is about analyzing competitors and trying to do things better than them (op. cit.). Combining the results from both types of market research is a way to succeed in marketing.

4.2 Social media marketing and social media platforms

In today's world, social media is huge. It is always available and goes everywhere with you on your mobile phone. Social media marketing is a great way of marketing, as it provides you with the opportunity to reach out large groups of people at the time, both quickly and with ease. According to Hanlon (2022, p. 122), social media platforms are attractive marketing platforms for organizations as they provide the possibility to easily acquire more audience and target their marketing based on profiles. Hanlon (p. 122) continues that it is also an important platform for customers as it provides them with an opportunity to get in touch with the organization easily.

Instagram is one of the biggest social media platforms available. As of today, Instagram has 2 billion active users monthly (McLachlan, 2023). What comes to the user statistics,

Instagram tends to be gaining popularity mostly from people who are under 45 years old as 85% of the audience are aged under 45 years old.

Facebook is the most used social media platform worldwide, reaching over 2.9 billion active users monthly (Newberry, 2023). Newberry also states that of these 2.9 billion active monthly users, 67% are active daily.

TikTok is a relatively new social media platform, but it is used for marketing by some of the world's leading brands (Grossman, 2023). Based on data from the third quarter of 2022, TikTok has 1.5 billion active monthly users, and its user count has been constantly rising.

Former Twitter, nowadays rebranded as X, does not have as many active monthly users as the previously mentioned platforms, but still reaches 550 million active monthly users (Duarte, 2023). Duarte also mentions one important fact about the users and that is that one out of four users is American. Based on this fact, if considering X as a social media marketing platform, the markets you are targeting should be in the USA for the most effective results.

YouTube is also a popular social media platform, currently it has 2.85 billion active monthly users (Turner, 2023). Turner adds that the largest age group using YouTube are people aged between 25 to 34 years old, covering 20,7% of all the users.

Snapchat does not reach billions in its active monthly user count, but it still has 750 million of them (Shepherd, 2023). As of October 2023, it ranked as the 9th most popular social media platform worldwide (Statista, 2023).

4.3 Event marketing

Organizing events is a great way to get people to travel to your desired destination and to potentially make new customers out of the people participating in the events. Hudson and Hudson (2017, p. 129) suggest that events also provide the visitors with a chance to get familiar with the local culture and experience the nature of the destination. Hudson and Hudson (p. 129) continue that events give an opportunity to also get to know the local

community, how the people are like. If these factors give a pleasant first impression of the place, it increases the chances of the people visiting an event coming back later as well.

The Municipality of Soini arranges a yearly hiking event called “Arpaisten Patikka” during every year September (Soinin kunta, n.d.-b). Adding even more events could potentially increase the number of visitors on the nature trails and in the Municipality of Soini overall.

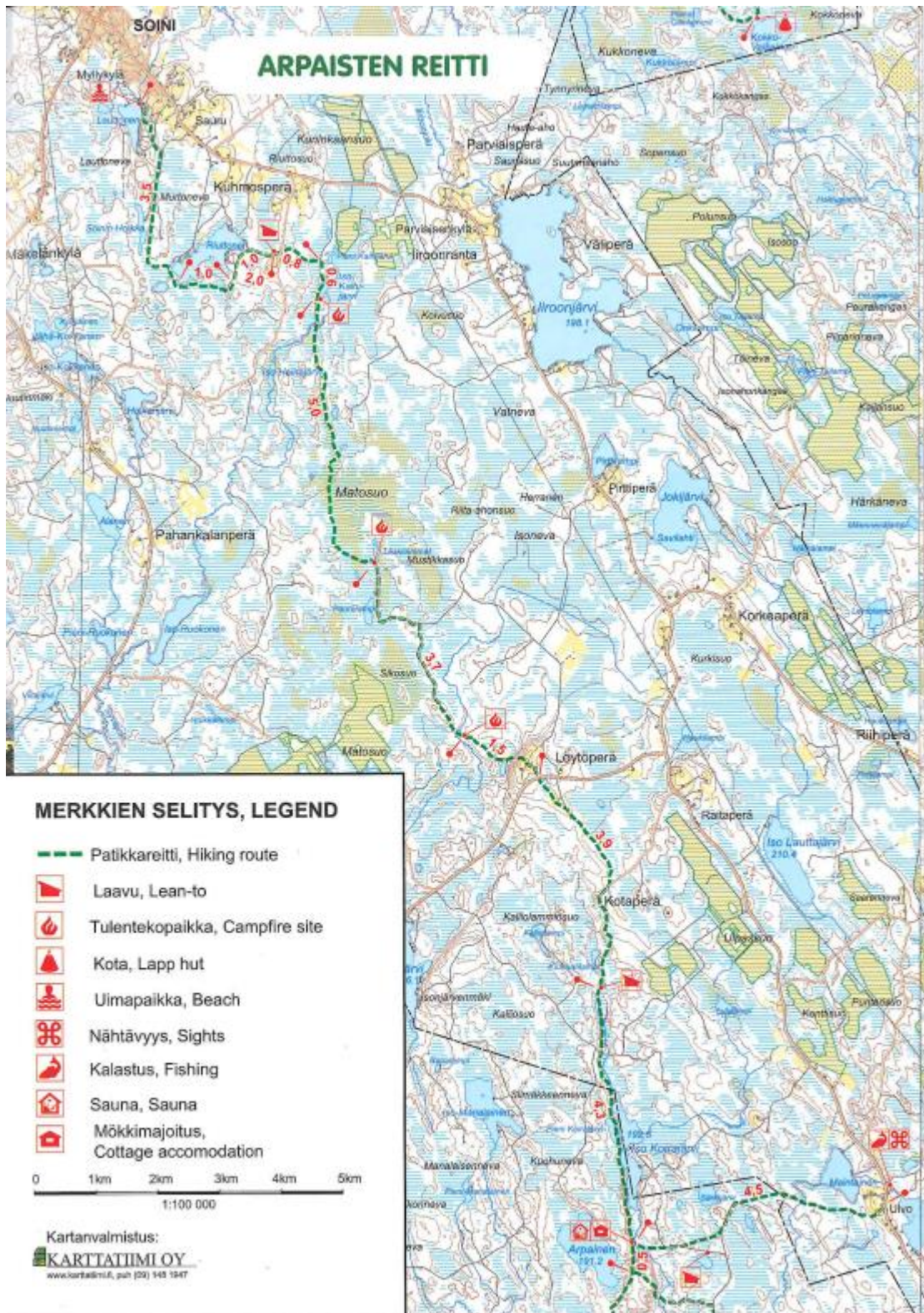
5 NATURE TRAILS IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SOINI

5.1 Available public trails

Soini has five major nature trails available for public use. They vary a lot in distance and the surrounding environment. Because of multiple different options, you can find suitable trails for everyone with different needs. Some of the trails are suitable for the whole family and even the smallest children can be brought on them, and some trails fit for active hiking enthusiasts.

5.1.1 Arpaisten reitti

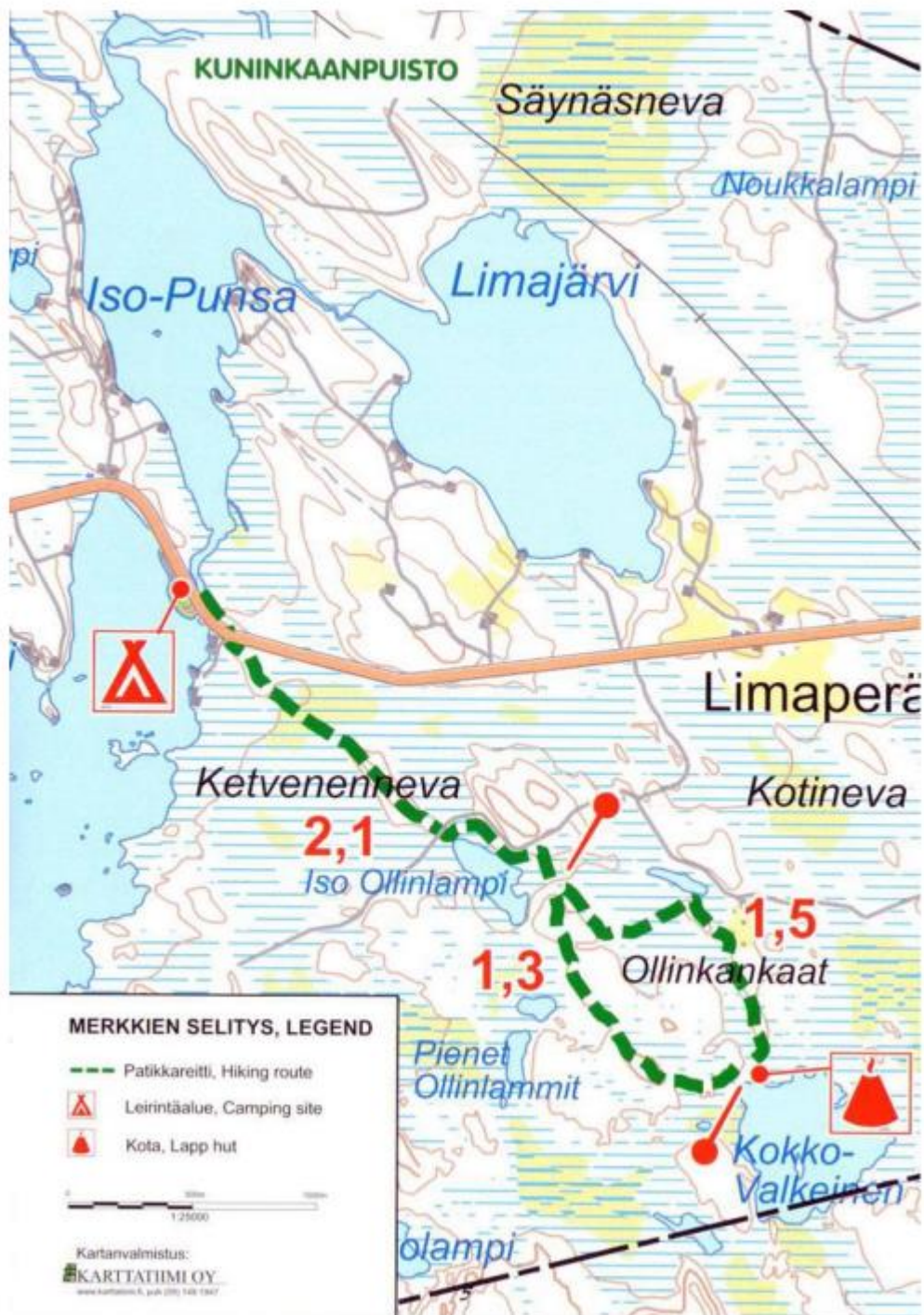
Arpaisten reitti (Picture 1) is the longest option out of all the trails. It can be divided into shorter pieces, but the whole trail is 28-kilometre-long. As the trail is so long in total, there are five different spots on the way to stop and take a rest. These resting spots depending on the spot have sheds, campfire sites, huts, beaches, sights, fishing spots, cottages and even a sauna (Soinin kunta, n.d.-b).



Picture 1. Arpaisten reitti (Soinin kunta, n.d.-d).

5.1.2 Kuninkaanpuisto

Kuninkaanpuisto (Picture 2) is a 7-kilometre-long trail with one resting spot on the way. This resting spot has a hut that is equipped with the possibility to make a campfire. This trail is easy to navigate and does not require any high tier hiking equipment (Soinin kunta, n.d.-b).



Picture 2. Kuninkaanpuisto (Soinin kunta, n.d.-e).

5.1.3 Kuninkaanpolku

Kuninkaanpolku (Picture 3) is an 8.3-kilometer-long trail that runs beside a river. On this trail there is also information available along the way about the history and traditions of the area. This trail includes three different resting spots that have sheds and campfire sites. At the trail starting point, there are also fitness stairs that can be used for a workout (Soinin kunta, n.d.-b).



Picture 3. Kuninkaanpolku (Soinin kunta, n.d.-f).

5.1.4 Hermannin polku

Hermannin polku (Picture 4) consists of two different routes that both lead on to a place called Kaihiharju. Kaihiharju has a toilet and campfire site available for anyone to use. The other trail is 600 meters long and the other one 2.5 kilometres. However, Kaihiharju is located in the middle of the forest, so the trail of choice must be walked back to the starting position as well (Soinin kunta, n.d.-b).



Picture 4. Hermannin polku (Soinin kunta, n.d.-g).

5.1.5 Hermanninlenkki

Hermanninlenkki (Picture 5) is a 7-kilometre-long ring route. This trail has the most diverse nature as the sights change from forests to swamps. On the swamps, the trail goes on long wooden planks to ensure getting over them without getting wet (Soinin kunta, n.d.-b).

5.2 Trails for people with mobility impairments

In addition to the five major trails, Soini also has two shorter fully accessible trails (Picture 6) available for people with mobility impairments. The shorter one of the trails is 200 meters long and is easily accessible with a wheelchair. The toilet on the scene can also be accessed with a wheelchair. The longer trail is 700 meters long and leads up to a campfire site. On the trail, there are four different benches to stop and rest. This longer trail might not be fully accessible for anyone in a wheelchair and might need an assistant with you (Soinin kunta, n.d.-c).



Picture 6. Fully accessible trails (Soinin kunta, n.d.-i).

5.3 Maintenance of the trails

Based on my own observations, the trails are well taken care of during summertime. It is easy to follow the trails as they are constantly marked with colored wooden poles on the way. There is no trash to be seen and bridges crossing streams are heavy-duty and easy to cross.

During wintertime, the trails are not maintained for hiking use. Even the roads leading up to the trails might not be plowed so you cannot even reach the starting points of the trails by car. Once there is deep snow, the trails become inaccessible. However, some of the trails are transformed into skiing trails based on the snow situation and can be used for cross-country skiing during wintertime.

6 SURVEY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

6.1 Objective of the survey

The main objective of the survey was to find out which social media channels people use, and on which channels they find interesting new content. This was the objective because the Municipality of Soini is looking to start marketing on social media, and they wanted to find out which social media channels would be the most suitable and efficient. The secondary objectives were to find out if people have already visited or heard about the Municipality of Soini before to measure their current level of awareness amongst people. The third objective was to find out how much people move in nature overall and how long distances at a time to know that on which kinds of trails the marketing should be focused on.

6.2 Survey questions and results

The survey was conducted as a Google Forms survey fully online. It was sent out to fellow students from different study programs, including international students, as well as relatives and friends. People responding to the survey could also share it with anyone as the aim was to gather responses from different kinds of people without a certain target group. The survey gathered 63 different responses from people living anywhere in Finland.

Ikäsi? / Your age?

63 vastausta

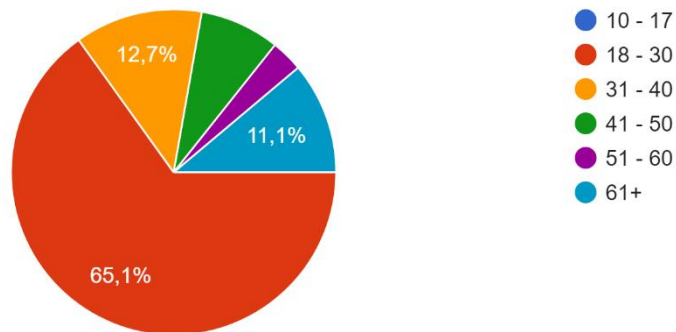


Figure 1. Respondents' age (n= 63).

From this pie chart (Figure 1) we can see the ages of people who responded to the survey. Most responses came from young adults aged between 18 and 30, covering 65.1% of the total responses. Second most responses were gained from people aged between 31 and 40, covering 12.7% of the total responses. Third most responses came from elderly people, aged 61+, covering 11.1% of the total responses.

Kansalaisuutesi? / Your nationality?

63 vastausta

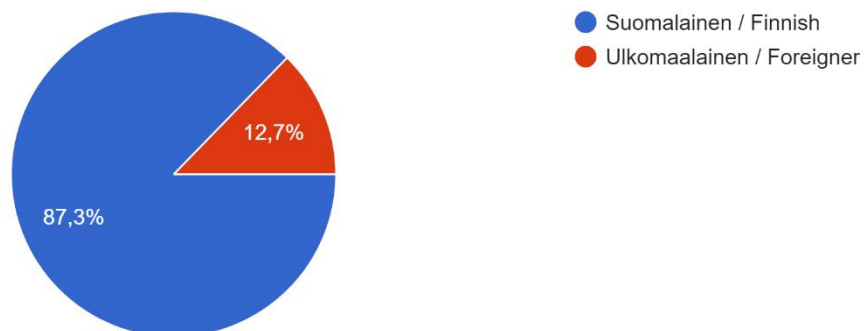


Figure 2. Respondents' nationality (n= 63).

As the survey was also sent out to international people living abroad in Finland, nationality was also a question. The pie chart (Figure 2), shows that most of the respondents were Finnish, covering 87.3% of the responses. All remaining 12.7% of answers came from people with other various nationalities.

Mitä sosiaalisen median kanavia käytät päivittäin? / Which social media platforms do you use daily?

63 vastausta

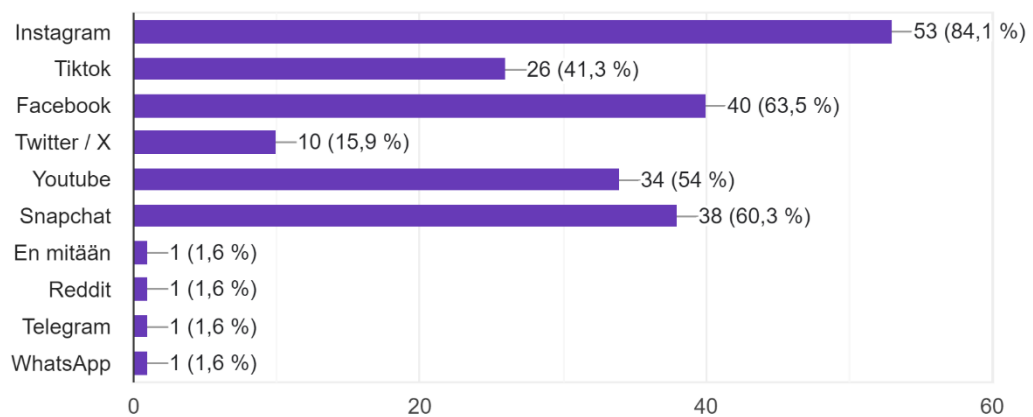


Figure 3. Social media platforms used by the respondents (n= 63).

Bar chart (Figure 3) shows which social media platforms do the respondents use on a daily basis. This question had a possibility to pick multiple options and also type your own answer. Most used platform is Instagram with 84.1% usage. Second most used platform is Facebook with 63.5% usage and third most Snapchat with 60.3% usage.

Millä sosiaalisen median kanavilla löydät usein uutta mielenkiintoista sisältöä? / On which social media platforms do you often find new interesting content?

63 vastausta

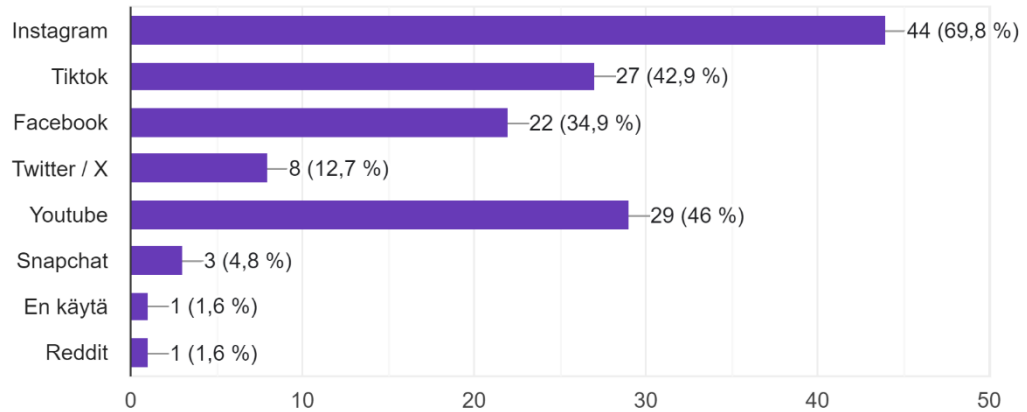


Figure 4. Social media platforms where the respondents find interesting new content (n= 63).

The below bar chart (Figure 4) shows the question about the platforms that the respondents find often interesting new content. Instagram got most answers with 69.8% of the responses. Second most popular answer was YouTube with 46% of the responses, and third most TikTok with 42.9% of the responses. This question also had the option to pick multiple options.

Oletko kuullut tai käynyt Soinin kunnassa? / Have you heard about or visited the municipality of Soini?

63 vastausta

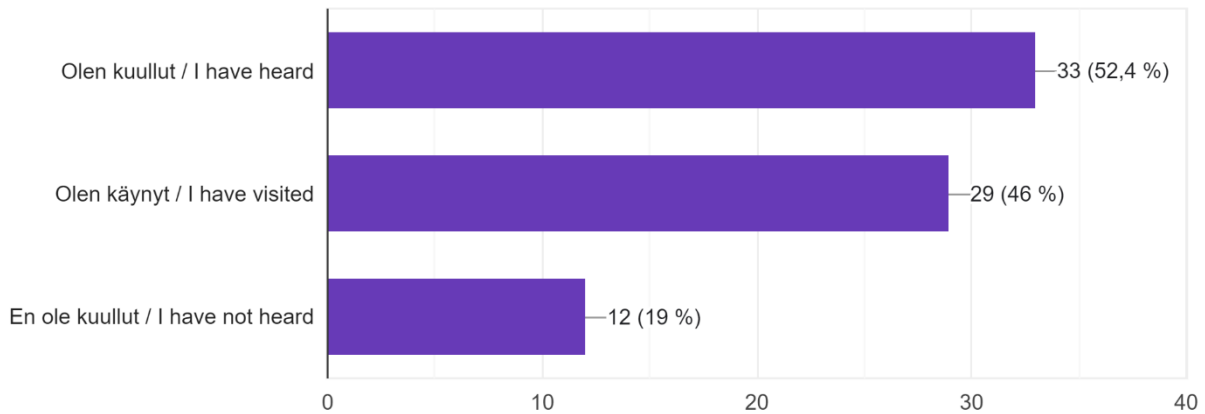


Figure 5. Have the respondents heard about the Municipality of Soini (n= 63).

When it comes to the question if people had heard about or visited the Municipality of Soini before, the bar chart (Figure 5) shows that most people had heard about or visited Soini before. Over half of the respondents had heard about Soini before and 46% even visited. This question also had the options to pick multiple options.

Kuuluuko arkeesi luonnossa liikkumista? / Does your everyday life include moving in nature?

63 vastausta

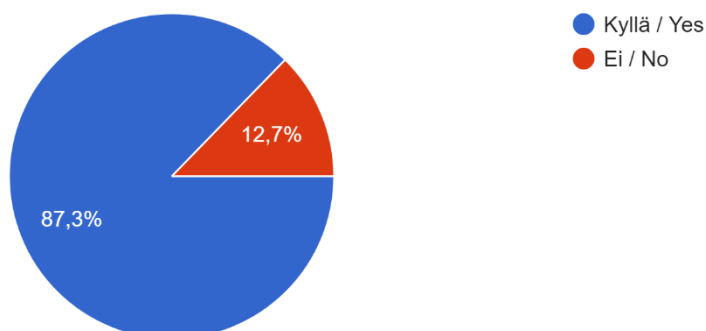


Figure 6. Does the respondent's everyday life include moving around in nature (n= 63).

Majority of the respondents move around in nature in their everyday life as the pie chart (Figure 6) shows. Only 12.7% of the respondents do not move in nature on a daily basis.

Jos kyllä, kuinka pitkiä matkoja kerrallaan? / If yes, how long distances at a time?

56 vastausta

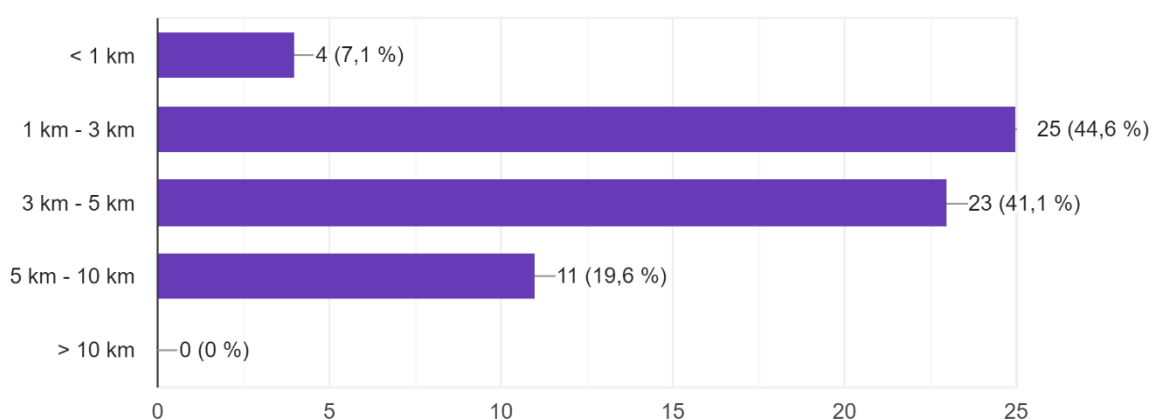


Figure 7. How long distances the respondents cover moving around in nature at a time (n= 63).

This question was answered only the respondent answered the previous question (Figure 6) with “yes”. This chart (Figure 7) shows that how long of a distance the respondents usually travel when moving in nature. This question also had the possibility to pick multiple options and most answers gained the option 1 km to 3 km at the time with 44.6% of the answers. It was also tied with the second most popular answer which was 3 km to 5 km at the time with 41.1% of the votes.

Onko sinulla liikuntarajoitteita? / Do you have any mobility impairment?

63 vastausta

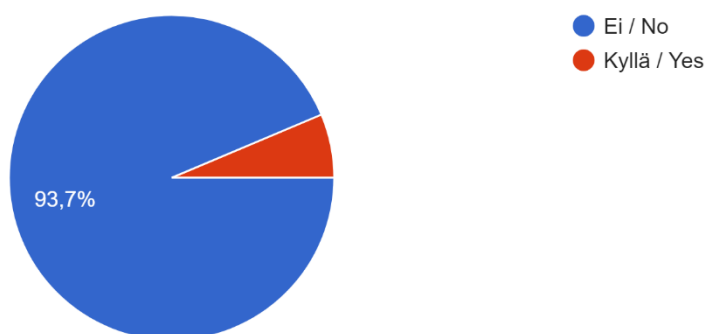


Figure 8. Do the respondents have any mobility impairments (n= 63).

The final chart (Figure 8) shows the answers for the question if the respondents have any mobility impairments. Huge majority of respondents do not have any mobility impairments, as only 6.3%, more precisely four respondents, answered to have a mobility impairment.

6.3 Analyzing the answers

It is also important to look at the questions and answers as a whole, and how they correlate to each other rather than just individually analyzing them to find out more.

6.3.1 Social media questions

Based on pure popularity on the question about which social media platforms are being most used, the top platforms were Instagram (84.1%), Facebook (63.5%) and Snapchat (60.3%) as seen in the chart (Figure 3). However, not far behind in usage percentage came YouTube (54%) and TikTok (41.3%) (Figure 3). When looking at the platforms that respondents find most interesting new content on (Figure 4), it can be seen that Instagram is still on top (69.8%), but YouTube (46%) and TikTok (42.9%) have surpassed Facebook (34.9%) and Snapchat (4.8%). From these results can be concluded that ultimately the best platform for conducting social media marketing would be Instagram. Other good platforms according to the numbers would be YouTube and TikTok, as even though they were not in the top three platform by user volume, they seem to provide more new content towards the users. When it comes to Facebook, it would still be relatively good option, but Snapchat is not as its interesting new content number dropped to 4.8% (Figure 4).

I also wanted to divide the respondents by age to gain information if the overall results on the social media questions are also valid on every age group when looked at separately. I took the age groups of 18 to 30 and 61+ into comparison as they are the furthest apart in the age groups with enough answers to analyze them (Figure 1).

Table 1. Above 61-year-olds social media usage (n= 7).

Your age?	Which social media platforms do you use daily?	On which social media platforms do you often find new interesting content?		
61+	Facebook	Facebook		
61+	Instagram, Facebook, Youtube	Instagram, Facebook		
61+	Instagram, Facebook	Instagram, Facebook		
61+	No usage	No usage		
61+	Facebook, Youtube	Youtube		
61+	Instagram, Facebook, Youtube	Youtube		
61+	Instagram, Facebook	Instagram, Facebook		

As can be seen, out of the respondents aged 61+, four out of seven told to find interesting new content on Facebook (Table 1). Even though the sampling is small on this group, Facebook was the most chosen option with over 57% of the responses, and this number is higher than in the overall results, where the equivalent number was 34.9% (Figure 4). From this can be deduced that Facebook should be considered a valid social media platform, when trying to target people aged over 61 years old.

Table 2. 18 to 30-year-olds social media usage part 1 (n= 33).

Your age?	Which social media platforms do you use daily?	On which social media platforms do you often find new interesting content?
18 - 30	Instagram, Facebook	Instagram, Facebook, Youtube
18 - 30	Instagram, Facebook	Instagram
18 - 30	Instagram, Tiktok, Snapchat	Instagram, Tiktok
18 - 30	Instagram, Tiktok, Youtube, Snapchat	Tiktok, Youtube
18 - 30	Instagram, Snapchat	Instagram
18 - 30	Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat	Instagram, Tiktok, Facebook, Youtube
18 - 30	Tiktok, Snapchat	Tiktok
18 - 30	Instagram, Tiktok, Facebook, Youtube	Instagram, Tiktok, Facebook
18 - 30	Instagram, Tiktok, Facebook, Youtube, Snapchat	Instagram, Tiktok
18 - 30	Instagram, Tiktok, Facebook, Snapchat	Instagram, Tiktok, Facebook
18 - 30	Instagram, Tiktok, Facebook, Youtube, Snapchat	Instagram, Tiktok, Youtube
18 - 30	Instagram, Tiktok, Facebook, Youtube, Snapchat	Tiktok
18 - 30	Tiktok, Snapchat	Instagram, Tiktok
18 - 30	Instagram, Tiktok, Facebook, Snapchat	Instagram, Tiktok
18 - 30	Instagram, Youtube, Snapchat	Youtube
18 - 30	Instagram, Tiktok, Youtube, Snapchat	Tiktok, Youtube
18 - 30	Instagram, Tiktok, Facebook, Twitter / X, Youtube, Snapchat	Instagram, Tiktok, Facebook, Twitter / X, Youtube
18 - 30	Instagram, Tiktok, Youtube, Snapchat	Instagram, Tiktok
18 - 30	Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, Snapchat	Facebook, Youtube
18 - 30	Instagram, Tiktok, Facebook, Twitter / X, Youtube, Snapchat	Facebook
18 - 30	Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat	Instagram, Facebook
18 - 30	Snapchat, Reddit	Reddit
18 - 30	Instagram, Tiktok, Youtube, Snapchat	Instagram, Tiktok
18 - 30	Instagram, Twitter / X, Youtube	Instagram, Youtube
18 - 30	Instagram, Twitter / X, Snapchat	Twitter / X
18 - 30	Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, Snapchat	Instagram, Youtube
18 - 30	Tiktok, Snapchat, Telegram	Instagram, Tiktok
18 - 30	Instagram, Tiktok, Facebook, Youtube, Snapchat	Instagram, Tiktok, Youtube
18 - 30	Instagram, Tiktok, Facebook, Youtube, Snapchat	Instagram, Tiktok, Facebook, Twitter / X, Youtube, Snapchat
18 - 30	Instagram, Tiktok, Facebook, Youtube, Snapchat	Instagram, Tiktok, Facebook, Youtube
18 - 30	Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, Snapchat	Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, Snapchat
18 - 30	Instagram, Tiktok, Twitter / X, Youtube, Snapchat	Instagram, Tiktok, Twitter / X, Youtube, Snapchat
18 - 30	Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, Snapchat	Youtube

Table 3. 18 to 30-year-olds social media usage part 2 (n= 8).

18 - 30	Instagram, Tiktok, Twitter / X, Youtube, Snapchat	Tiktok, Twitter / X, Youtube
18 - 30	Instagram, Tiktok, Facebook, Youtube, Snapchat	Instagram, Tiktok, Youtube
18 - 30	Instagram, Tiktok, Youtube, Snapchat	Instagram, Tiktok, Youtube
18 - 30	Instagram, Tiktok, Twitter / X, Youtube, Snapchat	Instagram, Tiktok, Twitter / X, Youtube
18 - 30	Instagram, Youtube, Snapchat	Instagram, Youtube
18 - 30	Instagram, Tiktok, Facebook, Youtube, Snapchat	Instagram, Tiktok
18 - 30	Instagram, Youtube	Instagram, Youtube
18 - 30	Instagram, Youtube, Snapchat	Instagram

When looking at the results to the social media usage questions in the age group between 18- and 30-year-olds (Table 2 and Table 3), can be seen that the results follow

the trend with the overall results (Figure 4). Of course, the sampling size on this group was the highest out of all the age groups, so this perfectly makes sense. The overall results can be used as a guideline when trying to target this age group.

6.3.2 Soini awareness questions

When looking at the question results from the question if the respondents have heard about Soini before (Figure 5), can be seen that the current awareness level is quite decent with 52.4% of respondents having heard about the Municipality of Soini before. Also 46% of respondents had also visited Soini before (Figure 5). These numbers tell that even though Soini is a small municipality, fairly many respondents already recognize the name of Soini.

6.3.3 Nature questions

In the results from the question of how much people move in nature in their everyday life (Figure 6), can be seen that the majority of the respondents (87.3%) do move in nature daily. The next question related to this question was answered only if the respondent answered “yes” to the question about moving in nature in their everyday life (Figure 6). This was the question about how long distances the respondent moves at a time (Figure 7). From the results can be seen that the most popular distances were 1 km to 3 km and 3 km to 5 km (Figure 7). These results tell that the focus on the nature trails in the Municipality of Soini should be on trails that cover these distances, on average around 3 km in length.

6.3.4 Mobility impairment question

As the Municipality of Soini also has two trails available for people with mobility impairments, I also wanted to find out how many respondents have one. The results show that 6.3% do have a mobility impairment (Figure 8). Even though the number seems low, it is still valid to have these trails for people with mobility impairments as there is also an audience for them.

7 FUTURE RESEARCH

As for now, the Municipality of Soini aims to market their nature trails only domestically to people living in Finland. However, in the future, marketing could be expanded to also target people from other countries as well. Soini offers a great experience in nature with their nature trails that include peace and quiet, something that cannot be experienced all around the world.

Pokorny (2023) states that there are multiple reasons why global expansion is beneficial. She says that one of the most obvious reasons is that it improves sales as you are exposing yourself to wider amounts of people. In this case, it would bring more awareness to the Municipality of Soini and potentially get more people interested in them. This is one of the major objectives of any company.

Pokorny (2023) also mentions another reason why global expansion is beneficial that applies to the Municipality of Soini and that is the gain of new partnerships. For example, similar places across the world or travel agencies could get interested in what Soini has to offer and contact them for possible partnerships that benefit both parties. Similar places that also offer nature trails could also market Soini as another place to visit and vice versa. Travel agencies could plan trips and vacations for their customers to visit Soini, the partnership possibilities are endless.

8 CONCLUSION

The main research objective was to find out which social media platforms the Municipality of Soini should use in order to start efficiently marketing in social media. Secondary objective was to find out the current level of awareness that the Municipality of Soini currently has amongst the public. Third and final objective was to see how much and what kinds of distances people move in the nature in their everyday life.

The results show that the number one social media platform to use for social media marketing would be Instagram. It came on top in both, usage popularity and as the platform that provides users with most interesting new content. Secondary options based on the research results would be YouTube and TikTok. The same options are viable when trying to target people between the ages of 18 and 30. But when trying to aim the marketing towards more elderly people, Facebook becomes a relevant option as it still remains its popularity amongst people aged over 61 years.

The current awareness level of the Municipality of Soini is fairly high when considering the smallness of the municipality. Survey results show that over half of the respondents had heard about the municipality before and almost half even visited. This awareness level is a good base to start planning social media marketing on.

Moving in nature is a part of most people's lives and the distances usually moved in nature at a time range between 1 km and 5 km, according to the survey results. These results tell that the biggest focus when marketing, should be on the nature trails covering distances between 1 km and 5 km, 3 km on average, as the majority of people are willing to move distances like these at a time. Also, there is a market for the fully accessible nature trails designed for people with mobility impairments, meaning their marketing should also be considered.

The results provided by the survey were positive, and the most popular social media platforms for social media marketing were found. The results can be used by the Municipality of Soini to start planning their social media marketing approach.

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