



Digital marketing in horse tourism

Case: Stable Furuvatni

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Abstract

Horses have historical significance for humans, but today horses promote both mental and physical health. In horse tourism, horses are used in experience, recreation, and well-being services, which enables versatile activities. All of these are important as part of horse tourism marketing.

The need for research arose from the need to create a new website for the stable Furuvatni and to develop their social media. The goal of the main research was to develop the digital marketing of stable Furuvatni. Benchmarking was used when familiarizing with Finnish horse tourism companies, based on which a development plan was created.

With this, a new website was created for the stable Furuvatni and social media was developed. Through digital marketing, stable Furuvatni can gain wider visibility and new customers and improve customer satisfaction. The number of permanent and committed customers can also increase which results in increased word-of-mouth marketing. Other entrepreneurs in the horse industry can also benefit from the research in the future.

Keywords/tags (subjects)

Horse tourism, digital marketing, digital marketing trends, Icelandic horse, benchmarking

Miscellaneous (Confidential information)

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1 Introduction

Horse tourism is a form of tourism that, if implemented correctly, can be very beneficial for the community and people. Horse tourism combines horse and nature. Together with a horse, you can explore wonderful landscapes and learn new skills. Digital marketing enables better visibility of horse tourism and attracts more customers. The thesis goes through the digital marketing of horse tourism. The thesis contains a study to improve the website and social media of stable Furuvatni. The thesis first discusses horse tourism, its origin, horse tourism and equestrian tourism as concepts, benefits of horse tourism, risks, and management of risks in horse tourism, and Icelandic horses as part of horse tourism in Finland. The thesis also discusses digital marketing. Social media and marketing are defined, their trends, advantages and disadvantages are explained, and finally we focus on customer orientation. The marketing of horse tourism in the digital world will also be discussed, after which we will move on to research. The thesis research is based on the client stable Furuvatni which is a small country stable located in Petäjävesi. The stable offers Icelandic horse-riding lessons and horseback treks. Stable Furuvatni needed a new website and an update to social media as part of marketing. With the help of functioning websites, the amount of work for the entrepreneur is reduced, because the customer can find the necessary and up-to-date information and know how to act accordingly. Good websites and social media bring customers and help in their commitment. The general practices found in the research may also benefit other stable entrepreneurs in the future. The research tells about its implementation, research question, method, competition research, open question interview method and the old pages of Furuvatni. The research question arose from the need to create new and developed existing digital marketing platforms for Furuvatni. This is how the research question became "How could digital marketing be developed?". The aim of the research was to create a website for the stable Furuvatni that was customer-friendly and supported the current operations of the stable. The aim was to use social media to meet the customers' wishes and to support the stable's marketing. The research is limited to developing the Furuvatni stable's website and social media. To be able to develop these, the research was limited to also consider marketing and social media. Finnish horse stables were used in benchmarking to create general guidelines for the development. Traditional means of advertising and foreign horse stables were excluded. The results of the research will be presented by new websites and social media. Finally, there is a reflection on the literature review and limitations, as well as the future direction.

2 Horse tourism

The significance of the horse to humans has historically been to serve as a part of transportation systems as well as companions and helpers. With the help of horses, the passage of nations eased e.g. both commercially and militarily. The use of horses became more common to various types of work and its role remains consistent even today especially in rural areas. Horses also began to meet the socio-cultural and economic needs of communities. This gave the start to a tradition known as horse culture referring to communities that use horses in their everyday lives for tasks like herding and in horse-related ceremonies and rituals. However, the importance of the horses evolved over time to include participation in recreation, sports activities and even leisure. This is how the tourism trend called horse sports was born which emerged in Europe, North America, and Australia in the 1950s and 1960s. (Alemu, 2020.)

2.1 Horse tourism and equestrian tourism

Horse tourism is diverse, and it can be seen in activities such as nature exploration, family vacations, visits to horse stables, horse events and most famously as horseback riding. Horse tourism companies also offer experience, recreation, and well-being services. (Hippolis, 2024.) Horseback riding tourism is a significant part of horse tourism. This form of tourism which has expanded into a travel trend which combines tourism with horseback riding providing an experiential mode of travel. It blends adventure and culture, connecting with like-minded people and assimilate nature in its purest form, even in places otherwise inaccessible or challenging to reach. Horseback riding tourism often includes spending time in rural areas which gives travelers the opportunity to immerse themselves in local cultures, understand different ways of life, and create meaningful connections with local communities. A significant aspect in horseback riding tourism is the bond that forms between the rider and the horse. This bond is profound and unique. (ReiterWelt, 2023.)

Horse tourism and equestrian tourism are often thought of as the same thing, but a real equestrian tourism product lasts at least two days and includes an overnight stay. It is a combination of a desire to ride in nature, a passion for horse riding and an interest in visiting places located in different provinces, continents and countries that can only be reached by horse. The experience can include going through gorges, crossing rivers and camping. The key factor in equestrian tourism is escaping from the stress of the city and enjoying nature and scenery. Equestrian tourism products

include beach riding, where the entire trip is carried along the coast, either near the beach or on the beach, camping riding, where you stay overnight in tents and various camps and ride for several days, as well as staying at horse farms or estancias, where you make daily riding trips in different directions and spend the night on a farm. (Ampascachi, 2021.)

2.2 Horse tourism benefits and risk management

Horse tourism has both a physical and mental effect on human well-being. Ewa Malchrowicz-Mośko, Dariusz Wieliński and Katarzyna Adamczewska conducted a quantitative study involving 2651 professional and amateur riders. The study included questions about the benefits and harms of horseback riding. The study used a statistical analysis that included the U-Mann Whitney test. As a result of the study it was found that riding increased pleasure with 67.9% rating it the highest in terms of enhancing enjoyment. 63.6% answered that riding improved mood and 59.68% stated that it induced relaxation. Additionally, 52.92% answered that horseback riding improves mental health and 51.04% considered it as good entertainment. However, some perceived disadvantages including the cost of riding, the time it consumed, and that there are not enough riding facilities. On the other hand, the physical benefits were answered to be that riding increases muscle strength and better muscle condition, improved body appearance, and enhanced physical fitness. Riding also answered to increase endurance and improve overall physical function. Despite this some respondents disclosed that riding is physically demanding. (Malchrowicz-Mośko, Wieliński & Adamczewska, 2020.)

Horses are also utilized in socio-pedagogical activities that aim to prevent alienation and support social growth and well-being. The activity focuses on the interaction between a person and a horse. Through interaction with horses, individuals can perceive their own traits that they may not have been aware of before. Working with horses provides an opportunity to learn behavior patterns because a horse is a sensitive animal and strongly senses the emotional state of a person and react according to its instincts. For example, a horse may retreat if it senses the person becoming nervous. Without this reaction a person would not necessarily notice their own behavior patterns. Thus, well-being involves continuous learning and person learns through experiences and observation. Working with horses can help a person to learn new things about themselves and gain courage for example being present and focused. Furthermore, horse also do not judge who we are and

what we have achieved but offers a genuine and practical opportunity for learning. (Strömberg, 2014.)

Working with horses also teaches empathy and trust promoting interaction and the creation of trust between the horse and the human. The calming presence and steady breathing of a horse have a positive effect on the mood and stress levels. Through interaction with horses a person can also learn to recognize their own needs and find ways to fulfill them. Overall, working with horses can promote physical activity, emphasize the importance of nature's presence, and enhance social interaction which supports mental and physical health in various ways.

The rapid growth of the horse industry has brought numerous challenges especially when new people join the industry without previous experience with horses and the special features of the industry. Safety issues have become a significant concern. Ensuring the well-being of horses is crucial in minimizing risks. (Saastamoinen, 2010.)

Insufficient experience among newcomers increases dangerous situations. Therefore, emphasis should be placed in education and information sharing. Horse industry organizations and training institutions could offer more courses and training programs focusing on safe horse handling and care. The need for mentoring also increases so that the problem can be solved, and newcomers learn faster and avoid dangerous situations. It is important to consider the well-being of horses as part of training because poor conditions can make a horse unpredictable or aggressive. Proper care and environment together with the right kind of nutrition, exercise and health care are key to the horse's well-being and thus human safety.

The importance of experience when working with horses is significant. The knowledge gained through experience affects how people engage with horses and experience or lack of it is understood as an explanation of one's own successes and failures. When communicating and caring for horses it is essential to observe and interpret the signs the horse gives. Reading a horse is not just an interpretation of communication but it includes the ability to understand the horse's behavior, physical and mental state, as well as signs that can be seen in the stable environment such as appetite, movement, and mood. (Schuurman, 2010.)

2.3 The Icelandic horse as part of horse tourism in Finland

The Icelandic horse plays a central role in the horse tourism business. From the point of view of sustainable operations, the quality of the horses is of primary importance, and the Icelandic horse, which is known for its small size, recognizable colors and versatile gaits, is a breed that attracts enthusiasts all over the country. The horses of this breed have adapted to the harsh conditions of their home country, and the Icelandic horses are naturally calm. The visual appeal of Icelandic horses increases their appeal and attracts tourists, as they come in many different colors. Icelandic horses also have versatile gaits, including gaits of all horses which are walk, trot and gallop but they also have tolt and flying pace, which are only associated with Icelandic horse riding. Also due to its small size, the Icelandic horse is suitable for both beginners and experienced riders. (Helgadóttir & Sigurðardóttir, 2008.)

3 Digital marketing

3.1 Definition of social media and marketing

Social media is a digital technology for sharing ideas, information, text, and visuals that takes place in virtual networks and communities. Over 4.7 billion people use social media globally. Users create content for social media and engage people through likes, shares, comments, and discussion. Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, and WeChat are the largest social media platforms in the world. (Dollarhide, 2024). In addition, platforms like X formerly known as Twitter are popular social media platforms. Mobile applications enhance the use of social media and make them more accessible. Social media enables connection and interaction, but it can also be used for marketing and advertising. It is an important part of many companies' marketing campaigns.

Social media often refers to forms of media that require interactive participation. There are two different eras in the media, which are the broadcast era and the interactive era. Broadcast time refers to radio and television stations, film production studios, and newspaper companies that distribute messages to many people as centralized entities. Interactivity became the focus of new media activities with the rise of digital and mobile technologies. Immediate feedback and the opportunity for consumers to share their opinions became possible. New technology made it possible to search for information from several sources, media consumption increased, and discussion through message forums became possible. Social media at the center involves the user and enables interaction. Part of social media is the creation of a personal profile, which lists various forms of contact, such as work and professional connections as well as recreational and personal connections. (Manning, 2014.)

Another form of social media is e-mail, which is one of the most common forms of everyday media. A faster communication method than e-mail is a text message. Text messages use the Internet so that the conversation can be carried back and forth quickly. The word blog comes from the word weblog. In a blog, information is distributed to many people via a website and the Internet. Discussion forums and connection sites give the opportunity to interact. (Manning, 2014.)

Marketing is an activity that a company uses to promote the sale of its services or products. Marketing gives the opportunity to sell products and services to consumers, organizations, and companies. A key factor in marketing is getting the public's attention through advertising. Marketing and promotion professionals' direct campaigns to targeted audiences using different methods. In these, the key factors are usually memorability, graphicness, the participation of well-known persons, and catchiness. (Twin, 2024.) According to Twin (2024): "Marketing makes use of the "marketing mix," also known as the four Ps—product, price, place, and promotion". Today, marketing is focused on digital marketing, but before marketing techniques were word of mouth, mail, television, and radio strategy. These techniques are still being used alongside new ones such as social media, content marketing strategies and newsletters. However, the most important thing is to find the ideal customer base and to get the customers' attention to focus on the product and service. (Twin, 2024.)

3.2 Digital marketing trends

Recent trends in social media have included short videos and this trend continues even today. Short videos are considered the most engaging type of content by consumers and it is one of the best ways to connect with and reach new audience. However, long videos have also recently gained new popularity and it is important to utilize them alongside short videos. Another recent trend is the playfulness of the content. Brands have recently come up with creative ways to bring out their brand personality through various playful experiments. This has involved exploiting meme culture and internet trends. However, it is important to remember when using them to maintain the brand's image, voice, and tone. Social media sales have also been an expanding trend and have been seen especially in TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram where social commerce has been enabled. Social media channels also serve as important search engines. It is therefore important to optimize social media profiles and messages for easy discoverability. This can be achieved using keywords and hashtags. (Hill, 2024.)

Transparency is significant growing trend. More and more people want authentic content and to see the business practices and values of brands. When the public is included behind the scenes, we offer them more transparency, but at the same time we get to practice social listening and we can identify emerging topics of discussion. Then we can understand problems in time and get ahead of future necessary changes. A big trend is also the authenticity of the content and this

trend is here to stay. Content producers are a big part of this trend by creating authentic voices for brands. Employees can also be part of the implementation of this trend. With creative and playful posts and introducing employees, you can advertise the brand in a genuine way. The importance of a human-centered approach to social media is a constant trend. The economy of creators and influencers is on the rise and their place is constantly becoming more important in creating an audience. The growing popularity is based on the authenticity and relatability that creators and influencers create. An authentic voice together with stories and creating a personal connection with the audience creates familiarity, trust, and loyalty as well as a brand message. A large part of the continuous growth and development of social media is new social teams and titles. With new platforms, new responsibilities and new necessary skills arise, which must be considered in the structures and development of teams. Deficiencies and the risk of obsolescence must be identified, and new roles introduced. (Hill, 2024.)

Personal customer service is constantly on the rise and expectations for it have risen. According to Index, up to 70% of consumers expect personal answers instead of quick answers, and 76% of consumers value companies' prioritizing customer support. Just like using artificial intelligence in marketing and customer service teams is one of the social media trends of the moment. Artificial intelligence is used to create content, scale customer service responses, and as a marketing and customer service tool. As the use of artificial intelligence becomes more common, the discussion about its ethics and safe use also increases. The creation of an artificial intelligence practice is an important part of keeping the brand and the team protected. (Hill, 2024.)

Social data plays a key role for marketers. Social data is often thought to be relevant only for digital marketing, but according to Hill (2024): "Social media data has the power to inform every area and team of your organization and improve your entire business, from product, to customer support to PR." Social information should be used in wider business and the data should be familiarized with to identify social media trends in one's own content. By knowing how to use social data, you can streamline your strategy and share its impact. With a strong strategy, a solid foundation and success also develop.

Current trends in marketing include artificial intelligence and the opportunities it creates. According to Benson & Sidlova (2024): "According to Kantar's Media Reactions 2023, 67% of marketers

feel positive about the possibilities of Gen AI." Artificial intelligence is utilized to enhance innovation and to develop and personalize creativity on a larger scale. AI can be a support in the ideation phase and in the creation of the story, bringing more opportunities and efficiency. (Benson & Sidlova, 2024.) Marketing must also be in line with culture. Culture should be monitored as part of marketing to create a connection with consumers. To help with this, you can use language, music, fashion, norms, characters, and aspirations. In the Kantar MONITOR monitoring in the USA, it was found that about two-thirds want brands to match their personal values, and up to 80% answered that they make an effort to be able to buy from companies that support things that are important to them. In the future, it is important to invest in synchronizing the culture, because customers have higher expectations of brands. (Walker Smith, 2024.) Cancel culture has recently been a rising trend, especially in social media. When the adoption of brands' positions has increased, so has publicity increased for better or for worse. With taking positions there are more opinions, which causes the risk of backlash. It is important to be prepared for these backlashes, and setting clear parameters helps to avoid them. Parameters should be used especially when influencers participate as part of marketing. In the best case, influencers can attract a lot of committed consumers, but in the worst case, cause the brand to be cancelled. (Bubani, 2024).

Attention to digital ads is popular among marketers. This is measured by facial coding and eye tracking techniques. Views and viewing time are also a way to measure whether the ad has worked, and they serve as dominant methods of measuring attention. (Sidlova & Southgate, 2024.) It is also important to measure long-term success. The measurements focus on value creation, a positive community, participation, environmental impacts, and sustainable development in general. Sustainable development is being measured more and more and the goals for it are rising, because consumers are looking for companies that show the promotion of environmental and social solutions. In a business strategy, it is important to consider both the planet and the people. (Horsley, 2024.) One of the current trends is also innovations and especially sustainable innovations. Brands that achieve a competitive advantage through innovation through courage, testing and learning combine characteristics such as consumer focus and a strong brand foundation. They are pioneers in sustainable development and typically shape the future of their class. (Morley, 2024.) Innovations are also related to marketing capabilities, which should be built in several different critical areas. In addition to innovation, these areas include disruption, speed of market access, consumer expertise and a consumer-centric approach, storytelling and agility, and data-based decision-making. Especially large global brands should take these into account, as part of

the trend is to buy from smaller brands instead of large global brands. These small brands strive to challenge the ideas of big brands, already established concepts and consumer needs. (Thomas, 2024.)

Pricing management has become a trend in 2024 with inflation. Marketers must think more and more carefully about how price and value work in synchronization, i.e. does the relative price correspond to the reality of the market and is there enough capital to justify the relative price. Successful brands raise their quality, but lowering the price is also one of the approaches that should be considered to keep up with the competition. (Staplehurst, 2024.) The importance of web computing machines is constantly increasing, and this gives a new value to keywords and algorithms. To understand the brand's customer path, search plays a decisive role. Brands must develop their content and digital strategy to ensure that they remain at the forefront of development and to be where the consumers are. (Chang, 2024.) One of the upcoming trends in the advertising industry is retail. Retail media is important for brands to attract buyers due to new consumer behaviors. The retail media network is based on the retailer's own real estate and paid media, to which the retailer sells advertising space to create advertising business. The third party will play an important role in ensuring the profitability of the investments and in measuring the development of retail media. Retail media networks also provide an additional source of income in uncertain economic times. (Meyer, 2024.)

3.3 Advantages and disadvantages of social media in marketing

With social media marketing, you can reach many customers with one message and very quickly. As social media becomes more common, people also use it more and thus companies need to be where their customers are, i.e. on social media. With this, social media can also be more cost-effective than other marketing. Social media can also reach a global audience, creating a global customer base. Social media also enables contact with the customer base and thus improves trust and community and helps with customer segmentation. By including customers in the development of the brand, they also commit and thus increase visibility and customers.

However, there are also downsides to social media marketing. Information security and privacy protection are an increasingly common concern. Social media collects information and in the worst case, this information spreads. If this information gets into the wrong hands, it can lead to

misuse of the information and thus legal problems. A big problem is also the loss of reputation, because misuse of information and negative feedback on social media travel quickly especially on social media. To prevent all this, a lot of responsibility and resources are required. A new social media platform always creates a new area of responsibility and thus requires a new person in charge. This person must be familiar with risks and their management and create a social media strategy that focuses on accountability and effectiveness, as well as staying up to date. Social media is constantly changing, and algorithms also affect visibility. A person can internalize only a part of what he sees, and it is therefore important to stand out from the crowd to maintain visibility and the audience's commitment.

4 Horse tourism marketing in the digital platforms

Storytelling and creating trust, safety, and challenges, highlighting the natural and cultural landscape turn out to be the most central in marketing horse tourism on the Internet. As part of creating trust and connection between travelers and tour operators, stories and storytelling are used. Customers' trust and the image of a shared horse culture is formed by emphasizing long experience and expertise in horse tourism. The stories are often supported by pictures, and they show the demands and excitement of horse travel and the opportunity for various challenges. This often attracts more experienced riders. However, safety is always an important factor as part of marketing. Natural beauty and rural landscapes also play a big role in the marketing of horse tourism. These often include nature parks, coasts, and mountains. Old villages and historical buildings are also part of marketing, presenting cultural heritage. Tourists are also often attracted to historical environments and places of natural beauty. Together, all these elements create exhilarating experiences. (Radmann & Hedenborg, 2019.)

Emphasizing the horse and horse care as well as the strong role of women are also one of the most important issues in the marketing of horse tourism. By placing the horses' well-being at the center, the commitment of the tour operators to the well-being of the horses, but also to offering customers safe and pleasant experiences, is communicated. The correct use of horses together with the quality of care guarantees the horses' good behavior. Women are also often at the center of the marketing of horse tourism, and they are encouraged to have active riding experiences. Here we try to bring a contrast to the traditional image of women, which is aimed at pleasing men. The strong role of women is emphasized by showing women participating in challenging situations as active and strong riders. (Radmann & Hedenborg, 2019.)

The most important digital marketing methods in horse tourism marketing are the website, social media, content marketing and email marketing. These can be used to reach new customers, target the target audience, build reputation, and promote products and services. A website provides an opportunity to present the company and products. However, the main thing is a good user experience and the quality of the content. Once again, social media enables brand building and communication with customers. Telling the story and increasing visibility is done with the help of content marketing, while communication with current and potential customers can be done via e-mail. When effectively integrated, these methods can be used to create an effective marketing strategy

together by understanding the target audience and responding to their needs. This helps the company grow and achieve its business goals in the digital world. (Evers Conrad, 2024.)

5 Customer focus

Customers' needs and wishes plays a central role in customer orientation. To implement this, customer feedback and other tools according to needs are used. This provides added value to consumers and improves the company's publicity. Serving the customer is one of the most important aspects of management in every company. When customers are well served, they engage, trust and are loyal to brands. These can increase brand awareness, profitability and help in creating a brand. Key skills in customer orientation are problem solving, adaptability, conflict resolution, empathy, active listening, creativity, communication, data analysis and customer service. (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023.)

Employee training plays a central role in implementing customer orientation. When employees value the customer experience, they understand better how to take care of customers. Continuous provision of high-quality services can be guaranteed, employees must have good training and orientation. Here the focus should be on communication, communication skills and positivity. For these skills to be implemented, the management must also invest in encouragement, praise, and rewards. Both employees and management have empathy in a key role. Through empathy, customers and their feelings can be understood better, and the service can be delivered more efficiently. In customer orientation, both internal and external thinking is important. The brand must offer positive experiences, listen to customers' concerns, offer excellent customer support and resources, develop the company based on customers' needs and offer them positive experiences, and interact with customers in person and online. (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023.)

In addition to training employees, it is also important to train management personnel. Training and incentive programs motivate managers in their professional development. Skills that generate added value for customers develop when companies focus their resources on the training of management personnel. Through this, the company creates a solid framework and gets managers who reflect the company's goals and values. The company also learns from the trainings with the help of comments and feedback and can thus find out, for example, about the managers and their needs. Participating in the local community can also promote the brand's image. Collaboration with community outreach information programs, other programs, and schools, along with encouraging employees to participate in the local community, can lead to increased brand awareness and improved public image. When a company shows that it supports education and donates supplies

or funds to local school systems, the company communicates that it cares about its customers. (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023.)

Different ways to implement customer orientation are, for example, changing protocols to better support customers, greeting customers by their first name, and money-back guarantee for products. This increases customer confidence, makes them feel welcome and valued, and shows that the company wants to help the customer with their needs in mind. Satisfied employees also create satisfied customers. Good interpersonal relationships and positive interaction are the result of a customer-oriented company culture. Through communication, customer service and corporate awareness, a customer-oriented corporate culture also affects product sales, creating long-term customer relationships. A brand can create personal value and encourage people to buy their services and products by creating trust and loyalty through friendly and good customer service. By offering valuable products and services to customers, other players in the industry strive for the same quality and service standards. In this way, the quality and service standards of the entire industry can rise, creating more sustainable practices and thus a more positive impact on the entire industry and customers. (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023.)

6 Research

The subject of the research was the development of the stable Furuvatni's website and social media to meet the current supply and standards. The research focused on creating new websites and improving social media marketing. The research focused on finding information related to website design. Websites had to be created to be user-friendly and easy to use. In social media, we once again had to boost marketing and engage new customers. Especially Instagram and Facebook are part of the marketing of stable Furuvatni, but the task was to try to get the most out of them as part of the marketing. The Furuvatni stable had received customer feedback mainly from the website, but also from social media. Part of the research was to take this customer feedback into account together with analytics and improve the marketing strategy of Furuvatni stable and its implementation.

6.1 Background, context, and research question

Stable Furuvatni's website no longer corresponded to the stable's offerings and gave misleading information. There was a lot of extra information on the website and not updating the website caused additional work and negative verbal feedback from customers. The websites were also unclear, and they had not thought about customer orientation. The daily maintenance of the pages was also difficult, and the stable keeper did not have the necessary technical know-how. The stable's website also did not meet the standards of today's horse industry websites.

Stable Furuvatni has moved to social media channels Instagram and Facebook and started to advertise activities there as well. The chosen strategy for this is to add bulletins with up-to-date and topic-appropriate images. This has been popular and gained a lot of exposure. The stable also has its own WhatsApp group, to which willing customers can be added to get more information about the stable's operations and, for example, available riding lessons. However, this social media marketing would like to be developed and diversified.

The main question for the research is "How could digital marketing be developed?". The purpose is therefore to focus on the current trends of digital marketing and to compare the practices of competing companies. The goal is to utilize the collected information and incorporate it into the

development of websites and social media. Important in this development is also customer-orientation and taking it into account when developing websites and social media.

As part of the research is a literature review, where is looked at existing literature and online sources in relevant subject areas. The aim of the research is to get information from different sources to understand the whole and to get versatile information about the subject areas, key concepts, and findings about topics and to recognize different opportunities and threats. The information was researched to help as part of the research, so that it would be as versatile and scientific as possible.

In the verbal feedback asked from customers at the stable they were asked as the main question "What would you change in the current website?" and then allowed the discussion to proceed openly. With these respondents were given the freedom to express their views completely freely and from that was received more comprehensive answers related to the topic. Based on the answers was gained a deeper understanding of the subject as well as new ideas and perspectives. Based on the opinions the websites and social media was developed respecting the development proposals and wishes of the customer base in question.

6.2 Research method

Qualitative research focuses on exploring and providing deeper insight. It collects the behavior, experiences, and observations of the participants. It answers the questions of how and why and explains the processes and patterns of human behavior. (Tenny at al., 2022.) Both research methods of the study are qualitative. In benchmarking, it can be seen in the usability of the user interface, content evaluation and contact channels. In verbal feedback, it can be seen in qualitative analysis and in-depth understanding.

In benchmarking, services, processes, and products are measured against the products of leading organizations in their field of operation. It is defined as a process where you get ideas by comparing an organization to similar organizations. However, this does not require the same customer group or business and it can also be used to identify processes, areas and systems that require improvement. (ASQ, 2024.) In appendix 1 you can find the companies selected for benchmarking. The companies include Turkan Ratsurinne, Okeroisten Talli, Kalliomaan talli, Hopoti, Tiinan talli,

Koivuniemen talli, Siipolan talli, Raijan talli sekä Wanhan Koulun talli, Wanhanmäen talli and Wanha Ratsastuskeskus. All these companies are horse tourism companies in Finland. The companies are selection of popular search results on Google. Benchmarking has been done in March 2024 and the model used for it can be found in appendix 1. Verbal feedback enables direct and immediate feedback that was both corrective, constructive, and positive. This feedback provides an opportunity to clarify expectations and improve performance. It helps to find out good features, mistakes, and suggestions for improvement, as well as possible goals for the future. This information can be used to build better services and meet demands.

In researching competing companies in the industry and conducting competitive research on them. Information about companies, their operations, marketing strategies, and services was obtained. Based on the information it was possible to map the competitive field and understand the market better. With the help of competition research, it was possible to map competitive advantages and opportunities to stand out from the crowd. Through that weaknesses, strengths, and threats were recognized. Based on the competition research, ideas on how the stable Furuvatni could develop its marketing strategy were obtained. Verbal feedback was asked from Furuvatni stable's customers, and they were able to openly tell the pros and cons of the stable and its services. Feedback was collected e.g. from the stable itself, services, website, and social media.

6.3 Findings

On several websites of horse tourism companies was the common theme that was strongly the visuality and ease of use of the websites. What caught the viewers eye was the demonstration video of the operation on the websites of a few stables. (Turkan Ratsurinne, 2024; Ratsastuskoulu Okeroisten Talli, 2019.) Several websites also told a little about what kind of stable it is, so that the customer could see if this stable would suit their needs. For example, the stable's value system was brought up many times and it was told how this is reflected in the stable's operations. On the website of one stable, the values were brought out separately one by one and explained how these are reflected in the daily life of the stable. They also had a story about where all the operation of the stable had started. (Kalliomaa stable, 2024.) Links to the social media of the stable embedded behind the icon were found on the websites of several stables. More typically, the social media posts of the stables contained current announcements and pictures of the stable's everyday

life and events. However, the main thing in the social media updates of all the stables were horse pictures, which draw attention to themselves.

The competition research revealed that comprehensive information about the stable's operations could be found on the websites of all the stables, and social media was supporting all this information available from the websites. Information about the companies' various services and their marketing strategy was found on the websites. A large part of the marketing of all horse stables was an emphasis on horse pictures. As a rule, people's attention and interest were sought with these. The stable introduction video was also a widely used method to creatively tell about the stable's operations. In many cases stables values were expressed in these videos but many had also expressed them separately as part of the text or even as separate information. In all the stables, the services offered, and the prices of these services were clearly displayed. Links to their social media were also found on the websites of almost all stables, meaning that the use of social media was part of their marketing strategy. Typical social media channels used were Instagram and Facebook. Some stables also used WhatsApp and TikTok. The booking calendar was a common method of booking services, but the majority had a separate contact by phone or e-mail to book services. On the websites of almost all stables there were navigation menus on the top or opening from the side.

Based on the research, the stable's small size, remote location and individual teaching turned out to be the most important competitive advantages of the stable Furuvatni. These were brought up on the stables' websites when reporting on their operations and values so they must be important since they are pointed out. Also, these things came to the fore when looking at the Google reviews of the stables I studied and finding out from there what aspects the stables value. Also, when talking with Furuvatni stable's customers about their favorite features of the stable, these things always came up. The stable's small size and remote location allow you to disconnect from everyday life and spend time in the bosom of nature. Due to its remote location, the customer can get a full nature experience, as the stable is surrounded by forests. Due to the small size of the stable, the number of people in the stable at a time is also small, and thus a calm atmosphere is maintained more easily. When the group sizes are small, the teaching and the implementation of the service is more individual, and each customer gets quality time together with the horse and the teacher. The stable also invests in safety which is enforced with the possibility of an assistant. The customer is

therefore not left alone if they wish, but they always have an assistant with them to secure the situation, guide and exist in constant interaction. At stable Furuvatni, the horses' well-being and good training are also at the center, which guarantees the horses' calmness and kindness. The chosen breed also helps in the realization of these qualities, as Icelandic horses are naturally calm. These features guarantee safety, but also create a reliable and warm atmosphere in the stable together with helpful and friendly staff.

When asking from customers at the stable for verbal feedback it was found that it was difficult to find information on websites. In their opinion, the information was not logically classified, but you had to search for it in several places on the website before you found it. There was also feedback about the extra useless information that was left on the website. In their opinion, this useless information confused the websites, and the way things could be found. The old information left on the website caused interest in services that were no longer available. So, there were useless contacts. However, one of the biggest topics of feedback was that the stables' website did not work on a mobile device. Many gave verbal feedback that they would expect websites to work on mobile devices as they become more common and were disappointed when there was no possibility for this. Feedback was also received on the old website about the old stable name found on the map, which confused first-timers. Many customers also tried to contact the stable by calling without success, as they thought this was the primary method of contact. The contact method was requested to be clarified, so that customers would know which way the contacts should primarily be made.

7 Developing plan

Figure 1 shows the front page of the stable's old website. The picture welcomes the customer to the stable's pages and introduces a little about the horses and the stable's activities with a photo collage. The pictures show nature and different seasons as well as customers of different skill levels. The picture also shows the training of horses.



1. Front page of old websites

Stable Furuvatni's old website was made by coding, and the entrepreneur herself did not know how to update it effectively, and she did not have someone who could have done it for her. As shown in figure 1, many old pictures of old services and already dead and sold horses that the stable had before were found on the old website. The front page was visually impressive and caught the viewer's attention. However, as part of this visuality, there are already removed activities and services from the stable, which the stable no longer offers. For example, the form of riding, the sled is attached to the horse with a rope, is no longer part of the services offered by the stable. This service is also no longer suitable for today, as it does not respect the stable's current safety practices. The horses in the pictures, most of which have already died or been sold, also give a misleading picture of the stable's operations. People expect to still find the same horses in the stable and are disappointed when there are completely different horses than what they see in the

pictures. The image also uses the font found in the stable's logo, which is also printed on the stable's branded products. However, the production of these branded products has already been discontinued.

On the new website, we decided to focus on clarity and the atmosphere created by the pictures. Figure 2 shows the front page of the new website of the stable Furuvatni. The front page welcomes the customer to the stable and shows a picture of one of the customers' favorite horses. It is also indicated below the photo who took the photo.

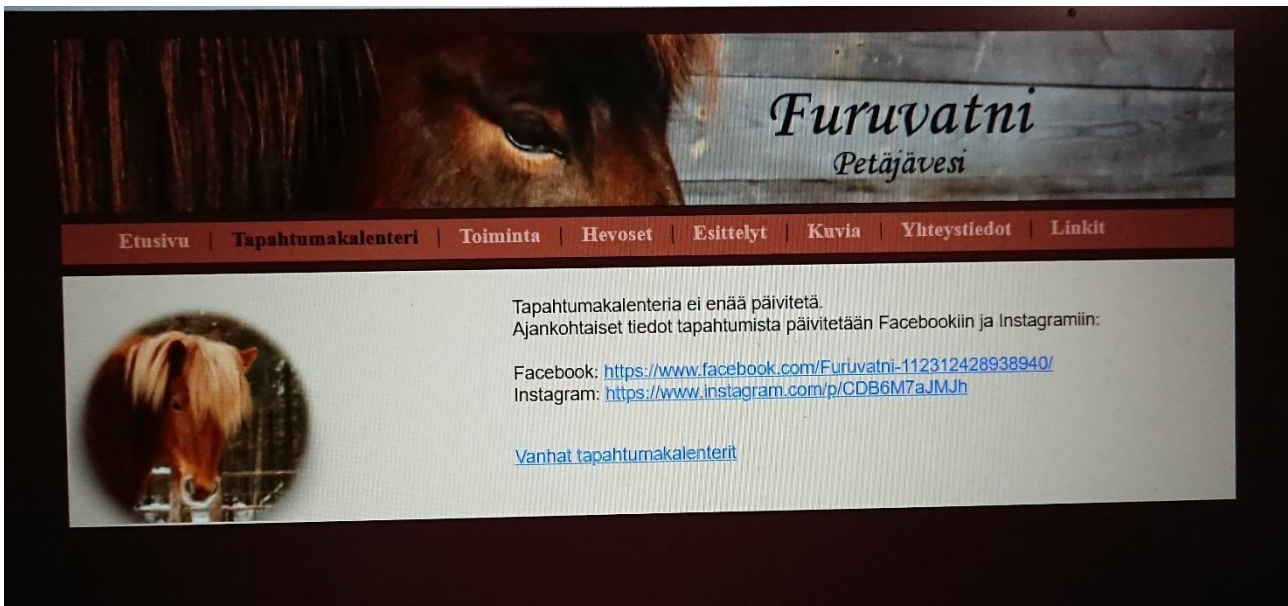


2. New website front page

In Figure 2, we can see that the new website includes social media icons at the top, from which you can directly access the stable's social media pages, as well as the entrepreneur's contact channels. At the bottom of the website, again, you can always find the address of the stable, the year

and rights of editing the website, the name of the website creation application, i.e. Webnode, and cookies. The name of the stable was kept written in the same font, and the location of the stable and the direct translation were kept below the name. The name of the stable is an Icelandic translation of the word "Petäjävesi", i.e. the place where the stable is located. We decided to clarify the transition bars and add a line under the bar that is selected. In addition, under each photo of the stable you can find the information of the person who took the photo.

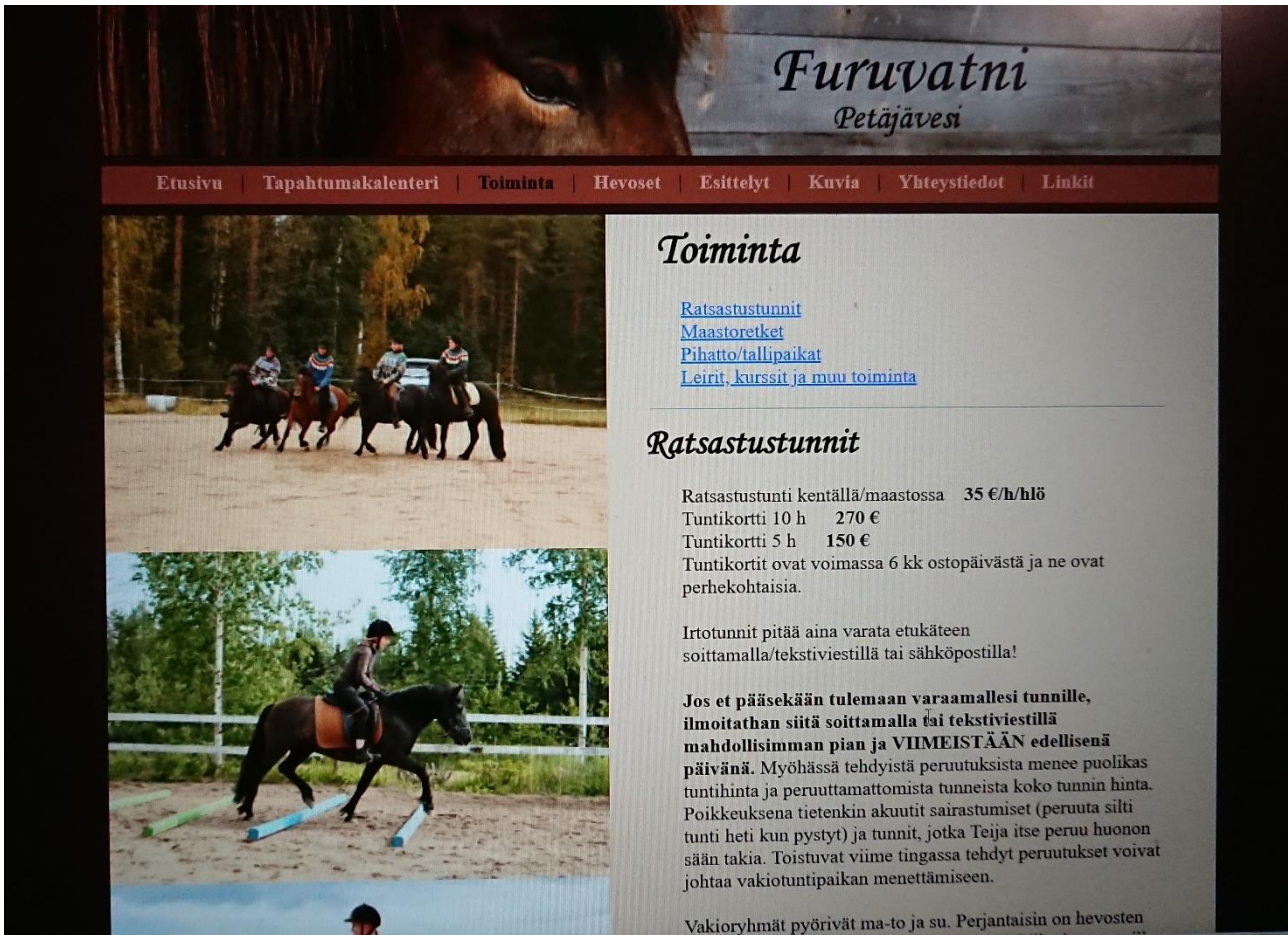
Figure 3 shows the event calendar of the old website. It now reads "the event calendar will no longer be updated" and has links to Facebook and Instagram as well as old event calendars. The picture shows the stable's old banner at the top and the transition bars between the information on the page. The bar changed from beige to black when selected, as shown in the figure.



3. Event calendar of old websites

The page shown in Figure 3 does not provide the customer with any important additional information about the stable's services. The page only states that in the future current information will be updated on social media and links to these will be provided. The link to the old event calendar is also useless for customers. The information on the page in question could very well be put together with the information on another page, so it would not need a whole page for itself.

Figure 4 shows the operation of the stable on the stable's old website. The activity tells about riding lessons, horseback trek, horse shed and stable places, camps, courses, and other activities, as well as the prices of the services. At the beginning of the page there are links that lead to different transition points on the page.



4. Activity page of old websites

The page shown in Figure 4 tells a lot about services that have already been discontinued. For example, a course session has not been organized at the stable for a long time and no horse shed and stable spaces have been offered. The text also contains old information about e.g. booking and implementation of riding lessons. In addition to this, the pictures show already dead horses.

We decided to bring a separate page for prices to the new website. This page is shown in figure 5. The prices for riding lessons and horseback treks are detailed in the price tab. Below these, you

can also find information related to booking and canceling lessons, as well as information about riding lesson cards. The most important information is highlighted in bold text.




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Furuvatni

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Ratsastustunnit

Ratsastustunti kentällä/maastossa	35€/hlö
Tuntikortti 5h	150€
Tuntikortti 10h	270€

Maastoretket

1h maasto	35€/hlö
1,5h maasto	50€/hlö
2h maasto	70€/hlö

Tuntikortit ovat voimassa 6kk ostopäivästä ja ne ovat perhekohtaisia.

Vakiotunnit pyörii tallillamme elokuun puolivälistä toukokuun loppuun asti ma-to. Tänä aikana perjantaisin on hevosten vapaapäivä ja viikonloput ovat varattu maastoretkille ja irtotunneille. Irtotunteja voit kysellä myös vakiotuntien peruutuspaikoille. **Vapaita ratsastusaikoja voit kysellä tekstiviestillä tai sähköpostilla.** Mainitse viestissäsi ratsastajien määrä ja taso sekä voit ehdottaa sinulle sopivia aikoja. *Huom! ryhmäkoko max. 4.* Lisätietoa ratsastustunneista löydät [täältä](#) ja maastoretkistä [täältä](#).

Jos et pääsekkään tulemaan varaamallesi tunnille, ilmoitathan siitä tekstiviestillä mahdollisimman pian ja VIIMEISTÄÄN edellisenä päivänä. Myöhässä tehdyistä peruutuksista menee puolikas tuntihinta ja peruuttamattomista tunneista koko tunnin hinta. Poikkeuksena tietenkin akuutit sairastumiset (peruuta silti tunti heti kun pystyt) ja tunnint, jotka Teija itse peruu huonon sään takia.

5. New website price list

On the old pages, there had been feedback about the price findability, so on the page shown in Figure 5, efforts were made to make it easier to find. Part of a good website is easy-to-find information, so we tried to make all information easy to find on the new pages. The most relevant information related to riding lessons and horseback trek was also included in the price list, so that there is no need to go looking for them separately, and thus the customer has less work to do. Bolding the text also focuses attention on the most important factors that influence the booking and cancellation of the service.

We also made a page where we tell more about the riding lessons, it can be seen in figure 6. Also, on this page, the most important text has been made bold. On the page, you can find all the essential information regarding riding lessons, as well as a picture reflecting the atmosphere of the stable.



Furuvatni

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Tietoa ratsastustunneista

Tallillamme järjestetään tunteja kaiken tasoille ja ikäisille. Voit itse avustaa lastasi ratsastustunnilla, jos sinulla on kokemusta hevosten käsittelystä. Aloitteijoilla on muuten avustaja/taluttaja tallin puolesta. **Ilmoitathan varauksen yhteydessä, jos pystyt itse avustamaan lastasi ratsastustunnilla. Irtotunnit pitää varata aina etukäteen.**

Ratsastustunnin **asiakasryhmäkoko max. 4 hlö**, jotta opetus on yksilöllistä. Tunneilla keskitytään paljon istuntaan ja oman kehon hallintaan. Tuntihevosta suurin osa on islanninhevosia, joten tunneilla opetellaan ratsastamaan käynnin, ravin ja laukan lisäksi myös tölttiä. Tunneilla harjoitellaan myös perus kouluratsastusliikkeitä kuten väistöjä.

Tallillamme on toiminnan vastuuvakuutus, mutta suosittelemme lisäksi henkilökohtaista tapaturmavakuutusta. Tunnit peruuntuvat jos pakkasta on yli -15 astetta, hellettä on yli +25 astetta tai keli on erityisen huono ratsastamiseen (ukkonen, myrsky, kenttä peilijäätikköä tms.). **Jos olet epävarma pidetäänkö tuntia, kannattaa varmistaa asia soittamalla tai tekstiviestillä.**

Tallillamme käytetään aina kynnäriä ratsastettaessa



6. New website "information about riding lessons"

On this page, which can be seen in figure 6, you can find more detailed information about riding lessons. The website states that lessons are offered to riders of all levels and ages, as well as the size of the group. The pages tell about the individuality of the teaching and the most important gestures, as well as information about liability insurance and the effect of weather conditions on riding lessons. The website also provides other information about riding lessons and their implementation, which is necessary for the service.

Figure 7 also shows similar information about horseback trek and a picture from a horseback trek. There is also a picture on the website where you can see what kind of landscapes the horseback trek can take place in.




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Tietoa maastoretkistä

Maastoretkiä voi varata syyskuusta toukokuuhun viikonloppuisin, kesäisin myös muina päivinä.

Maastoretkillä **asiakasryhmien koko max. 4 hlö.** Joskus maastoretkille lähtee lisäksi mukaan myös muuta talliporukkaa esim. apuvetäjiksi.

Ratsastajilla tulee olla hevosen perushallinta kaikissa askellajeissa. Tunnin retkille pääsee myös taluttajan kanssa, jolloin aiempaa kokemusta ei vaadita.

Muistathan kertoa ratsastustasosi retkeä varatessasi.

Ratsastajan painoraja on **80 kg.**

Maastoreittimme kulkevat rauhallisilla hiekkateillä ja poluilla. Maastossa etenemme rauhallisesti tai vauhdikkaammin riippuen ratsastajien aiemmasta kokemuksesta ja keleistä.

Hevosemme ovat kilttejä ja hyvin koulutettuja, mutta kaikki hevoset voivat kuitenkin jännittyä kovakouraisista ja huitovista otteista sekä kovasta metelistä. **Käyttäydythän siis hevosten läheisyydessä rauhallisesti, kuuntelet tarkasti kaikki saamasi ohjeet ja**

Pakkasraja tunneille on -15 astetta ja helleraja on +25 astetta. Myös myrskysäillä ja ukkosella tunnint peruuntuvat. **Jos olet epävarma järjestetäänkö maastoretki, kannattaa kysyä soittamalla tai tekstiviestillä.**

Jos et pääsekään tulemaan varaamallasi maastoretkelle, ilmoitathan siitä mahdollisimman pian tekstiviestillä tai soittamalla.

Tallillamme käytetään aina kypärää ratsastettaessa, joten jos et omista kypärää, voit lainata sen tallilta. Kun tulet ratsastamaan, ota mukaan kannalliset kengät (esim. kesällä saappaat ja talvella kuomat) ja pitkälahkeiset housut. **Pukeudu sään mukaisesti:** kylmillä keleillä laita reilusti päälle, varsinkin sormet ja varpaat palelevat herkästi. Ethän käytä liehuvia/lepattavia vaatteita.

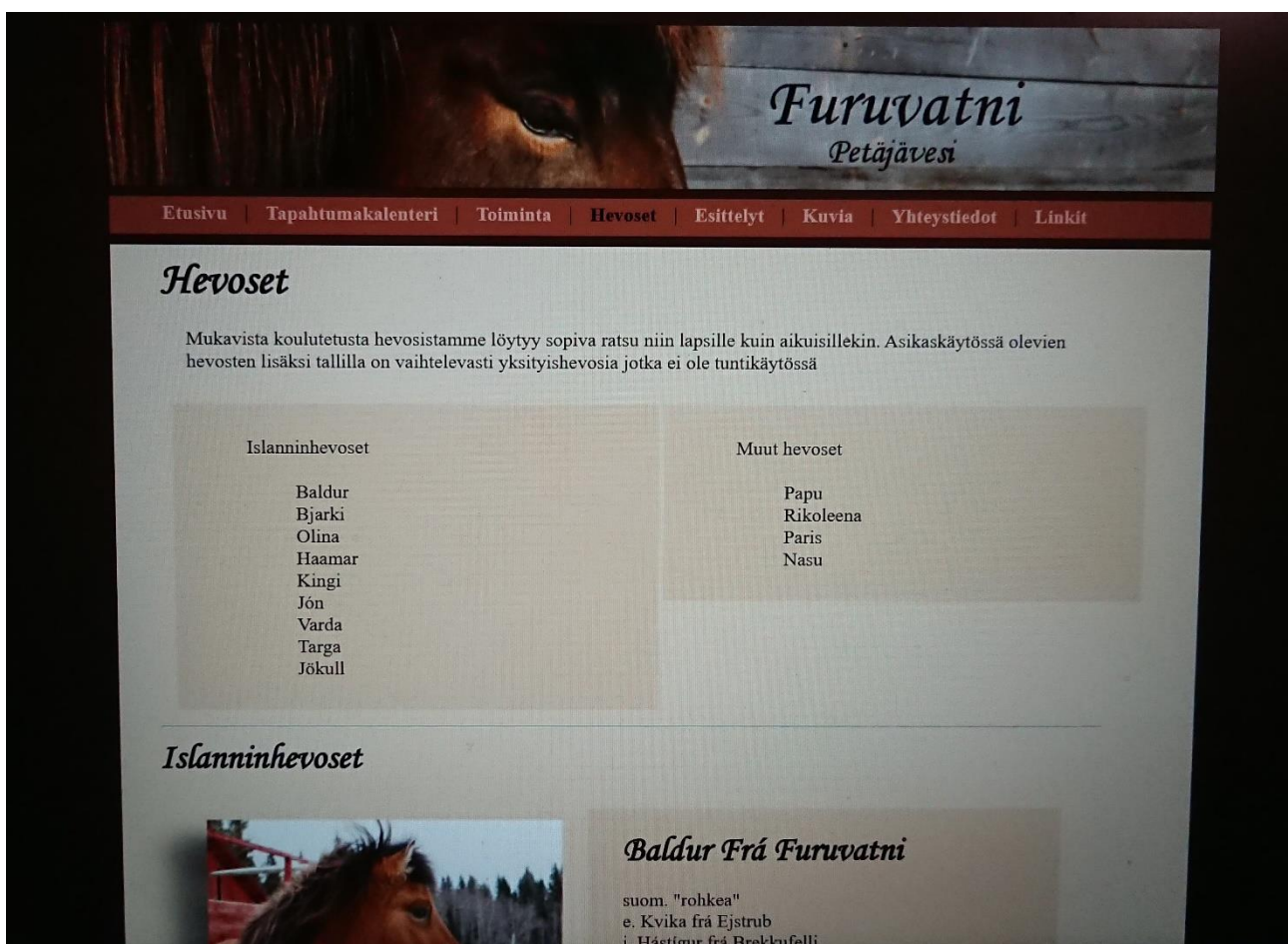


7. New website "information about horseback trek"

On this page found in Figure 7, you can find a lot of the same information as on the page that talks about riding lessons. Similar information is e.g. weight limit, group size, the effect of weather conditions on the riding lesson and dressing instructions, as well as the policies for booking and canceling lessons. On the website, however, you can also find information that only applies to horseback trek. Even though the pages have a lot of the same content, it was important to separate them into different pages, because especially on weekends and in the summer, there are a lot of

tourists visiting Furuvatni stables who want to book a horseback trek for themselves. It is important to offer these customers a page where they can easily find all the most important information.

The horses page was also found on the stable's old website, which can be seen in figure 8. The page described the horses of the stable and found a picture, name, and date of birth of these horses. In addition to this, there was a small character description of each horse and information on what use and what level of customer it is intended for.

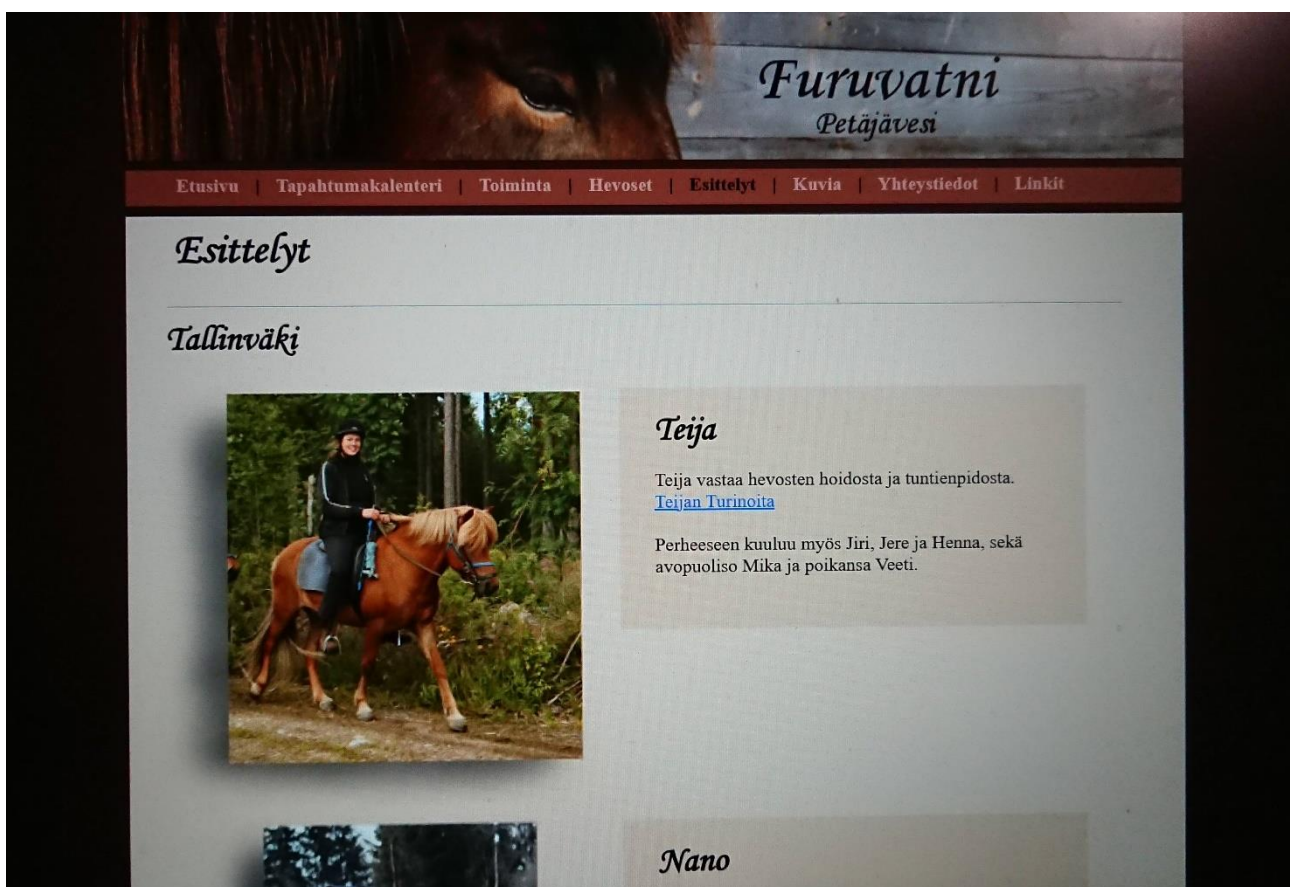


8. The horses page of the old website

The horses page shown in figure 8 was effective and aroused interest among customers. However, it was difficult to maintain the page and it was difficult to promise customers the information in the horse photos, because the same horse can behave differently in the company of different people. Horses also have bad days and they constantly change as the surrounding factors change, due

to training and as they age. The pages also tell about old horses that were no longer in the stable. The pictures of the horses were also old and thus the horses did not necessarily meet expectations, as they had changed in appearance and body with age.

An introduction was also found on the stable's old website, which can be seen in figure 9. The pages briefly introduced the owner of the stable and her family, as well as the other animals on the farm in addition to the horses. These animals are only rarely seen in the stable and are not related to the stable's activities.



9. Staff introduction page of the old website

On the introduction page shown in Figure 9, the introduction of the owner of the stable was minimal. The text did not say anything other than that she is responsible for taking care of the horses and keeping the lessons. The customer could not get any personal bond based on this text alone.

The information and pictures in the texts are also old and thus do not correspond to today. Information about family members and pets is also somewhat unnecessary, as they are not part of the services offered by the stable.

We decided to add a general section to the stable's new website, which tells what kind of stable Furuvatni really is. This was one of the stables' customers biggest verbal feedback wishes. As shown in Figure 8, we brought up-to-day picture of the owner of the stable to this page. Below the picture are the names of the owner of the stable and the name of the horse. We also told a little about her way of teaching and the values of the stable.

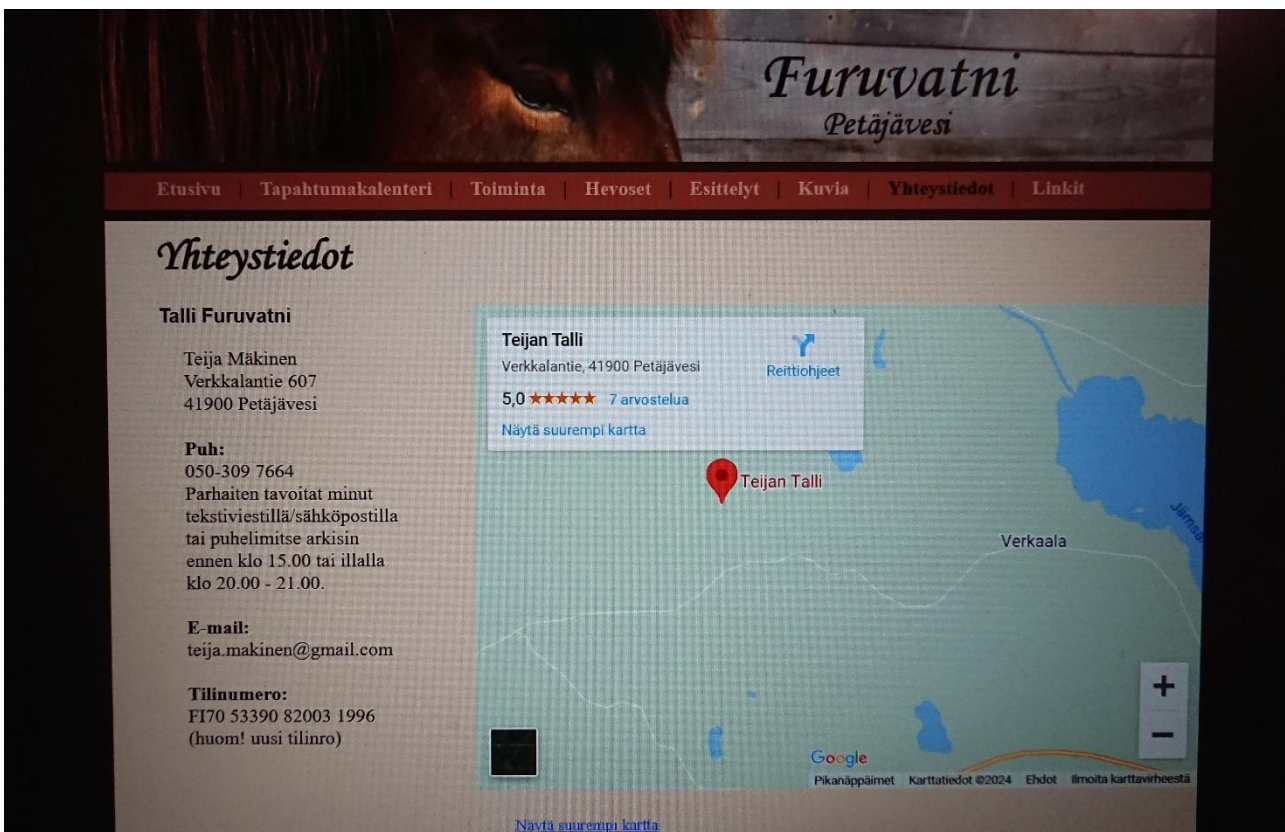


10. New website "general" page

On the pages shown in Figure 10, we decided it was important to tell customers how the values of the stable and especially the well-being of the horses is reflected in the stable's operations and

everyday life. Adding this information creates transparency and increases trust. We added information about partners and a link to the pages, where you can find links to their pages, who work together to maintain the well-being of the horses. At the end, we added links to the stable's social media, because there they bring out more of the stables' operations.

A general information page was also found on the stable's old website, which can be seen in figure 11. The page contains the information of the stable's owner, account number, best call times and a map. The map is linked with the Google Maps service and by clicking on the image, you can get directions to the stable. At the same time, the stable's old name and Google reviews also appear on the pages in connection with the map.



11. Contact information for old websites

In the general information section, which can be seen in figure 11, there is the old name of the stable. This name has not been used for many years. The information on contact times and methods

is also old. The website says that you can also book lessons by calling, but the entrepreneur prefers text messages and WhatsApp contact. The pages have also had the text "note! new account number", which has not been removed from the site.

Figure 12 shows the contact page of the new website. The owner of the stable wanted to change the name of the top bar to contact instead of the word contact information, because she felt that it would be a more approachable and relaxed choice of words. We added all the stable's contact information, the stable's address, and account number to this page. We also created a map from which you can directly access the Google Maps service to view the arrival instructions directly to the stable. In addition, we added social media links and a list of cooperation partners.

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Furuvatni

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Teija Sillgren
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Kengittäjä Mikko Peränen

12. New website "get in touch" page

On the contact page shown in figure 12, the text "contact us" was added in capital letters, which prompts the customer to contact the stable. Contact information was updated to meet today's messaging needs, i.e. customers were given the option of contacting them via text message or e-mail. The extra text under the account number was also removed and it was decided to advertise the partners, as they are in active cooperation with stable Furuvatni. The old name of the stable was removed from the, but and you can still click to see the stable's location and driving directions on Google Maps.

7.1 Furuvatni's social media

Stable Furuvatni's social media marketing focuses on two different social media channels, i.e. Facebook and Instagram. Of these social media, Instagram has recently reached more people than Facebook. Figure 13 shows the Facebook pages of stable Furuvatni. On the Facebook you can find the most important information about the services of stable Furuvatni, as well as contact information and a link to the website. Facebook's publications mainly include announcements about the stable's activities.

Furuvatni
501 tykkäystä · 514 seuraajaa

Lähetä viesti Tykätty Hae

Julkaisut Tietoja Mentions Arvostelut Seuraajat Kuvat Lisää ▾

Esittely

Ratsastusta islanninhevosilla Keski-Suomessa.

Jos et saa yhteyttä puhelimitse, lähetä viesti, jotta voimme ottaa yhteyttä myöhemmin. tuntien varaus puhelimitse tai sähköpostilla.

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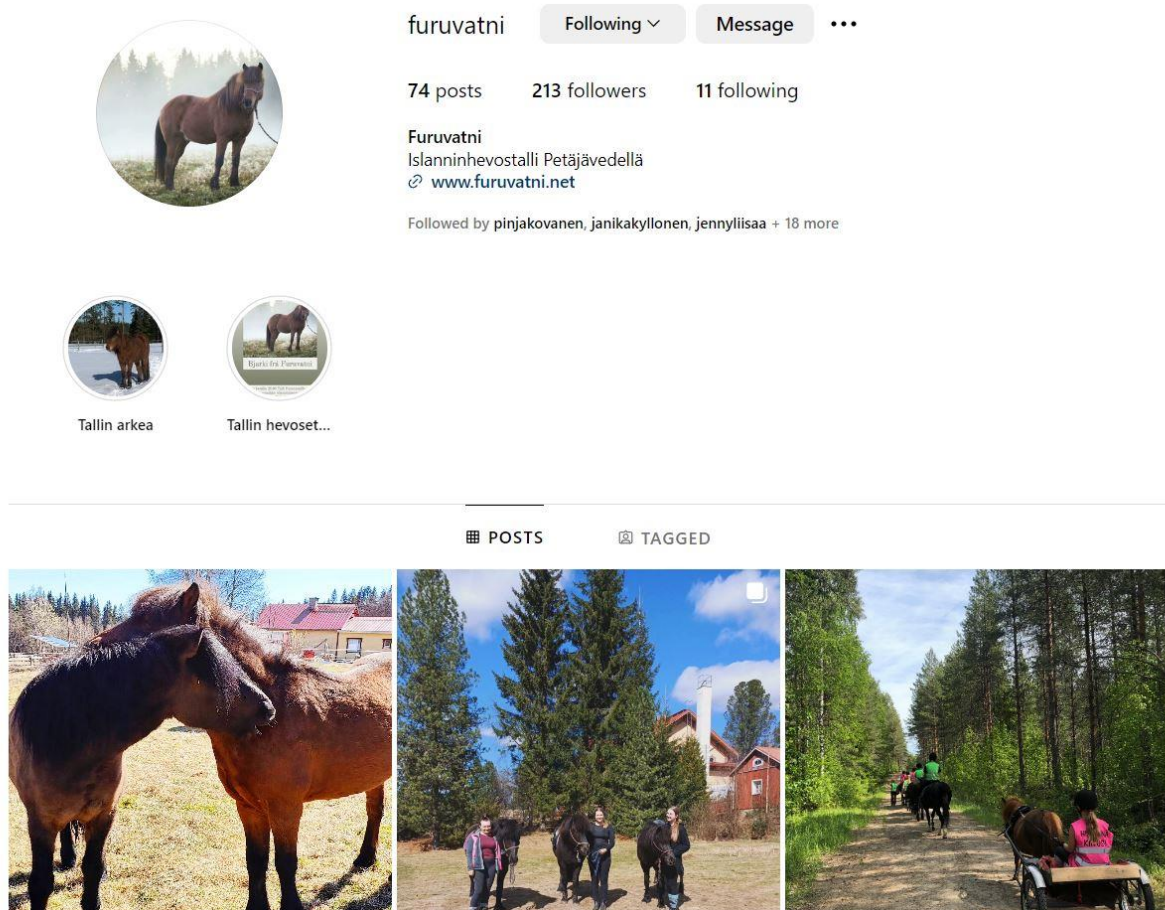
Kesäkuussa tallillamme järjestetään muutamia lasten ratsastusleirejä. Leireille 10.-11.6 sekä 13.-14.6 mahtuu vielä osallistujia, ja ne sopivat myös vasta-alkajille. 🐾🐾

Kahden päivän leirin hinta on 180€, ja päivittäin on noin kaksi tuntia ratsastusta. Lisäksi ohjelmassa on hevosaiheista toimintaa sekä kaksi lämmintä ateriaa päivässä. Leiri on klo: 9-18, ja yöpyminen tapahtuu kotona. Mikäli leiri kiinnostaa, ota yhteyttä sähköpostitse tai viestillä: teija.makinen@gmail.com 0503097664"

13. Furuvatni's Facebook page

Stable Furuvatni's Facebook marketing focuses on short and informative texts. Pictures have been placed in the center, and efforts have been made to invest in their quality. With the help of this communication, customers are given the opportunity for communication and participation. They can like, comment, and share posts. As the number of active Facebook users decreased, we decided that there would not be many changes to Facebook. There are still posts there, but due to the low level of customer activity, there is currently no need to invest in the development of Facebook operations in more detail.

Once again, Instagram, which is surfacing more and more, became the target of development. In figure 14, we can see the Instagram pages of stable Furuvatni. Instagram of the stable contains basic information about the stable and a link to the stable's website. Current updates about the stable's operations are made on Instagram and customers are kept involved in the changes.



14. Furuvatni's Instagram page

On the Instagram page, you can find a profile picture shared with the front page of the stable Furuvatni's website, which can be seen in figure 14. This ties Instagram and the stable's website together. Instagram is constantly updated with posts that market Furuvatni stable's services, but also tell about the stable's news. Customer commitment and trust also improves when the stable's my story is updated with posts about the stable's everyday life. On the stable's Instagram page, you can now also find the highlights, in addition to the presentation of the stable's horses. In the everyday part of the stable the customer can become a part of the stable's everyday life and see how things are done at the stable. By seeing inside the company's operations, transparency is emphasized, and values are highlighted. For example, taking care of the horses' well-being comes up in the highlights and the customer can thus see how it happens in practice. In many cases, the posts also stimulate participation and customers sent messages related to the posts. In customer service, the focus is on quick responses, positivity, and friendliness. In this way, the customer always feels valued and heard.

7.2 Limitations and future direction

The owner of the stable Furuvatni does not want to expand her operations in the future, nor does she want to change her services behind the booking calendar. She wants all bookings to go through her also in the future. She wants to keep the website only in Finnish and not add e.g. English to the languages. She wants to keep this because she only offers her services in Finnish. She wants the website to be simple and not to add extra unnecessary information in the future. She also wants the responsibility of social media to remain with the same people assigned to it. She also does not want to include influencers as part of marketing and does not want to spread to new social media platforms such as TikTok.

However, in the future, services could be developed by offering an introductory video on the website, which you could watch to understand the idea, services, and values of the stable without reading any other text on the stable's website. This would also provide the desired transparency to the service. Transparency could also be added to social media updates by bringing out more of the stable's activities and especially its everyday life. Part of the research was testing the implementation of this and the reception was positive. Therefore, we should continue to make similar updates and add them to other social media of the stable.

Social media could also be used to invest in marketing by adding relevant hashtags to the post and by including partners in the advertising. Possible partnerships could be e.g. Petäjävesi municipality and Visit Jyväskylä. Also, possible events that raise the profile of the stable's activities could be increased to achieve more visibility for the stable. A few of these events have already been seen every year, but the number and scope of the events could be increased. Events should also be advertised more in advance and on a larger scale. Currently the advertising strategy is based more on posting about past events after events. The stable could also be advertised more in the future with more open days, where customers could freely get to know the daily life of the stable and thus see if this would be a good place to start a new hobby. These open days should also be advertised more and more widely, so that more participants and potential new customers could come.

8 Conclusion

The thesis considered horse tourism as a form of tourism and brought out its various benefits for people and society. Digital marketing, its trends and benefits are highlighted, and this information was used in the implementation of the study. From the literature review, the most important factors to emphasize in the marketing of horse tourism emerged. These include history and the importance of horses to people, the company's service offering and their implementation environment, the connection between horse and human, promoting physical condition, supporting mental health, horse instincts, guaranteeing the well-being of horses, training horses, taking into account special characteristics and continuous development and guaranteeing quality. At the stable Furuvatni, the Icelandic horses and their breed-typical characteristics also play an important role, as they are the main breed at the stable. Social media can be used as an aid in marketing, which gives the opportunity for interactivity and immediate feedback and interaction. When used effectively, it reaches many people very quickly, is constantly becoming more common, is cost-effective and enables direct contact with customers. When marketing using social media, it is important to consider current social media and marketing trends, as well as security. One of the most significant trends in marketing is customer orientation which is a part of all the company's operations at the stable Furuvatni.

Case study

The subject of the case study of the thesis was the stable Furuvatni. The need for research arose from the need to update the old website and social media of stable Furuvatni. The main research question was "How could digital marketing be developed?", which was answered in the study and measures were taken based on the results of the studies. The main method of the research was benchmarking, where competing companies were studied and, based on the collected information, the competitive field was mapped and competitive advantages and the possibility to stand out from the crowd were identified. Together, based on benchmarking, Google reviews and customer comments, it was found out that Furuvatni's main competitive advantages are the stable's small size, remote location, and individual teaching. The research also highlighted the importance of horse-themed pictures, a presentation video, expressing values, explaining services, explaining price lists, social media, the booking calendar and the ease of use of the pages, which can be seen

in appendix 1. Based on all these results, a development plan was created for the stable's digital marketing. It was decided to completely re-create the stable's website and develop social media.

All unnecessary information was removed from the website and only the most important information was collected. On the website, the focus was on creating an atmosphere with the help of images and by highlighting the services, their prices, and the contents of the services. It was also decided to bring out the values and tell about them as part of the stable's activities. Social media focused on the quality of the posts and the transparency of the team. The customers were included in the everyday life of the stable and the activities of the stable were explained in a more comprehensive manner. Customers could also participate in the updates of the stable by registering. However, not all reforms have been done yet and their implementation will continue in the future. The reliability and ethics of the research were explained at the end, where more information is given about the conduct of the research. With the help of new websites and updating social media, stable Furuvatni can get wider visibility and thus new customers, and get permanent, more committed customers through the expression of transparency and values. Customer satisfaction also increases, as their development proposals have been considered as part of improving the team's website and social media. This increases word of mouth marketing for the stable.

Reliability and ethics

Benchmarking is the main research method of the study and stables all over Finland have been studied in it. A table has been used to measure the results, where the same things have been compared between all the stables. This same table could be used when researching more stables, in which case you could get more results that would repeat similar results. Only the most important things that could have been used as part of the research have been considered for measuring the research. The results can be placed in a wider context when looking at websites in general and their characteristic features, but the study only examined certain variables. The data collection was carried out within the framework of the table, examining only the details discussed in the table from each website. The correctness of the information was verified by examining only the websites created by each team, which describe the team and its operations. Tabulation was used to analyze the results, as it clearly brought out all the variables and connecting factors to determine which features were the most used and thus corresponded to the standard of horse tourism company websites.

Stable Furuvatni gave consent to the study before participating and all their confidential information was kept confidential. In the thesis, none of this confidential information was brought out and the information brought out is permitted. In the study, impartiality and honesty were ensured by benchmarking, where stables were compared with each other and thus their differences from each other were considered. A clear tabulation was used for this, where only the most important features were highlighted. All methods and results were also reported accurately and honestly. Research material is stored on a private computer in a folder to which only the researcher has access. After the investigation, all confidential materials are destroyed from the computer.

The research focuses on companies in the horse tourism industry and especially the stable Furuvatni, as well as interviewing and observing people belonging to the target group. Benchmarking and verbal feedback are used to collect information. In addition, existing literature on the topic is used, including keywords, key phrases, multiple search methods and sources, data screening, data collection and analysis, and interpretation. The research also uses stable Furuvatni's social media channels and websites, as well as data collected through the stable's customers and the stable's owner, which are analyzed. This information has been collected during practical training through open communication and participatory observation. Taking all of these into account as part of the research gives a deeper understanding of the materials.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. A study of the stables' websites

The name of the stable:	Lots of pictures of horses	Introduction video	Values expressed	Services at a glance	Price list	Links to social media	Booking calendar	Things on separate pages on the website	Links
<i>Turkan Ratsurinne</i>	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	https://turkanratsurinne.fi/
<i>Okeroisten Talli</i>		x	x	x	x, in the reservation calendar	x	x		https://www.okeroistentalli.fi/en/
<i>Kalliomaan talli</i>	x		x, also specified	x	x			x	https://www.kalliomaantalli.fi/
<i>Hopoti</i>				x	x	x		x, part of the data	https://hopoti.com/fi-stable/KortepohjanRatsutalli
<i>Tiinan talli</i>			x		x	x	x	x	https://www.tiinantalli.com/
<i>Koivuniemen talli</i>	x	x, changing images only		x	x	x	x	x	https://koivuniementalli.fi/
<i>Siipolan talli</i>	x		x	x	x	x		x	https://siipolantalli.fi/
<i>Raijan talli</i>	x		x	x	x	x		x	https://www.raijantalli.net/1
<i>Wanhan Koulun Talli, Wanhanmäen Talli, Wanha Ratsastuskeskus</i>	x	x, changing images only		x	x	x	x	x	https://www.wkt.fi/