

**SERVICE PROVIDER COMPANIES' SOCIAL MEDIA
MARKETING AND PRODUCT PRICES**

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Social media platforms are the most used platforms for marketing. The material for this thesis was gathered from companies' social media channels. The aim of this thesis was to answer questions about what types of marketing messages of service provider companies in the Rovaniemi area are, how social media and storyfication are used in marketing and what the price ranges are for sold activities.

The main subjects of the thesis in the theory base were social media, social media marketing and storyfication in social media marketing. In the theory base product pricing and sales were also taken into consideration.

Companies' activeness in social media varied. Some companies had accounts on Facebook and Instagram. Other companies had accounts only on Instagram. The shared content varied, but most of the content was about the northern lights and snowmobiles. The stories companies told about the activities were similar.

Companies' goals are to make profit. Companies' costs come from variable and fixed costs. Customers use the Internet for searching companies' prices and the prices are affected by demand.

The research shows that the potential of social media marketing is not always utilized. Some companies could be more active in social media and share more content of their activities. Social media could be used more widely in marketing, and marketing could be more targeted to specific activities.

Keywords social media, social media marketing, story, storyfication

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Ohjaaja(t)	Ulla Kangasniemi, Petra Paloniemi		
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Työn nimi	Palvelualantarjoajien sosiaalisen median markkinointi sekä tuotteiden hinnoittelu		
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Sosiaalisen median alustat ovat käytetyimpiä markkinointialustoja. Opinnäytetyön aineisto kerättiin yritysten sosiaalisen median kanavista. Tämän opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli vastata kysymyksiin siitä, millaisia Rovaniemen alueen palveluntarjoajayritysten markkinointiviestit ovat, miten sosiaalista mediaa ja tarinallisuutta hyödynnetään markkinoinnissa ja mitkä ovat myytävien toimintojen hintaluokat.

Opinnäytetyön pääaiheet teoriapohjassa olivat sosiaalinen media, sosiaalisen median markkinointi ja tarinointi sosiaalisen median markkinoinnissa. Teoriassa otettiin huomioon myös tuotteiden hinnoittelu ja myynti.

Yritysten aktiivisuus sosiaalisessa mediassa vaihteli. Joillakin yrityksillä oli tilejä Facebookissa ja Instagramissa tai joillakin yrityksillä oli tilejä vain Instagramissa. Jaettu sisältö vaihteli, mutta suurin osa sisällöstä käsitteli revontulia ja moottorikelkkoja. Yritysten toiminnasta kertomat tarinat olivat samankaltaisia.

Yritysten tavoitteena on tehdä voittoa. Yritysten kustannukset syntyvät muuttuvista ja kiinteistä kustannuksista. Asiakkaat käyttävät internetiä yritysten hintojen etsimiseen ja kysyntä vaikuttaa hintoihin.

Tutkimus osoittaa, että sosiaalisen median markkinoinnin potentiaalia ei aina hyödynnetä. Jotkut yritykset voisivat olla aktiivisempia sosiaalisessa mediassa ja jakaa enemmän sisältöä toiminnastaan. Sosiaalista mediaa voitaisiin hyödyntää markkinoinnissa laajemmin ja markkinointia voitaisiin kohdentaa paremmin tiettyihin toimintoihin.

Avainsanat sosiaalinen media, sosiaalisen median markkinointi, tarina, tarinointi

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1 INTRODUCTION

Every minute the Internet is used for sending millions of messages, having tens of thousands of Microsoft Teams meetings and over two million Google searches are made. In social media Instagram is viewed over ten million times a minute and eleven thousand fake accounts are removed every minute from Facebook. (Austin, 2023.) About 59% of the world's population used social media in 2023 and the number of social media users keeps growing (Dixon 2023a). Social media has become the number one tool in marketing. Companies can be directly in contact with their customer on various social media platforms. (Kananen 2018, 24.)

A company's story explains why the company exists and the story is the core of the company. A company's marketing is based on its stories and storyfication is used for creating products and services for the company. A company content has started to play an important role in business. (Kalliomäki 2014, 13.)

The aim of this thesis was to gather information from companies' social media accounts, Facebook, Instagram and from their web pages. The information will help Beyond Arctic to see how they compare in social media marketing in the area. An analysis will be made from this information about marketing trends and marketing messages that companies share for their customers. The information will give an overview of the price ranges and discounts that companies offer for their customers. Facebook and Instagram were used for gathering information because of the high number of users in these platforms. Another reason for choosing these platforms was that most of the service provider companies in Rovaniemi use either both or one of them.

The main questions Beyond Arctic has is how to get more people to attend their day tours and how their prices on sold activities compare with other tour operators' prices. To answer the questions, the activities companies posted were analysed and the reactions to posts were recorded. Tables and figures were created from this information, and answers were found for Beyond Arctic's research questions.

2 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

2.1 Overview of social media and most used platforms

Social media is referred to as a collection of software based digital technologies. Apps and web pages are digital environments where the users can send and receive content in their social networks. It is said that social media is a platform and Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are the features of the platform. (Appel, Grewal, Hadi & Stephen 2019.) In another place Albarran (2013, 2) states that social media buyers are the consumers and sellers are advertising their products for other social media users. Sellers are the companies who offer the platform for their buyers. The sellers are Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. The buyers are consumers who create social media for marketing purposes.

Li, Larimo and Leounidou (2022) state that companies use social media for branding, sharing content and communicating with their customers. Social media is also used for marketing purposes. Social media is a place where people spend their time, sharing content/information with other users. Social media has a big impact on culture since users around the world share information and content for people in other countries and cultures. (Appel et al. 2019.) People create networks and communities where they can interact with people who share common interest with them. When people join these virtual communities, they become part of a larger group having the same purpose. These networks are valuable for the people linked to them. (Gershon 2017, 148.)

Various social media channels are used worldwide and in 2022 there were over 4,59 billion social media users in the world. This means that about 59% of the people in the world use social media. The statistics show that the number of users will be increasing each year. (Dixon 2023a.) Figure 1 shows that the biggest social networks are Facebook in the lead, followed by YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram and TikTok. Facebook has over billion registered accounts and its monthly active users are over three billion. Instagram has over two billion active users monthly. (Dixon 2024b.)

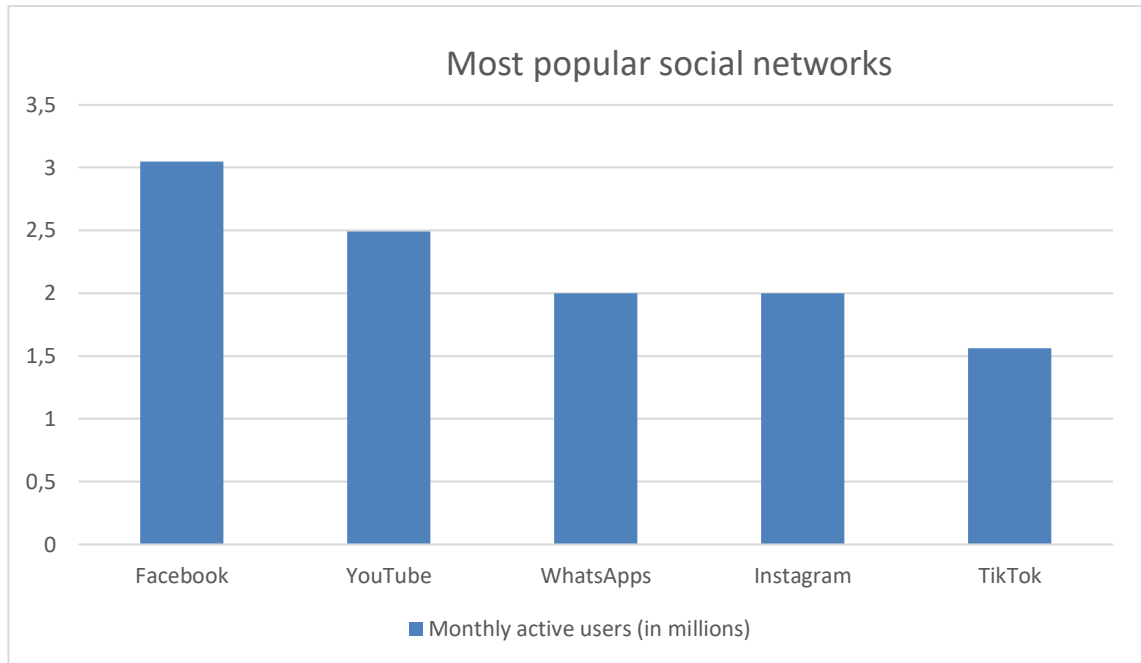


Figure 1. Monthly active social media users in 2023 (Dixon 2023a)

The advantage of social media is that it is free of charge for its users. Companies content can reach several people in a short time and the only costs for this are how many hours are used to post content and maintain the social media pages. For companies the most important knowledge is which channels the potential customers use and how to reach the communities and utilize them in marketing. (Kananen 2018, 20–23.)

2.1.1 Facebook

The most used social media channel in the business world is Facebook. This is why companies use Facebook when they want to be in the same place with their potential customers. Facebook is free for its users. The main idea of Facebook is to share pictures, experiences, news, ideas and have fun together with other users. People share stories and everyday experiences in a diary form and they can join various online activities in Facebook. Facebook users can comment and like other users' stories, pictures and videos. The more a Facebook post gets likes and comments the more visibility the post gets in the platform. (Kananen 2018, 23, 290–295.)

For companies Facebook is a place where they can get visibility for their products and services. The visibility can attract users' attention and they can become possible customers. (Kananen 2018, 300–309.) In the business world Facebook is used to traffic users to companies' web pages and hope the people would buy companies products from them (Wibowo, Chen, Wiangin, Ma & Ruangkanjanases 2020). Facebook functions have been built so that the more companies share content, like and comment other people's posts the more specified the news feed is for them. Active users get more visibility and it is easier to create customer relationships with the followers. (Kananen 2018, 300–309.)

2.1.2 Instagram

Instagram is a social media platform which is specialised for sharing pictures. In Instagram users can post pictures and reels which are short videos. People can like and comment on other users' posts. On Instagram people can follow other users and they can check what the latest trends are amongst the people they follow. Instagram users can follow other users who share the same interest together with them. Instagram can be used for personal branding and users can make money in the platform by marketing and selling their own products. Personal branders can specify who can see their content and the platform helps to find the target audience. (Instagram, 2024.) Instagram is a popular platform amongst the younger generation, half of Instagram users are younger than 34 years old (Dixon 2023c).

Instagram is used for creating a company's brand in a visual way. Instagram can be used for marketing new products and services; companies can share pictures of their new products and services and get more visibility and attract their follower's attention. The content companies share for their followers should be consistent and they should have a main theme. A positive effect of using Instagram for marketing is that the platform is easy to use, but a minus is that the usage for marketing is limited as it is created for mobile devices. (Kananen 2018, 397–400.)

2.2 Communication and communities in social media

Companies want to be where the customers and potential customers are. Over 50 percent of the world's population uses social media daily (Dixon, 2024a). This is why companies use social media platforms for marketing purposes. In the early years of social media, it was used more for communication, but over the years the purpose of social media has changed and lately it has been used for sharing pictures, videos and other type of content. By understanding how people use social media companies can target their marketing more effectively. (Appel et al. 2019.)

Chen and Lin (2019) states that companies use social media for communicating and interacting with their customers. In terms of social media marketing companies use social media for creating relationships with customers and sharing consumers experiences of the companies. When creating marketing content into social media, companies must understand their customers and how the platforms are used. (Wibowo et al. 2020.) Alzaydi and Elsharnouby (2023) say that in the tourism industry both tourist and tourism providers share content and are content creators. Some of the concerns on social media marketing are the marketing effectiveness and is the produced content appealing for the target audience (Zhang 2017 as cite on Li et al. 2022). Instagram users are mainly 18-34 years old and the platform is for sharing pictures and videos (Dixon 2023c). The largest group of Facebook user are 25-34 years old, and the platform is more for sharing stories and diaries (Dixon 2023d).

Wibowo et al. (2020) explains, for creating good relationships with customers the shared content should not only be commercial-oriented, but it should be social-oriented involving interaction with other users. Many research and books state the importance and power of communities in social media. Chen and Lin (2019) state that social communities can spread brand awareness to other social media users and the brand values are key factors in communities. Being that social media users create and join communities (Gershon 2017, 148) companies marketing should be targeted to customers or communities' preferences (Wibowo et al.2020). Customers create value through various activities and user-

generated content. Participating in these communities can lead to interaction with other consumers which might affect the markets. (Li et al. 2022.)

People share the need to belong somewhere. In online communities people can meet other people who share the same values and ideas. By joining communities people get social support from others and their need for self-identity is filled. These people share stories and experiences of the community. Companies can utilize these communities when spreading brand awareness in social media. (Gershon 2017, 148.)

Companies' social media campaigns activate consumers, supporters and customers. In these campaigns companies' social media followers tag friends or post experiences of themselves to win a prize from the social media campaign the company has launched. These campaigns help companies attract awareness in social media and create communication with their customers. (Atherton 2020, 8–9; Wibowo et al. 2020 & Van Looy, 2016, 77–80.) Even though companies use social media accounts such as Facebook and Instagram for gaining visibility amongst tourists, most of the information of the companies can be found from their own web pages (Asnawi 2021).

Companies use social media for listening to their customers. They monitor what customers post and comment in social media and collect data to analyse and better understand their customers. Customer knowledge helps companies innovate new products for their customers. Companies who use social media can improve their profitability and competitive advantage. (Li et al. 2022.) These actions that marketers use have aroused suspicion and social media users have started to block advertisements. To deliver marketing messages companies have realized the importance of inbound activities and content marketing. (Atherton 2020, 9.)

2.3 Customer engagement in social media marketing

Atherton (2019, 84–96) states that companies must know why they are in business. By presenting why the companies exist they can build brand presence in social media and create brand stories. By content marketing companies attract consumers with relevant, timely and useful information which can be entertaining,

educational, and informational. The content can be shared in blogs, vlogs and eBooks so that the consumers can engage with the brand. When customers' needs are satisfied the company and customer exchange values and create relationships. The value exchanges are creating customer engagements between consumer and companies.

When a company wants a loyal customer, it must have good relationship with its customer. Trust and satisfaction help build quality relationship with customers. When customers participate in a company's events, programs and discussions they tend to suggest and recommend these companies to others. Good communication between companies and customers creates a strong relationship between the parties and the content of marketing effects the customer experience. Interaction and positive feeling evoked by videos, pictures and music help companies promote their marketing message. (Wibowo et al. 2020). In several research it has been stated that potential customer tends to research information about possible destinations and talk with other travellers before making their final travel decision. Positive feedback of destinations and companies increases purchase intentions in consumers. (Katsikari, Hatzithomas, Fotiadis & Folinas 2020; Alzaydi et al.2023.)

Customer engagements and comments come from visual content, videos and pictures. The visual content has a crucial role when consumers make their travel decisions. It has been stated that a couple quality posts in a day are more effective than several pictures during the day on Facebook posts and posts with 200 characters are more engaging than posts over 200 characters. (Katsikari et al. 2020.)

Customers satisfaction towards the company arises from the companies' products and services. If the products and services meet the customers' expectations, they feel satisfied. Satisfied customers are more loyal and positive of the community around the brand. (Chen et al. 2019.) When consumers themselves generate stories about a brand, other consumers then share the stories more willingly, but if the stories are created by the brand for marketing purposes, they are less engaging. (Hong at al. 2021).

Consumers have a major impact on storytelling. When the stories are told by other consumers, they are more relatable and reliable than if the story would be written by firms for advertising and selling purposes. From a company perspective there are risks when companies together with consumers create brand stories. (Hong et al. 2021.)

By listening to their customers companies can co-create products and services to better fit customers' expectations. Stakeholders' involvement in brand identity has been found to be beneficial for the company. Some of the benefits are competitive advantage, increased customer satisfaction and an improved destination image. (Stoica et al. 2022.)

2.4 Privacy concerns and the future of social media

Social media marketing also has negative effects. Some topics which create concerns are privacy and data security concerns as several studies show. (Appel et al. 2019 and Li et al. 2022.) Social media users are afraid that companies gather too much information about their consumers and utilize this data when targeting marketing. Too identity-relevant posts of products may negatively affect a customer's purchase intentions. (Li et al. 2022.) Consumers have worries over ethical and legal aspects of data privacy. From a consumer perspective the biggest concerns arise from tracking purchases and whether companies buy consumers personal data for marketing purposes. Other concerns are about hate speech, fake news and unreliable content. These concerns have affected social media users negatively and have caused them to delete their social media accounts (Appel et al. 2019).

Customers today are more well-informed about who can communicate with existing companies. They can find recommendations and review companies from social media and the Internet. (Van Looy 2016, 92.) Responding to customers complaints in a problem-solving way leads to better conclusions than just being sympathetic towards the customers. The way companies respond to customers influences the customer relationship. (Li et al. 2022.)

Social media has an impact on every part of people's lives, for example, food, travel and work, to mention some. This can be seen in the way people scroll social

media for advice on how to cook food, where to book a hotel room or what beauty products social influencers use. Products and travel ideas can be found from social media and the payments can be made on the Internet. Influencers create content which can spread virally and other social media users might start imitating or using the same products that the influencers use. (Appel et al. 2019.) As Arango et al (2023, 228–229) states, people have always listened to media personalities and movie stars, so celebrity culture and star status is not a new concept. The Internet and social media channels have enabled sets of influencers who are stated to be third-party actors with relevant relationships. These people create content for stakeholders through social web.

Appel et al (2019) explains that micro-influencers are people who share content in social media but might not be recognized worldwide. Micro influencers have from hundreds to thousands of followers and their content is said to be more trustworthy and authentic. Micro- influencers' content is more relatable and warmer. This is why people engage more easily with the content. Well-known brands worldwide use celebrities for spreading brand awareness. Using celebrities in creating content becomes more expensive for companies and people also feel that the content is not as personal. People prefer watching livestreams over prerecorded videos and streaming platforms are still popular amongst people. Study shows that influencer marketing will have a potential in future marketing.

Companies have taken actions in customer care. This can be seen in the communication between the company and customer. To help customers navigate through webpages, companies have chatbots and messaging systems which answers customers' questions when they need help finding information about products and services. (Appel et al. 2019.)

It has been stated that posts which have videos and pictures gain larger visibility than messages that only contain text. Social media companies are developing features for real-time and visual virtual reality. In the future the line between online and offline will become more vague. (Appel et al 2019.)

Companies want to build trust and communication with their customers. Trust towards traditional media, news, social and owned media has diminished, and

people tend to find confirmation for their views from communication bubbles. Algorithms in social media are built by the type of information users search or by following other users. Well created content helps companies to attract attention in their target audience. Miss and disinformation are harmful for societies and organizations. For the audience, the source of information has a role whether the information is trusted or not. Companies must be able to tell where their information comes from. (Aragon et al. 2023 229–231.)

3 ROLE OF STORYTELLING IN MARKETING

3.1 Storytelling in tourism

Storytelling is an old way of explaining life experiences, history, culture and stories to other listeners. People share stories of their lives, travels and of their everyday activities. (Bassano et al. 2019.) As several researchers explain, the ancient way of communication is telling stories (Pachuchi, Grosh & Shcoll-Grissmann, 2022). Both Tsai (2020) and Hong, Yang; Wooldridge and Bhappu (2021) state that in the business environment companies tell stories to positively affect consumer's feelings and emotions when spreading their brand identity. Good brand stories attract the customer's attention, leaves lines in their memories and let them identify with the brand identity. Stories visualize the products or services sold. (Tsai 2020.)

In tourism, stories of destinations or companies are told to attract the tourists' attention and to get them to visit these locations or companies. The stories can share knowledge of lifestyles, values and a sense of belonging. It is important that companies in the same area tell the same stories. Storytelling is a way of communication which spreads place identity. This helps destinations co-create values together with enterprises, so the destination has a competitive brand identity. The stories destinations tell arouse the tourists' feelings and create an atmosphere so that they can feel a sense of belonging towards the destinations. (Bassano et al. 2018.) Consumers remember types of stories better which arouse their feelings. This means that the companies which use humour and authenticity in their stories are better remembered and connected to the brand. Stories are better memorialized and less criticised than traditional marketing messages. (Pachuchi et al. 2022; Tsai, 2020.) As several research show, narrative perspectives in stories bring social presence and tone to online communication which might have effects in customer engagement (Pachuchi et al. 2022).

Stories have the most effect when potential travellers are planning their travels. Digital media has changed the way of telling stories. (Bassano et al. 2018.) Social media platforms are important digital marketing channels and stories have a positive effect in social media interactions (Pachuchi et al. 2022). In tourism,

social media is used for sharing tourism related information for other social media users. (Alzaydi et al.2023). In the travel industry it is crucial for destinations to tell stories and attract attention to better compete with competing destinations. Stories can be spread to a wide audience by using technology such as tv, social media, newsletters and advertisements. (Bassano et al. 2018.) Online stories can reach large numbers of people in a short period of time if they go viral (Stoica et al. 2022).

Companies, organizations and governments build stories of destinations, locations and companies. When customers give feedback of their experiences this is story listening on behalf of the companies, organizations and destinations. (Bassano et al. 2018.) Stories told by destinations create an identity for the destination and have competitive advantages (Pachuchi et al. 2022).

Companies and consumers create brand stories of companies. Consumers share unique experiences of brands in social media and this can help other consumers familiarize with brands. Consumers tend to empathise with other consumers' stories and keep them less biased compared to stories told by companies attempting to influence consumers. By monitoring consumers interactions companies can better understand their consumers, engage with them and create successful brands. (Hong et al. 2021.)

Destinations have commercial stories and non-commercial stories. Commercial stories are created for marketing purposes by organizations and destinations. Commercial stories are for creating a brand image and giving information of the services and products. When consumers share stories and experiences of companies this is consumer narrative which is used for brand co-creation and communication. (Pachuchi et al. 2022.)

3.2 Social media in tourism and travelling companies

Travellers have motivations for travelling. These factors are called push and pull factors. The push and pull factors can be sports, adventures, culture and history. (Katsikari, Hatzithomas, Fotiadis & Folinas 2020.). Before travelling, tourists search for information about the companies and destinations where they are

planning to travel. Other travellers' comments, posts and videos of the companies in the destination might influence the traveller. (Stoica et al.2022.)

As Katsikari et al (2022) states tourism has been growing in the past years and will be growing in the future. It is one of the biggest industries in the world. The competition between destinations and companies is intense and they compete for customers attention. Before travelling, travellers search for information through social media, companies' web pages and various other sources. The information search is about accommodation, transportation and local entrepreneurs, how much products and services cost and what would be the best options for the planned trip to be a success. Many travellers share content on their social media accounts after travels and others read and watch these videos and pictures to make their travel decisions. These comments have effects on destinations both positively and negatively. The content shared about destinations and companies have an impact on traveller's purchase decision. (Stoica et al, 2022; Asnawi 2021.)

The destination's attractiveness is about how tourists feel their needs are filled in the location. Social media posts can affect the attractiveness of a destination positively or negatively. The type of content visitors share of the destination varies depending on the reason to travel to certain locations. (Alzaydi et al, 2023.) Positive destination image influences tourists. A positive image attracts the tourist and a tourist who has visited the destination once might repeat the visit again. (Asnawi 2021.)

4 PRODUCT PRICING IN COMPANIES

4.1 Information about companies' product pricing

Pricing is one way of marketing a company to potential customers. Correct type of pricing in a company will attract customers to the company. (Chaffey and Smith 2017, 52.) In product and service pricing, prices are counted so that the company would make a profit and the customer would have experiences. (Hayes, Hayes & Hayes 2022, 31–33). Huefner says (2015, 3) to operate a profitable business, companies must make more money than what their expenses are. Some of the cost's companies may have are internal costs, standard costs and fixed and variable costs. Both the seller and the buyer's perspective should be considered in the prices. When a buyer decides to buy a product or service they want to benefit from the purchase. Sellers must be open-minded about the way buyers think they benefit from their business transactions. The price explains the value of the sold product or service. If the buyer values the product or service, they buy it willingly. (Hayes et al. 2022, 31–33, 35, 43.) Social media is a channel for companies to market their products for potential customer (Li et al, 2022).

Market price is described to be the price consumers are likely to pay for the product or service at a certain time (Cambridge dictionary). Tribe (2016, 116) explains that when there are many operators offering the same products and services for the wide buyer audience the competition of customers is high and the product or service prices are similar. Chaffey et al. (2017, 72) continue together with Tribe, (2016, 117) when the consumers are aware of the price ranges, they attempt to buy the cheaper product or service. Internet has affected consumers purchase behaviours and they have more knowledge of the prices in the markets. To promote companies' sales social media is referred to be a dominant selling tool for the companies' (Li et al. 2022).

The prices are affected by demand. Demand comes from the buyer's desire, ability to pay and willingness to pay for the product or service. If the prices are too high the consumer is not likely to pay the price. If the price exceeds the consumers expectations positively, they are likely to buy the product. Companies in the hospitality industry must follow the demand and make their own

calculations for the set price. The demand must not be evaluated from the prices of competitors especially if they are lower than the demand. (Hayes et al. 2022, 41; Huefner 2015, 2.)

High and low seasons have an impact on businesses' income. During the high seasons sales volumes are higher and in low season sales volumes decrease. The sales volumes effect product pricing and the seasons should be considered. The break-even point is reached when business profits are equal to sales revenues and expenses. When revenues go above the break-even point variable and fixed costs are covered and businesses can make profit. The break-even point should be known on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. (Hayes et al. 2022, 44–45.)

Businesses should not only have cost based pricing. The products costs changes by the volume. When a company sells more, the fixed costs per sold product decreases so the price can be lower. If the break-even point is only considered in pricing when demand is low the prices of products would be overpriced. (Hayes et al. 2022, 46.) Product or services prices can include price packages and these packages can be the basic price, discounts, guarantees and warranties, refund and refund policies and order cancellation terms (Chaffey & Smith 73).

Part of customer satisfaction can be explained with price and expectations. If the price is low the expectations are small and if the price is high the expectations for quality are greater. When reality does not fill expectations the customer and company face conflict. To avoid conflicts, companies must communicate about products or service values to buyers. (Hayes, 55, 66.) As Li et al. (2022) explains, social media can be used for communicating and sharing information of sold products. When the values are well explained and customers are satisfied with the product or service the price can be higher. Buyers are affected by quality, service and price when purchase values are at question. To offer the best service the customer feels important, special and comfortable in the buying process. Product quality and service quality has a role in pricing. (Hayes et al. 2022, 55, 60, 62–63.)

4.2 Discounts and differential pricing in companies

Promotions can be monetary and non-monetary promotions. Monetary promotions can be discounts, coupons and price reductions and non-monetary promotions can be contests and gifts. (Casalo & Romero 2019.) Discounts are lower prices of products and services offered in certain time periods for customers. After the time ends prices rise to the normal level. Discounts for seniors and children are called customer-based pricing and these reduced prices are permanent. Black Friday discounts are not offered during low season, but it is a day for consumers to go shopping and spend money. Depending on the constructor of the seller usually discounts are not profitable for the companies. (Huefner 2015, 51, 53.)

Customer demand changes daily, weekly and monthly. This causes companies to try attracting customers for the slower times and offer customers lower prices to fill the capacity. Companies attempt to sell products and services in advance to get an indication of the coming sales. In differential pricing customers are not charged the same amount from the sold product or services. Companies may offer early-bird, happy hour and reduced rate discounts for customers to fill low demand times. Customers call differential pricing discounts. Some companies offer early or last-minute purchase discounts. (Huefner 2015, 12–15.)

5 RESEACRH METHODOLOGY AND IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Commissioner, Beyond Arctic

The commissioner of this thesis is Beyond Arctic, a Finnish service provider company in the Rovaniemi area. The company operates in the tourism industry offering various tours for its customers. The target groups of Beyond Arctic are international individuals and small groups of travellers visiting Finland. The main season for Beyond Arctic is winter and the busiest times are during Christmas. Beyond Arctic is a small company employing seasonal workers during the high season. The activities Beyond Arctic sells are husky and reindeer safaris, trips to Ranua Zoo and Korouoma canyon. Beyond Arctic also offers snowmobile tours during the day and snowmobile tours in the evening for chasing northern lights, to mention some. Beyond Arctic is one of the 24 companies which are compared in the thesis.

The main questions to answer from Beyond Arctic's point of view are the types of products service provider companies sell for tourists, the price ranges for the sold products and whether there are any campaigns offered on social media (Facebook and Instagram) of the sold products. The main questions for Beyond Arctic are what type of competition there is, how they could get more tourist for their day activities and how companies can differ from their competitors. The goal of these questions is to help Beyond Arctic see how their social media usage compares with other tour operators in the Rovaniemi area and how they can develop their social media usage and gain more visibility amongst their potential customers.

Service provider companies in tourism are companies which sell tours, travel packages and offer accommodations for tourists. Service provider companies can be public or privately own companies operating in certain areas. (Law Insider 2024.) The tour operators operating in the Rovaniemi can be found from Visit Rovaniemi web page (Visit Rovaniemi 2024).

Company 6	x		x					x		x		
Company 7		x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	
Company 8		x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x
Company 9		x	x	x	x	x		x		x	x	x
Company 10			x					x		x		
Company 11	x		x	x			x	x	x	x		
Company 12	x			x	x	x	x	x	x			
Company 13	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Company 14	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x
Company 15							x	x				
Company 16				x		x				x	x	
Company 17	x			x		x	x			x	x	
Company 18	x	x		x	x		x	x	x	x		
Company 19	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Company 20	x					x		x	x	x	x	
Company 21				x			x	x	x	x	x	
Company 22	x	x		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Company 23	x	x		x		x	x			x	x	x
Company 24	x			x		x	x	x	x	x	x	

The purpose of this thesis is to give Beyond Arctic an overview of the marketing of service provider companies in Rovaniemi, how Facebook and Instagram are used to deliver marketing messages and what themes arise from the posts. The goal of the thesis is to help Beyond Arctic see what the price ranges for the sold activities are and what type of marketing campaigns there are. Beyond Arctic will see what the marketing trends are in tourism, how social media is used in marketing and what types of stories and videos companies post in their social media accounts. The result of the thesis will help Beyond Arctic to see where they are good at marketing and how well their company compares with other companies in the area. The result of the thesis will not only help Beyond Arctic, but it will also help other tour operators see the big picture of marketing and marketing trends in Rovaniemi. Companies will see how social media is used in marketing.

The data collected for the thesis is from service provider companies' social media accounts on Facebook and Instagram. The comparison was limited to 24 companies according to the activities they sell to their customer and their location in Rovaniemi. The information of product prices was gathered from companies' web pages during the winter season of 2023-2024. The data was collected from social media posts posted in October 2023 till February 2024 which is the high season in tourism in the Rovaniemi area. This is the time when the Rovaniemi area gets snow on the ground and winter activities can be implemented. Companies posted content of their winter activities around this time of year. Notes were taken about how actively companies used social media, which activities were represented in their posts and how many followers, comments and likes their posts had gotten.

6 RESULT OF RESEARCH ON SOCIAL MEDIA

6.1 Destination image on social media posts

Difficulties which companies might face in social media marketing are the messages the companies send, and the messages customers send from the activities and destinations. People tend to listen and make travel plans depending on what other travellers tell about the possible travelling destinations. (Katsikari et al 2020.) The service provider companies should remember that with their social media posts they create an image to the potential customers of the destination and the activities they offer. (Bassano et al. 2018). Tourists post pictures and videos of their travels. They are creating images of the visited destinations and of the companies (Hong et al. 2021).

The stories companies told in their social media accounts about northern lights, husky and reindeer safaris, sauna and other Finnish traditions were similar with all companies. Husky and reindeer were the traditional way of travelling back in the olden days and northern lights are a natural phenomena which cannot be seen every day or night. Because of the snowy conditions people have used skies and snowshoes for traveling shorter distances. These all were told in the posts and descriptions of these activities.

On Instagram 21% of companies had mainly pictures of northern lights and on Facebook the percentage was 12,5%. Other companies had pictures of all their activities, but the northern lights were represented more than the rest of the activities. The rest of the companies had posted pictures of all their activities equally. The companies which posted pictures mainly from northern lights gave the type of image of Rovaniemi that northern lights can be seen almost every evening. In these posts it was stated that northern lights are natural phenomena and cannot be seen all the time, but the number of posts posted of them was a contradiction.

In business and in the tourism field companies' social media accounts are used for directing traffic to companies' web pages where the sales happen (Wibowo et al. 2020). Each company had a direct link in their social media accounts to their

web pages. The company's basic information, address, name and location was found in the social media accounts.

6.2 Companies Instagram usage on social media marketing

The main purpose of Instagram is to share pictures and reels which are short videos to users (Instagram, 2024). All the service provider companies had Instagram accounts. The usage of Instagram varied based on the company. As Atherton (2019, 84–96) explains, in content marketing the shared content can be informal and educational. This might be why companies which were active in Instagram had focused on the quality and stories of the pictures and posts. The companies which were not so active in Instagram could have focused more on the quality of the pictures and been more attractive in this way. Companies had posted from one up to several pictures per posts and most of the posts had a description of the activities in the posts. As seen in the Figure 2 some of the Instagram posts were from northern lights and wintery landscapes.

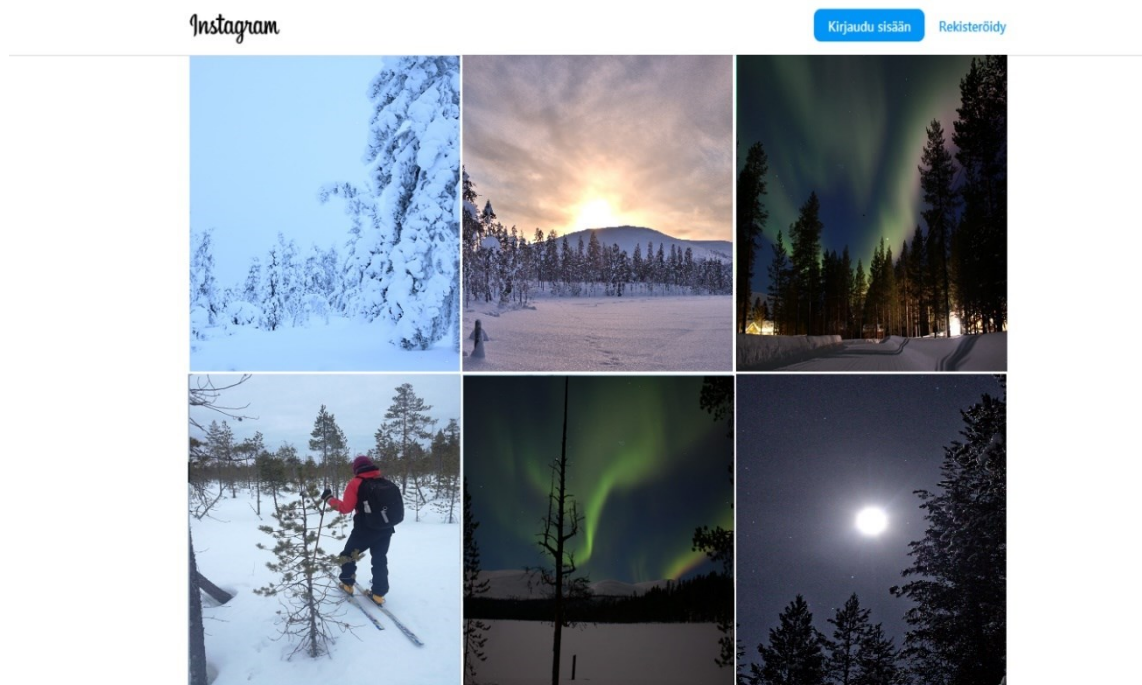


Figure 2. Example of the styles of Instagram posts shared by companies. (Partanen, 2022, Tölli, 2017, Partanen 2024)

Figure 2 is a self-made visualization of the content service provider companies share on their Instagram. Videos and pictures which evoke positive feelings are used for promoting marketing message (Wibowo et al. 2020). Companies content marketing is for attracting people's attention using educational and informational content (Atherton, 2019). A company's potential customers search for travel information from social media. (Alzaydi et al. 2023). This is why the themes of companies' content were reviewed in the research. Of the 24 companies 37,5% had posted the most content of northern lights, 20,8% of the companies most represented activity was snowmobiles and 8,3% had the most posts of huskies.

Table 2 shows the activities which were represented the most on Instagram posts. The main themes for posts were husky safaris, reindeer safaris snowmobile tours and northern lights. Ten of the 24 companies were chosen for Table 2 because of the similarity of the activities they provide for their customers. These companies offered the activities offered in Table 2.

Table 2. Average likes per Instagram posts with mentioned themes

	Husky	Reindeer	Snowmobiles	Northern lights
Company 3	41,25	34,50	35,78	75,33
Company 5	195,17	165,50	166,83	245/2
Company 7	209,00	248,75	218,20	1709,29
Company 8	80,00	105,00	55,50	99,30
Company 13	54,00	112,33	0,00	277,25
Company 14	38,50	100,67	0,00	153,33
Company 16	0,00	0,00	0,00	14549,00
Company 18	21,78	20,50	25,87	2,04
Company 19	86,00	218,00	112,73	376,09
Company 24	40,65	0,00	74,83	28,63
Posts in total:	76,63	100,53	68,97	2149,37

As seen from Table 2 the posts of northern lights had the most likes per picture in average. Reindeer had the second most likes, huskies had the third most likes and snowmobiles the least likes on average. As Kananen (2018, 397–400) explains, companies gain visibility and attract attention on social media by sharing content. For example, company 16 has a bigger probability of attracting the customers' attention because they average over ten thousand likes more on

northern light pictures than other companies as seen on Table 2. The visibility that company 16 gets from their northern lights pictures may lead social media users searching for activities in the Rovaniemi area to use their other activities.

In business, social media is used for branding and the content posted creates the brand image (Kananen, 2018, 397; Li et al, 2022). The content of the posts varied. Companies used Instagram for advertising activities in posters type posts. Other companies posted content from their activities by visualizing to their customers what the activities were. These posts were realistic and gave a fair picture of the safaris and Finnish nature. There were also posts from Finnish nature, accommodations and companies' premises.

The number of followers' likes and comments varied based on the company. Company 4 had the least followers when the research was made. They had 664 followers on Instagram. Company 23 had the most, with 111 thousand followers. Because company 23 had so many followers they have more visibility on social media. With the number of followers, they can better attract possible customers attention than company 4 which has less followers on Instagram.

As told in the theory, visual content shared in social media can have a big impact on travellers' decisions about which company's product they end up using (Stoica et al, 2022; Asnawi 2021). Because of the main question how to attract customers attention and how to gain visibility this is why the research followed the activity of companies on Instagram. December was the busiest time for companies to post content. In December there were 290 posts of the various activities' companies offer for their customers. February had the least with 225 posts during the month. Companies had posted content 228 times in October, 264 times in November and 254 times in January. The amount of posts companies post can have an influence on brand awareness and they can gain visibility amongst the possible customers.

The most active company, company 24 had 32 posts in October, 33 in November, 37 in December, 36 in January and 32 in February. The least active company, company 12 had not posted any content during the research time between October 2023 till February 2024. The Christmas season is the biggest season in

tourism in Rovaniemi so this might be why all companies had posted more content during December 2023.

6.3 Companies' Facebook usage on social media marketing

Facebook is for sharing pictures, videos experiences and stories in diary form (Kananen 2018, 290–295). For companies it is a tool for attracting attention and trafficking people to their web pages (Wibowo et al, 2020). The companies compared in this thesis had added their logos, addresses and general information about them on Facebook. They had a web page link to direct people to their web pages. These are measures that create brand image and visibility (Kananen, 2018, 300–309).

The posts on Facebook had pictures of activities companies offer for their customer and these posts had descriptions and stories about the activities happening in the posts. Customers positive feelings and companies' interactions with followers could promote companies' marketing message (Wibowo et al. 2020). Most of the posts were from northern lights 301 times, huskies 96 times, reindeer 68 times and snowmobiles 131 times. Ice fishing 31 times and hiking 13 times were occasionally in the posts. The least amount of posts were from Ranua Zoo, Korouoma canyon and Riisitunturi national park. Table 3 shows how many times huskies, reindeer, snowmobiles and northern lights were mentioned on Facebook posts.

Table 3. Representation of activities on Facebook posts

	Huskies	Reindeer	Snowmobile	Northern lights
Company 2	9	7	9	22
Company 3	6	6	3	15
Company 4	0	0	0	10
Company 5	5	5	5	13
Company 6	2	2	0	1
Company 7	7	2	11	11
Company 8	6	5	10	4
Company 13	3	4	33	6
Company 14	3	3	0	24
Company 15	0	1	0	12
Company 16	22	0	16	25

Company 19	1	2	0	2
Company 20	2	3	6	3
Company 22	0	0	4	9
Company 23	25	25	25	46
Company 24	5	3	9	98
Average likes in total:	96	68	131	301

Companies 8, 11 and 21 were not on Facebook. Companies 1, 10, 17 and 18 had not posted any content on Facebook from October 2023 till February 2024. On Facebook November was the busiest time for sharing content in the platform with 180 uploads. In October there were 171 posts, in December 170, in January 168 and in February 151 posts in the month. On Facebook the most active company had posted 30 times in October, 31 times in November, 333 times in December, 29 times in January and 28 times in February.

The posts posted in October had a message about the coming season informing tourists that the companies were getting ready for the coming season. The posts were calls for action, letting tourist know that winter season is coming and it is time to book activities for the season. When the first snow arrived at Rovaniemi many companies had pictures of the snow-covered grounds. Some companies offered early bird discounts for their customers. As Huefner (2015, 12–15) explains these types of posts in the beginning of the season are to give an indication of the coming sales for the season.

November and December were busy times and this was the time when companies were the most active on social media. The content varied from northern lights to snowmobiles and reindeer and husky safaris. Some companies had Black Week and Black Friday sales in November. Black Friday sales are not for promoting low season sales, but the sales are linked to the day which is a day for consumers to go shopping (Huefner, 2015, 51, 53).

In January the pictures of northern lights were fewer and there were more pictures of sun, snow and wintery landscapes. The posts had pictures of snowmobiles, huskies, reindeer, ice fishing and skiing. Some companies offered discounts for the end of the season. These discounts can be to fill days when there is a lower demand for the sales. (Huefner, 2015, 51, 53).

Almost all the posts had more than one picture, the amount varied from one to ten pictures. The posts had stories and explanations of the activities. The likes and comments on posts varied company wide. Companies had responded and reacted to followers' comments. The most important way to engage customers on social media is good communication and interaction with potential customers. When a company response to customers they build trust with them and trust is a key for longer relationships with the customers. (Chen et al. 2019.) The posts posted in October had longer and more explanative text than the posts posted in December and January.

6.4 Companies' product and activity pricing

Prices for companies' activities were gathered from companies' web pages. Companies price ranges varied depending on the activity and the implementation of the activity. For this thesis the most common activities were chosen and their prices were compared. There were activities such as snowmobile drives to husky and reindeer farms and husky and reindeer rides under northern lights which were not taken to the comparison because the activities had their own twist depending on the product. These activities were not included in the pricing.

Each company had written a description of the activities that they offer to their customers. These descriptions illustrate that the activities varied between companies. Depending on the company, some concentrated on small groups, individuals, photography, sustainability and locality. Because of the specialities in offered activities, the prices varied somewhat between companies.

The theory in this research explains the pricing policy companies should use for their products and activities. Prices are comprised of fixed and variable costs and demand and competition in the industry. (Hayes et al. 2022, 41; Huefner 2015, 2; Tribe 2016, 116.) In the thesis 24 companies were compared which offer all or some of the following: snowmobile, northern light, husky and reindeer tours. The competition is great, and every company wants to be top in the markets. This is why the prices are similar between companies in the Rovaniemi area.

The northern light snowmobile tours which were operated by electric snowmobiles had a higher price than the snowmobile tours which were operated

by gas used snowmobiles. The same trend was seen also on the day tours driven by snowmobiles. These price ranges can be explained by fixed and variable costs which should be considered in pricing (Huefner, 2015, 3). The most common activities for snowmobile tours were two, six hour and whole day tours. These were not the only snowmobile tours companies offer, but because the two- and six-hour tours were the most common they were selected to the pricing.

In husky activities, companies had used two ways to explain the activity. One way was by the hour or how long the ride takes and the other way was by the kilometres the huskies run. When the activity was marked by hour the kilometres were not seen and it was hard to estimate whether these activities were comparable to the activities marked by kilometres. As seen from Figure 3 the prices for husky rides were similar and there is not significant difference between the lowest and highest price.

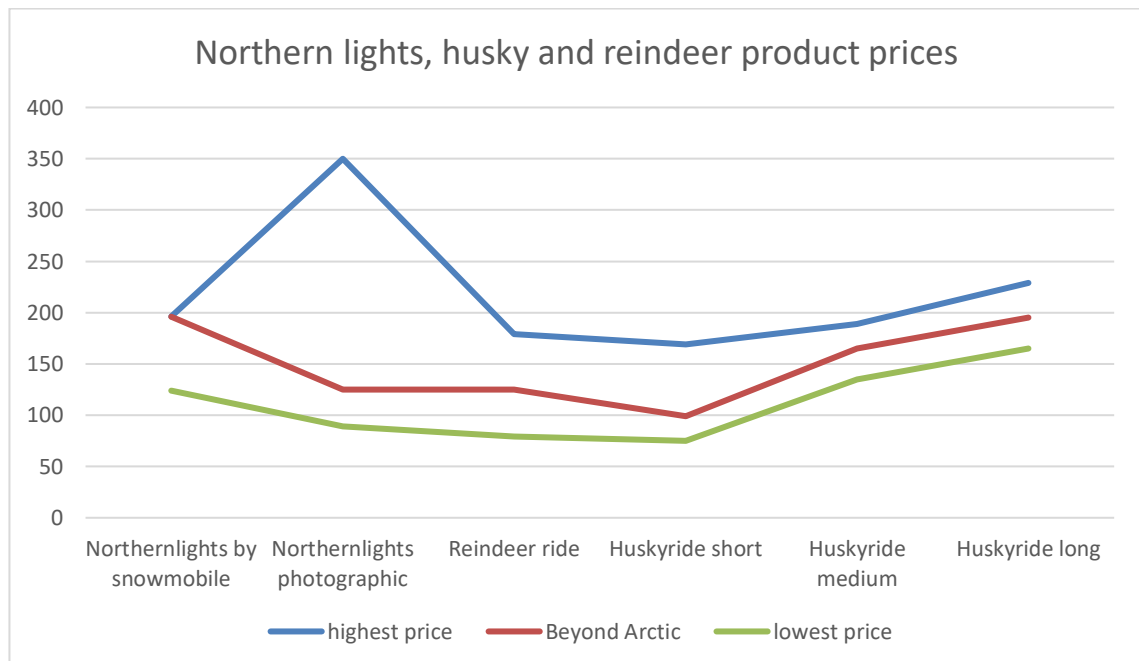


Figure 3. Northern light, reindeer, and husky safari prices

As seen from Figure 4, activities to Ranua Zoo, Korouoma canyon, ice fishing, skiing and snowshoeing were the most similar and the prices were in comparison to each other. In these activities the price varied in some tens of euros except for ice fishing where the price range was greater. Here the price range can be explained if the customers are transported to the location or if the lakes are at a

walking distance. These are the internal costs of companies which Huefner (2015, 3) relates.

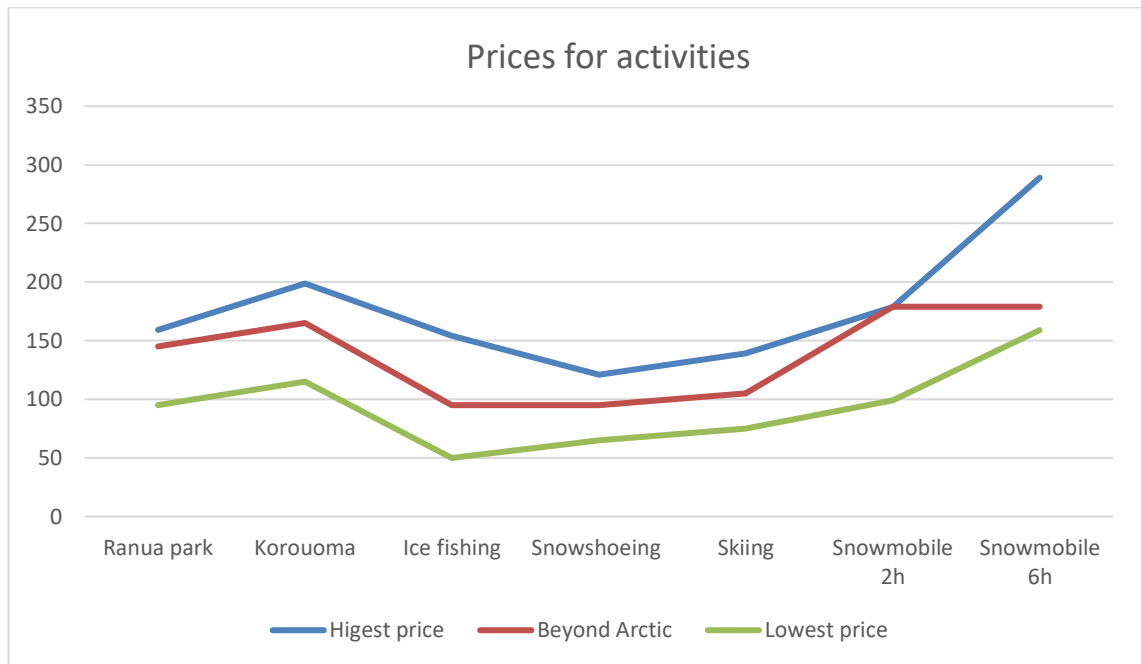


Figure 4. Day tour prices

As seen from the figures the commissioner of this thesis had average prices for their activities. They were not the most expensive company, but they were not the cheapest.

6.5 Discounts companies marketed on Instagram and Facebook posts

The service provider companies in Rovaniemi offered discounts to their customers through social media posts. Early bird discount posts were posted in the beginning of the season in October and in the beginning of November. They covered various activities that ran during the season, for example, 10% off from snowmobile tours. On Facebook, companies 13 and 23 offered early bird discounts and companies 13 and 24 offered discounts off their snowmobile tours. On Instagram companies 15 and 18 offered discounts off their aurora tours and companies 15 and 24 offered discounts on their snowmobile tours. The discounts offered from aurora tours were 10% and 20% off the tours. The discounts from snowmobile tours were 10% off the tours.

Black Week and Black Friday discounts were offered on November 20-26th. These discounts had promocodes for 15% off from activities and accommodation, 20% discounts from snowmobile tours and 15% discounts from small group photography tours. There was also a Black Friday discount of 10% off from husky tours. Of the 21 companies which are on Facebook only companies 7, 14 and 23 offered Black Friday discounts. On Instagram companies 7, 14, 15 and 24 offered Black Friday discounts. The Black Friday discounts companies offered on Instagram were 20% off from snowmobile tours and 15% off from small tours the company offers. The Black Week and Black Friday discounts are to promote sales and Black Friday is known to be a day that consumers spend money (Myllyoja 2018; Huefner 2018, 51, 53).

In Rovaniemi the high season for tourism is around Christmas, starting in November and lasting till the beginning of January. As Hayes et al (2022, 44–45) explains the season influences the price and the companies which operate only in winter are closed during the summers. The conditions for winter and summer seasons are so different that the same activities cannot be arranged in both seasons. Winter has its own specialities and summer its own.

7 DISCUSSION

As the theory indicates, social media has a worldwide audience and the platforms are used daily (Dixon, 2023a). Marketing on social media is free for companies. This might explain why so many companies have social media accounts and why they use them for marketing purposes. The marketing messages might reach out to potential customers who are searching for information and coming to the Rovaniemi area.

The result shows that companies' activeness on social media varied. Some companies were only on Instagram and other companies had both Facebook and Instagram accounts. The content of social media posts varied depending on the company posting the content. Some companies had more posts of northern lights and other companies had content equally from all their activities. Generally, more content from skiing, ice fishing and snowshoeing could have been posted. Posts on social media usually give an idea of activities offered for tourists so if an activity is less represented in the posts it might influence the popularity of booking the activity with the company.

On Instagram the pictures of northern lights had the most likes on average. If there were more pictures of various activities together with northern lights, these activities could gain bigger visibility amongst social media users than a singular post of activities such as snowmobiles, huskies or reindeers. According to the research, Beyond Arctic could use posts of northern lights to gain more visibility and views on social media. This way they could gain more active followers on their social media accounts and get more visibility to market their products.

Some service provider companies could be more active on social media. It appears that some companies have social media accounts just because most companies have them and social media accounts are effective marketing channels. However, the potential of social media marketing is not always utilized, or companies' resources are limited for social media marketing. Companies could use social media more effectively in marketing by targeting groups and platform users and not posting the same content on each platform.

Both tourist and service provider companies are creating an image of the destination. Tour operators and service providers all told the same stories about the nature and culture in Rovaniemi. The companies can effect on the image of the destination with the type of content they share of the destination, but tourists share the type of content they have experienced in the destination. The content tourists share can be negative or positive depending on how the service provider company has successfully offered the implemented activities.

The research material was gathered from unnamed service provider companies' social media accounts and web pages. The research material was accessible for all social media and Internet users. The descriptions of products and product prices were taken from companies' web pages so it can be considered as accurate and up to date information.

It is difficult to tell if the discounts seen on social media posts have any effect on companies' sales. The product prices shown on companies' web pages can only be used for comparing the prices of sold activities. How the price ranges effect the decision of the customers cannot be explained in the results.

The information gathered from social media posts is content from companies' activities. The posts are visible for all social media users but their effect on marketing messages is hard to prove. In the end it is hard to tell how many of the Facebook and Instagram users turn out to be actual customers for the companies. In general, the number of followers on social media is not comparable to the number of customers companies have. As companies gain visibility on social media it is likely to help them gain more customers for activities they offer during the day.

The research data of likes and activity on Instagram and Facebook are valid, but the number of viewers cannot be transferred straight to several potential customers. Companies' names were not mentioned in the thesis. The ethical guidelines of research were followed and taken into consideration.

There are additional social media platforms other than Facebook and Instagram which companies can use for marketing purposes. Further research could be done utilizing all social media platforms including YouTube and X. Destination

images, reviews and pictures posted by other travellers to Tripadvisor and Google could be analysed. A further research question could be, could companies promote their number of followers on social media through posts of northern lights.

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