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How Improvement of Social Media Platforms Can Enhance the Brand.

Case Company: Vuokatin Aateli

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Abstract

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The luxurious hotel, villas, apartments, and island in Finland, Vuokatin Aateli commissions this thesis; the company wanted to improve its social media accounts, for example, Facebook. The aim of the thesis is to develop a plan for the firm to enhance its brand through improvement of social media networks.

In the first part, the brief information about Vuokatin Aateli and expediency of this thesis were given. The theoretical background was based on Four-Stages Social Media Marketing Process, trends of Social Media Marketing in 2019 and theory on Brand Value and Brand Equity. The development method was a good fit for the task given by the company. In the development part, the author explained the work that was completed, the working process and suggestions for future advancements of social media platforms of Vuokatin Aateli which will make the brand better. The development task described the improvements of the firm's VK business page. The development plan is based on Four-Stage Social Media Marketing implemented to the Vuokatin Aateli firm which was concluded with the information how those improvements will influence the brand. Therefore, the marketing strategy on how to upgrade the social media platforms to enhance the online part of the Vuokatin Aateli brand was fully described in the thesis.

In conclusion, the whole working process and collaboration with the company on this thesis was described. Moreover, there was mentioned the importance for the company to begin its social media marketing campaign with a content plan.

PREFACE

This thesis was completed in autumn 2018 and it meets the requirements for the Bachelor`s Degree in International Business at Kajaani University of Applied Sciences. I would like to thank some people for support. Firstly, thanks to my dearest parents for the encouragement and the effort they have done to make my studies possible.

Special thanks to my supervisor for this thesis and teacher Elina Jääskeläinen for her valuable ideas, inspiration and helping me to finish the thesis in the limited time. And to my teachers Erja Karppinen, Ruey Komulainen and Prof. Dr. Simon Fauser to make me interested in studies and inspire to learn more.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Social media is a key for a successful marketing campaign for most of the companies nowadays. Most of social media platforms are optimized for business. For example, there is an option to create on Facebook – business page, on Instagram – business account and on VK (Russian social media network) a company's group or page. Having business pages, groups and accounts where companies can interact with customers, for instance, asking for their feedback and promoting a discount is undoubted advantage in 2018. People spend hours surfing the Internet through social media checking News Feed and, obviously, a company wants its content to be seen by all followers. Even though, a follower does not enter a business page every day, there is a chance he/she will see the post in News Feed of particular social media platform. Each social media network requires special treatment as all of them have different algorithms which influence whether customers see a company's post or not in their News Feeds. How to create a social media strategy to get high rating, attention of the audience, thus enhance the brand are discussed in this thesis.

Various actions are included in brand management such as managing the relationship between the company's customers and its brand, managing the consumer's desire for a particular brand, managing the brand's popularity, and ultimately, the financial value of the brand. Unquestionably, a firm's behavior in social media platforms can enhance or harm its brand. For that reason, social media accounts of the companies should be run professionally.

Furthermore, for Vuokatin Aateli it is important to build a strong brand online. The digitalization will move mostly from offline services to online soon. For example, customers do not have go shopping anymore they can order clothes at home and try them on. The same happens to the hospitality industry. People prefer to go online and look at the pictures of the resort, check the reviews and rating of the hotel rather than go to agency or go to check the place by themselves. Some people go to social media pages of the hotels. People have a meticulous selection of the place to visit for vacation. if they have seen once that there is nothing memorable on the website or social network, there is a little chance people will visit it again. But if the page is well-designed, has significant amount of followers and nice content, it is more likely that people will follow the com-

pany's social media page. Furthermore, one day the company has a hot offer and people will see it in social media and buy. That is how social media can turn subscribers to the clients.

The objective of my thesis is to develop a social media strategy to enhance brand of Vuokatin Aateli. First, I will study the social media marketing and brand management topics using various books and articles. Nowadays, there are many bloggers and websites which share significant information related to my topics. Social media networks which are discussed in this thesis are Facebook and VK due to the active usage of Facebook by Aateli clients and at the wish of Vuokatin Aateli to attract more people from Russia. Changes starting with some advancements in social media platforms VK and Facebook and finishing with a proposal for future improvements and content plan.

Management of Social Media Marketing (SMM) campaigns for hotels has a certain specificity. Methods that work in other areas of business may not be successful or even be counterproductive. At the same time, technologies such as engaging subscribers in a dialogue and encouraging them to share impressions about the hotel are extremely effective and useful for promoting the hotel.

Vuokatin Aateli represents luxurious recreation. Some people ask if it is reasonable for high class hotels have a social media marketing campaign. Perhaps 50% of the subscribers do not earn enough to rent a room in the company's hotel even for a day. Social media gives them the opportunity to touch the dream, tells them about the resort, villas, cottages, island and hotel and how people will feel good when living there. Vuokatin Aateli's social media marketing campaign will make their dream a little more real. Therefore, who knows, maybe Aateli will be chosen for an unforgettable weekend.

2 SOCIAL MEDIA AND BRAND MANAGEMENT

When social networks such as Facebook, VK and Twitter appeared, our world was divided into online and offline. With their help, we can communicate with each other, even on different continents, listen to music, read books, look at photos, watch videos and much more. Social networks have greatly simplified our lives and got us tightly tied to them. (Dijck, 2013)

First social media networks

The site “Six Degrees” was launched in 1997 and was the first social network. He allowed users to create a profile and make friends with other users of the site. Although the site no longer exists, at one time it was quite popular and had somewhere a million users. In 2000, it was bought for $ 125 million and was closed in 2001. (Cycero, 2009)

Then the American Randy Conrads created Classmates.com - the first social network in the modern sense. Registered users get access to a list of graduates from various educational institutions. Thus, anyone can find classmates. It is worth noting that Classmates.com immediately proved very popular. Also, its popularity does not fall even today - more than 50 million people use this social network. (Zinovieva, 2018)

Brand management is a comprehensive, regular management of brand building and improvement carried out at all stages of its development. Brand management is the allocation of a brand into an independent marketing management directly to a brand. Furthermore, it is not to the company's entire market offer or to goods grouped in one way or another, say to products grouped by profitability or inventory turnover. (D'Arienzo, 2016)

The goal of brand management is to maximize sales of goods or services offered to the target audience under the brand name. Brand management tasks are: to make products or services attractive to the end user; and promote products through the marketing channel. (D'Arienzo, 2016)

The essence of brand management is to follow up on new opportunities and make a move, securing a brand product in the minds of consumers. Finding answers to the questions: who is the consumer of this product or services, how to convince to buy this particular product, are the basis of brand management. (Young, 2010)

2.1 Social Media Marketing

“A form of Internet utilizing social networking sites as marketing tools, thereby gaining traffic, brand exposure, and interaction with customers through social media”, - formal definition of SMM. (Dodson, 2016, 153) Indeed, 81% of small and medium companies use social media platforms. (Smith, 2018) Undoubtedly, this percentage is even higher for large enterprises. For businesses social media is an amazing tool to have an online 24/7 interrelation with clients. Beyond the leading firm’s social media network stands Four-Stage SMM Process: Goals, Channels, Analyze and Implement. (Dodson, 2016, 154)

Figure 1. Four-Stage SMM Process (Dodson, 2016, 154)

Goals

Nevertheless, social media develops rapidly, the company’s strategy must be established slowly, step by step in order to create the best service to customers. Before starting social media campaigns, companies can choose whether it is better for them to do earned media, owned media or paid media activities for promotion. The first one would be generated by customers and fans, the second involves company’s own social media pages and the third means to pay out for promotion of firm’s owned media properties. (Dodson, 2016, 155-156)

There are three key stakeholders of SMM: Users, Social Platforms and Advertisers. There is on-going conversation between users and advertisers around the world. Thus, users can tell companies what they want through user-generated content and, on the other hand, continuous communication helps businesses to stand out from the crowd with authentic and attractive profiles. (Dodson, 2016, 156)

Even though, nowadays it is basically impossible imagine a company without social media networks, there might be no sense in social media marketing if:

- Enterprise's ideal audience does not use social media
- A company is not ready to give its reputation and credibility into the hands of customers
- Communication with customers is possible only when it is monitored and carefully managed
- Firm cannot run an endless online marketing campaign

When social media marketing is well set up and customers keep returning back and share with others about the company, it is important to have adjusted goals such as:

1. Business (sales, cost reductions and lead generation)
2. Customer service (consumer satisfaction and the chance of recommendations)
3. Product (design, research and enhancement)
4. Communication (reputation and brand personality)
5. Marketing (engagement, branding and awareness)

After the social media marketing goals are specified companies need to choose the best channels to help companies to achieve them. (Dodson, 2016, 158)

Channels

Most channels require a lot of lead time to yield an Return on Investments (ROI). For instant, content marketing works best over time after it is able to yield Search Engine Optimization (SEO) traction and backlinks. (Jolly, 2017)

Some channels bring immediate results but not day in and day out. For example, influencer marketing can earn a company positive numbers in sales or/and business social media accounts followers for low effort (although high cost). Howerver, these results will not appear after some time. Rather, a firm earns sales on a per post basis, and often less each time the ad post is online. (Jolly, 2017)

Some channels are consistent but time consuming to dial in. For example, AdWords can produce consistent results for the company's brand, but it takes a while to master and earn specific placement. (Jolly, 2017)

To choose the right channel company should consider various factors such as the product or service it is offering and the available human and financial resources at its disposal. It is better to choose only few social media channels and develop them. A company needs to have a clear and implementable plan on which social media is working on. Management of social media channels might be confusing but it takes time and investments in order to achieve sustain period and results.

Facebook

Facebook is a social media marketing platform for millions of people around the globe. Users can be reached 24/7. Therefore, it is one of the best platforms to employ as a marketing tool. As personal accounts cannot be found in search engines, most of the brands create business pages using personal accounts. Undoubted advantages of these pages are:

- Unlimited likes, connections
- One click and user follows company news
- Optimized for search engines
- Easy to track post performance
- Large amount of analytics (Dijck, 2013)

Facebook implements an algorithm called "EdgeRank". It chooses the most relevant content for the user to show in one continuous stream called News Feed. Each like of the post is important, whether the post is liked by people/friends over other types of content, the company has higher chances to connect with people it is eager to reach. (Dodson, 2016, 159-160)

When a company creates a Facebook page, it is crucial for it to know its identity, e.g. if it is a business or place, a brand or a product or maybe even an artist, a public figure, or a band. There are six key points to follow when creating a business page:

1. Add business details
2. Eye-catching cover photo and appropriate profile picture
3. Keep the style and tone of the company within the page
4. Regularly update a page with informative and entertaining content
5. Tap the business page to personal account favorite on Facebook
6. Having at least two administrators of the page (Dodson, 2016)

Marketers should understand that it is important to post only engaging content. If person who sees the post does not find it interesting or funny, does not click to the post to get a closer look, and does not share it with their friends means it requires work to improve the content. The content should be relevant, interesting and easily understood. (Dodson, 2016, 160-161)

According to the research carried by Jeff Bullas, Facebook posts with no more than 40 characters or fewer get 86 percent more engagement than posts with a higher amount of characters on it. (Bullas, 2015) There are over 60 million business pages on Facebook. (Smith, 2018) And to stand out from the crowd the content has to be simple, short and intuitive for people. Also, firms should not forget about conversational tone.

Each post has to be lead with a picture. It might not be easy to get people' attention at the beginning but hard work pays off. Changing one or two things at a time will help to find a style that works for the company's community. Also, the rule "Quality, not quantity", the content should be posted only when it makes a sense. Keep high quality is important as well as keep the positive attitude of the firm's social media content. Video is another powerful tool, clip automatically plays in News Feeds. If the video is engaging, it may stop people to spend sometime with your content. Moreover, it is important to have a balance between business and entertainment content. People might lose their interest in your social media page if it is not fascinating enough. (Dodson, 2016, 161-162)

Using analytics

No matter how ingenious the content is, if a company does not know how to analyze it, the content becomes useless. (Dodson, 2016, 162)

- Post Reach shares basic post statistics inducing impressions, consumption, engaged users and video views.

- Post Engagement shares basic engagement stats inducing engaged users, negative feedback and consumptions.

Reach

“Post reach is the number of (unique) people who have seen your post. Your post counts as reaching someone when it’s shown in their News Feed.” – according to Facebook. (Facebook, 2018) The number of impressions is different, it shows how many times people saw a post. Facebook has an algorithm what to show in News Feed to customers, it is called “Edgerank”. (Dodson, 2016, 162)

There are two ways how post reach people, first who is already the page’s follower – organic search. The result shows how well a post can perform by itself without paying for any advertising. Second, the company can pay to boost a post to attract those who you are not currently followers and fans. This should increase the number of likes for a firm’s Facebook page. It takes time to define which content company followers like, thus there is a negative feedback (fans hide of posts, report it as a spam, or are prompted to unlike a page) which an enterprise can get at the beginning. There is no problem about it, that is how a company can learn from its mistakes. (Dodson, 2016, 162)

About Social Plug-Ins

Social Plug-Ins allow users to share the content on the page of company across the web. (Dodson, 2016, 162) For example:

1. The Like button allows people to share the content from a company’s web-site and easily to get back to their social media profiles with one click.

2. The Send button gives users a possibility to send content from a company’s web-site to their timelines or privately to friends.

3. Embedded Posts add any public post a company did its web-site.

4. The comments plug-in allows people to comment on content at a company’s web-site using their own Facebook accounts.

Facebook Features

First feature is running a contest on Facebook. It sounds easy, but in the reality having a contest has many pitfalls. There are rules which a company needs to follow in order to not get punished by Facebook.

1. Knowledge about what is considered a “promotion” on Facebook. Promotions on Facebook typically include: Entry or registration, element of chance and giveaway or prize.

2. Knowledge about the difference between Sweepstakes/Giveaways, Contests and Lotteries. Sweepstakes or giveaways means that a user can win a prize by a chance and there is no purchase or payment is required. Contest is a campaign where skill, merit or effort are compulsory to win a prize. To participate in lottery users need to make a payment or other consideration to win. Lotteries are illegal in the United States. Thus, companies cannot run this type of competition on there territory. Moreover, companies should consider location factors before running the promotions online.

3. Make clear the fact that firm’s contest is completely independent of Facebook

4. Post detailed contest rules on a landing page

5. Know the actions Facebook forbids. For example, Facebook prohibit to force anyone to share the contest on a personal timeline.

Another way to attract more people to the page is to utilize its Offers and Events features. A company creates an offer’s title and description. If the offer is online purchase then company places there an online redemption link. Facebook will email people who claimed the company’s offer.

In addition, Facebook offers a wonderful way to increase brand awareness – events. 700 million people use Facebook Events every month to promote their companies and events. High effectiveness brings high demand.

Implementation and analysis

From the client’s point of view, social media is a great way to stay in touch with people they already know and companies they want to know. The job of social media manager is to deliver the company value to followers though the social media. Undoubtedly, to deliver the brand value, the company needs to create a social media strategy for its business. Thus, a company listens to its customers, therefore build sustainable relationships. (Dodson, 2016, 187)

Process

Being engaged with customers in Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn is important but planning and scheduling content is crucial. The company must be able to set appropriate goals, create and manage its campaign within budget and proposed timeline. (Dodson, 2016, 187-188)

- At this part of theory will be explained:
- Intricacies of social media platforms' analysis features
- How to schedule appropriate content for social media network
- Setting of suitable objectives for a particular social media platform
- Creation and managing of social media campaigns to a schedule and budget
- Issues related to privacy and data protection associated with SMM

There are three important things which help to better implement the campaign:

1. Understanding the company's position in the market
2. Knowledge about the different ways to listen to firm's audience
3. Careful consideration of marketing campaign

Audience

A firm needs to find out which social media platform customers use. It is very important to know what social media networks are consistent with company's audience. Also, a company needs to decide what style and tone of conversation should it use. Fun and easy going content would suit teenage market, but may not be the best choice for other audiences. Thus, it is significant to define who customers are, what their habits are and other information answering demographic and geographic questions about the customers. In addition, an enterprise needs to hire a professional social media manager to run social media channels. There is going to be much responsibility for image management to fall on the shoulders of this employee. Also, company has to define how to react on negative feedback or comments. Even though, it is a key learning tool, criticism must be responded quickly on public and the issue solved privately with a customer. (Dodson, 2016, 190)

Resources

Any marketing campaign requires investments such as budget and human resources. ROI is an amount of actions required to create a certain value in social media. A ROI can be calculated with a formula:

Social media ROI (in percentages) = revenue / investments (salary expenses, online advertisement budgets, etc.) multiplied by 100. (Dawley, 2018)

Example: €500 profit / €500 ad budget * 100 = 100% return on a firm investments

Listening

Listening of a customer is important. In fact, a company can get aware of what channels should it use, what style and tone to adapt, if there is a difference among customers depending on demographic and geographic factors. Also, who the influencer of firm's targeting market and how a company can reach them. (Dodson, 2016, 190-191)

Moreover, it is possible to get to know company competitors better by analyzing audience engagement in social media. Checking how company potential or current customer react on social media strategies of other firms. In addition, it is a good way to learn from their success. (Dodson, 2016, 191)

Influencers

There are hundreds, thousand or even more people a company may interact with. Undoubtedly, there are limits due to company's focus, for example, if a firm is focused on Finnish domestic market, it will not have same leads as an international company might have. Some of them leave comments, feedback on social media. Sometimes their reaction is bad. It is important to not ignore customers complaints. If a firm is able to solve the issue of customers and win their favor, there is a high chance this person to become your loyal customer and a big advocate of company's brand. Undoubtedly, engagement with unhappy customers is as important as with happy. A company should look after a positive feedback of the customers and reward them. Also, identification and attraction of potential customers are significant to grow market share. One of the options is to have a look at the negative feedback that competitors have. Then analyze complaints and offer a solution to people in order to approach them. (Dodson, 2016, 191)

The most important reason why a company needs to listen is to hear exactly what customer wants, then it is easier to figure out what to deliver. Thus, two main ways of listening: Being reactive or being proactive. (Dodson, 2016, 191-192)

2.2 Social Media Marketing Trends 2019

Social networks have been firmly established in the list of business tools for a long time. It is possible to sell, invite to events, stand out from competitors and even manage the reputation of companies. And there is a battle for the client to whom firms offer everything from fluffy toys to real estate. (Lazarev, 2018)

One of the ways for a company to not get lost in a crowd and be distinguished is to know the most promising trends in social media and be able to use them.

Longreads

Longreads - long posts are coming back. People started again to read in social networks and if the material is interesting, they are ready to spend time for a long text. This fact does not mean that it is necessary to rebuild the content strategy and write only longreads for upcoming year, just add them to the content plan and track the reaction. Facebook, for example, allows companies to create longreads in Instant Articles service where a user can view articles from different web resources without going to a third-party site page.

Digital Influencers

Opinion leaders “Digital Influencers” who have millions of subscribers, gradually fade into the background and their place is taken by “Micro Influencers”, who have about 50-150 thousand subscribers. First, they have a more lively and responsive audience. Secondly, their services are more affordable, and their involvement is several times higher. (Jackson, 2018) Thirdly, the audience does not will to follow the advice of celebrity anymore, knowing that the recommendation of the yogurt or restaurant has been paid. (Lazarev, 2018)

Last year, the US Federal Trade Commission sent out about 100 warning letters asking the most well-known opinion leaders to clarify their relationship status with the brands they are writing about. (Webster, 2017) Basically, it means to designate advertising content. Federal Trade Commission did not reach influencers with 100,000 and less flowers,

but even if they come their audience is more loyal. Thus, people understand that for some of them it is the only way to earn money.

Chat bots

Chat bots are ubiquitous. Chat bot - a program that performs the functions of the companion in the messenger. It can simply keep a dialogue going, answer the most popular questions, offer products and services. According to LivePerson polls, a company that studies communications with clients, only 19% of the 5000 have negative opinion about chat bots, 48% were apathetic to them until chat bots helped them solve a problem, 33% of respondents positively evaluated the work of chat bots. (LivePerson, 2017) The numbers show that in the near future, these programs can completely replace live operators, at least in messengers. (Lazarev, 2018)

Interactive content

Interactive content is becoming more and more popular. A person who regularly check social media News feeds is already fed up with pictures, videos, fun stories and quotations. Nowadays, promotion requires a new type of content not a passive, but an active interaction. Due to this fact, the increase in popularity of quizzes, polls and tests is obvious. Active involvement of users in the game is a benefit for a company. First, a person associates a brand with the pleasure received from a game and victory. Secondly, a good quiz or an interesting puzzle has a viral effect. (Lazarev, 2018)

New Instagram features

Instagram is not only dynamically developing platform, but also the social media network that is trying to do it with the interests of users. For example, the format "Stories" has been redesigned and supplemented. In particular, Stories can be combined by subject now. Firstly, this feature makes life easier for the users, who can choose what they are interested in without spending time for scrolling the page. For example, by going to the restaurant’s page, a user can go directly to the menu or to the interior, without looking through all the photos, in order to find right ones. Secondly, it allows the company to differentiate its messages, saving the client’s time and making his/her life easier. (Lazarev, 2018)

And one more innovation by Instagram: Product Tags. What are Product Tags? This is a special tag, clicking on which, the user goes to the product page, where more photos,

description and cost of the product are indicated and provided a link to the company's website. It seems that the way of collaboration, when a person can get acquainted with the product and service, without leaving a beloved social network is becoming a steady trend. (Lazarev, 2018) For example, there are a social networks in which users not only communicate, but also make purchases and it exists already for a long time in China. (Thai, 2018) The most popular one is WeChat, it has more than one billion users. (Angrymoo, 2018)

In the summer of 2018, Instagram launched IGTV, a platform that allows uploading videos up to 60 minutes to Instagram. However, unverified accounts can upload videos only up to 10 minutes, but this is significantly more than a standard minute. (Lazarev, 2018)There are many functions including a possibility to watch and film horizontal videos, it was never before on Instagram. The content the person sees is not only what followers make, but also some popular content and based on the person's interests. (Systrom, 2018)

Short videos

At the same time, in the news feed there is a tendency to reduce the length of the video. A laconic video clip where a trainer shows in detail how to do one exercise is gaining more views and likes than a one-hour recording workout today. This tendency tells that users want important information for the minimum amount of time. From that perspective is rise of popularity of the video blogs showing various "life hacks". (Lazarev, 2018)

According to forecasts, in 2019 video content will take up to 80% of all Internet traffic. Therefore, companies need to think about how to create entertaining and useful videos, both in traditional and in IGTV-format.

Blogs

Blogs or personal pages which run by business owners are gaining adoration. It brings to a business humanity. It is very difficult for a user to perceive a cafe, a car-care center, a candy shop as animated, but its owner - easy. Through humanizing the business, understandable, close and trustworthy relationships can be quickly achieved.

Augmented Reality

Augmented Reality continues to blur the lines between our and digital worlds. Many brands are already using this technology, that allows them to showcase their products to

consumers more effectively. For example, “Plac” - an application developed for IKEA allows the buyer to see if the selected furniture fits into the interior of his home. Also, Snapchat has allowed brands to create their own Snap Lenses where AR-elements are not entertaining, but doing a business function, lead to the order page. Nike immediately took advantage of this feature and got an excellent result - the batch of Air Jordan sneakers was sold out within 23 minutes. (Dickey, 2018)

Mailing latest news

The last but not the least trend in the list is related to “VK” – the most popular social media platform among people in Russia and other CIS countries. Communities have an option for users to subscribe for latest news emails. However, a distinction is that letters come not to an email box, but to personal messages. It would seem that this should annoy users, but marketers estimate that the rate of opening such messages exceeds 90%, and for email distribution is 60%. Even more interesting is the fact that about 20% of the recipients write a response message in which they share their opinions or ask questions - and this is already a direct dialogue with the client. (Lazarev, 2018)

2.3 Brand Management

Brand media strategy is a plan of actions which assist company to reach its target audience and by doing it, company improves its overall conversion rate. When setting up a strategy it is important to not forget about basic principles. (Young, 2010)

Nowadays, strategy is quite overused and misused words in business. Sometimes, companies set up goals but forget about a long way to achieve them. Also, companies often go its long way for many years to nowhere. (Young, 2010, 39) According to Michael Porter school of strategy:

Creation of a unique and valuable position

Brand media strategy does not only plan achieving of objectives but also it is about delivering of competitive advantage. (Young, 2010, 39)

Trade-offs

In a brand media strategy company needs to think of what not to do. Because being strategic requires choices. For example, determine where to allocate resources for a greater return. (Young, 2010, 39)

Creation of a fit among activities

The media strategy works better when all activities such as ideas, initiatives and tactics are combined in order to get a more complete strategic platform. (Young, 2010, 39)

Brand Value & Brand Equity

Brand value and brand equity are similar, but not the same. Quite often, there is misunderstanding about how each differs from another. (Godin, 2009)

Brand equity is a bunch of liabilities and assets in a form of brand visibility, brand associations and customer loyalty which add from value of a current or potential service or product driven by the brand. This is a key for business strategy and marketing management. (Aaker, 2016)

Brand equity is connected to the customer's perception of a particular brand, which can be translated into the financial value (brand value). Also, brand equity is more difficult to evaluate due to the fact that it is a set of customer's perceptions, attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors. (Aaker, 2016)

Opposite, brand value is the financial value of some brand. To define businesses and brand value, businesses need to estimate how much the particular brand is worth at the market – basically, how much someone who buys the brand would pay.

In addition, it is significant to notice that even if the brand value considered to be positive, it does not mean necessarily a positive brand equity for any company. There are various situations the company or brand gets into which influence its reputation, what is brand quantity for that case. If in the mind of people, the company does wrong things, but at the end people still continue using its products and services, the brand value will not be influenced poorly. (Keller, 2007)

The process of measuring brand value and brand equity is not simple and requires the consideration of various factors.

Brand Visibility

The meaning is that a specific brand has credibility and awareness with respect to a particular customer need — relevance. If the brand does not come to mind, when a customer is looking for a purchasing option or if there is some reason that the brand is deliberate to be unable to deliver sufficiently, the brand will not be relevant and not will not considered by the customer. (Aaker, 2016)

Brand Associations

Brand associations include everything that creates positive or negative attitudes or feelings towards the brand. It can be based on functional benefits, as well as brand identity, organizational values, emotional benefits, self-expressing benefits, or social benefits. (Aaker, 2016)

Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty provides a stream of business for current and potential products and services from customers who believe in the value of brand offers and will not waste time assessing other different options with lower prices. The inclusion about loyalty in the approach of brand equity allows marketing managers to justify giving loyalty priority in the budget for creating a brand. (Aaker, 2016)

3 DEVELOPMENT TASK

A development task method was the most suitable option for my thesis paper. Since the beginning of collaboration, the company stated a goal to improve its social media. Thus, the company representative meant that as a result they are willing to get something that can develop their social media platforms. Finally, there was implemented some ideas about improving VK business page of Vuokatin Aateli. To do so, up-to-date data about social media marketing, trends and other information which fit the target were applied. Within a few weeks, it was possible collaborate with the company representor, therefore some ideas which were realized on VK page. We improved different sections of the VK business page and implemented a one weekly post. Thus, changes which were done to increase the brand value of Vuokatin Aateli from Social Media perspective. In addition, there was implemented a plan for the improvement of not only VK but the Facebook business page as well.

Development tasks are used in firms and other organizations in order to create new operational processes, products and services from the demand of the companies or from the demand of environment. There is usually an organization that is eager to make itself better, behind the task. Research problem and development task are different because of a goal to find new, fresh solutions in practice contrary to the process of finding a new, fresh theory. Accomplishing the task, many methods are generally used and to support the planned development, both theory and practical information is required. Typically, the process of a development task starts from planning, the next step is implementation and final step is evaluation. Defining the target of the development is significant for the accomplishment of the development task. (Ojasalo, 2014)

Week 42

A cover picture was developed for VK “Vuokatin Aateli” group. It was made of a few pictures of Aateli hotel and their famous visitor Ville Haapasalo. The cover picture was done using a design and picture editing program Photoshop. (Appendix 1)

Week 43

Relevant links were added to “Links” section on VK. We added Facebook and VK links to attract more followers to those channels. Also, we put there a link to booking on the official web-site. (Appendix 2)

Week 44

Discussion section was improved in VK “Vuokatin Aateli” group. The discussions named “Restaurant”, “Feedback” and “How to get to Vuokatin Aateli” were added. Pictures of menu were added in the “Restaurant” section. In the “Feedback” section we kindly asked to leave a feedback about the time customer spent with Aateli. And in the “How to get to Vuokatin Aateli” is detailed information how to get to the hotel from Moscow and Saint Petersburg by car, train or plane. (Appendix 2)

Week 45

The information about one of the cottages was posted to increase brand awareness and get some bookings. A picture that shows how beautiful the cottage was posted with link, thus followers who are directed to web-site when they lick to the image. Also, the post contained a short information about the chosen cottage. (Appendix 3)

4 DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Some of the ideas were possible to implement in Social Media of Vuokatin Aateli, but most of them are only on paper. Therefore, a description of the changes which were made and a list of improvements for Social Media which can enhance the brand of Vuokatin Aateli are in this development plan.

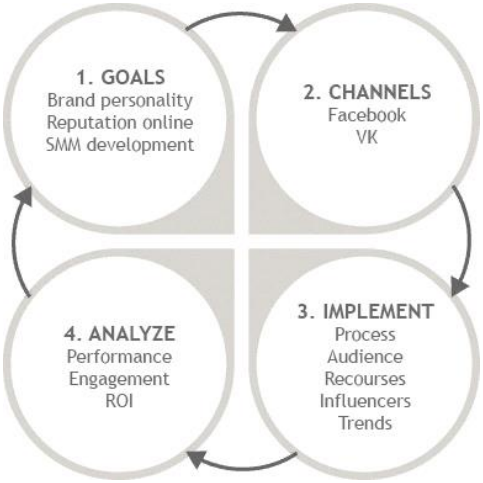

Figure 2. Social media marketing process applied to Vuokatin Aateli

4.1 Social Media Marketing Goals

Vuokatin Aateli has a goal to build a brand personality and reputation online. This company has a strong brand offline. Many people who are aware of Vuokatti know Vuokatin Aateli as the company that has the most luxurious villas, cottages and hotel in the region. Even though, the hotel is new, the company tries to keep there the same high class standards which are already set up in other facilities. However, Aateli does not have a good social media marketing campaign. The company does not have a social media marketing manager, they do not have a content plan and everything on Facebook is posted in Finnish language. But it is well-known that the company wants to attract many people from other countries to visit its hotel. Thus, there are plenty improvements which should be implemented to prove Vuokatin Aateli's luxurious brand online.

It was decided to develop owned media. Because the company at the beginning does not want to spend money for paid media or rely on earned media. Vukatin Aateli will

have to be ready to spend some resources in order to build a successful marketing campaign. The large number of followers tell us that the company has a significant audience online.

4.2 Social Media Channels

There are three social media channels on which Vuokatin Aateli operates: Facebook, VK and Instagram. Facebook is used for publishing news or pictures. And it is not used in full, there are many things to be improved. Another one is VK, it does not have a constant publishing content. The whole concept of running VK as a social media page for Vuokatin Aateli needs to be reworked. However, Instagram of Vuokatin Aateli looks good enough. The company does not post the same content in Instagram and Facebook. Thus, it is possible to see pictures of Aateli and wonderful nature around. It seems to be the most advanced channel for the company now. Therefore, it was decided to concentrate more on development of Facebook and VK.

Two social media networks were targeted such as VK and Facebook. First was chosen due to the desire of the owner to draw attention of more Russians to the company. Vuokatin Aateli sees the Russian market as one of the most promising. There are thousands of Russian tourists travelling to Finland each year and the company wants to reach its target audience online.

Facebook is a global platform and Aateli should pay the most attention to it. Facebook business page has a huge potential to gain thousands new subscribers, therefore potential visitors. Probably, the company will use influencers one day to promote its social media accounts, but now it is important to improve its platforms to be able to bring new audience online and make them clients.

4.3 Implementation of VK

Current status of Vuokatin Aateli VK page (appendix 4, 5, 6, 7):

- 581 people follow the Page,
- 1,245 page reaches within November

- 509 page reaches within October
- 70% of last month visitors are women
- 85% of last month visitors are located in Russia
- 80% of last month visitors using mobile device to reach the page

According to the statistics, VK Page has 581 followers and that is 10 times less than a number of followers on Facebook. However, there is a significant amount of visitors from Russia. Due to the fact of low number of follower and high number of visitors from Russia, it can be concluded that VK does not run in a proper way and brand value suffers because of wrong actions and strategy. What challenges can be on the page:

- Not well-designed
- Bad structured
- No content plan, no strategy and no goal
- No leads from external sources (e.g. web-site)

Last months' statistics shows that there is rapid increase in number of reached users on VK. It might be related with upcoming winter season, but also with changes on Social Media which started in October. When I have developed first improvements.

70% of last month visitors are women, hence this fact should be considered when creating a content plan or advertise on VK.

85% of last month visitors are located in Russia, this is quite obvious fact, but still proves the idea behind running VK in a proper way in order to attract those visitors from Russia to visit Vuokatin Aateli.

Moreover, 80% of last month visitors using mobile device to reach the page, that is definitely a lot and this factor must be also consider when VK Page's design and structure are improving.

In general, there are a lot to do on VK to enhance a brand equity and brand value. Thus, there is a list of changes and list of possible improvements of VK Page considering much information and various trends.

Discussions

Discussions sector helps to interrelate with the audience. Vuokatin Aateli can hear visitors feedback online, answer question and provide relevant information. It is always important to get feedback from people. On Facebook, it is possible to leave review and then company can comment on it. However, on VK there is no function to do it. Thus, the section “Feedback” in discussion sector on VK gives a possibility to people leave their opinion online. And company has a chance for a dialogue with a client where the Vuokatin Aateli might find something useful for future development. Also, potential clients will see the feedback and company’s reaction to it. Moreover, it influences brand equity as the company demonstrates that it cares about customers opinion.

Also, we added a “Restaurant” sector because owners want to keep customers updated about restaurant seasonal menu. The company want to attract more people to eat in the restaurant. In my opinion, it would be more relevant to have a weekly post about one of the dishes in their restaurant. People like engaging posts, they even might plan before they arrive to enjoy a lunch or dinner in the restaurant while visiting Vuokatin Aateli. One of other options can be a poll post on VK where people choose one of two different dishes and the most voted one has a 20% discount within next week. In general, this kind of posts would also be a good feature for Facebook. This type of collaboration allows audience to participate in brand development. Again, customers are those who create that brand value, therefore his activity shows to people that their opinion matters to Aateli.

Moreover, the section “How to get to Vuokatin Aateli” directs people to google maps where they can find detailed information how to get to “Vuokatin Aateli” from Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Firstly, it is about using car, the map tells the number of kilometers and how much time the trip will take. Secondly, there is a way to get to the hotel by train. The map has information about where to get tickets, how long the trip is and how much tickets cost. Thirdly, another way to get there is by plane. Having this map shows a special relationship status between Aateli and customers. Aateli needs to provide high class service in any touchpoints between the company and clients.

Links

There is a section on VK where the company can add their reliable links to other social media profiles, web-site and etc. Vuokatin Aateli has a Facebook page, Instagram and a web-site where customers can book the room in a hotel or a cottage. Also, there is an official page of this place “Vuokatti” on VK. Undoubtedly, the company should add it in order to keep customers up-to-dated about the news in the region.

Attraction of users from one Social Media Page to another has various advantages:

- Customers will see Vuokatin Aateli in New Feed any social media platform they use
- Customers increases the value of a few social Media accounts if they are followers in one social media and another
- Demonstration of digitalization of Vuokatin Aateli

Logo and cover picture

Logo and cover picture play significant role in social media page attractiveness. Most of Facebook and VK business pages have a cover picture. It is important element of appearance where the communication between users and company starts on social media. Vuokatin Aateli has a well design cover picture for Facebook, but VK did not have it at all. The goal was to create the picture that makes a clear impression about what the resort is and value that the hotel brings to visitors. According to some trustful sources, it was decided to divide picture into three main parts: left, middle and right. Left part is Ville Haapasalo who is the most famous Finnish actor in Russia. He was filmed in 27 Russian movies. (Wikipedia, n.d.) He wears the Vuokatin Aateli's hat on the picture, thus it shows what is the status of visitors of the resort. At the middle we put the logo, as it is important to have the most recognizable sign on the cover picture. The words: "Luxury recreation, At the Vuokati, Finland" were placed on the right side. Moreover, the background is the picture of cottages and it has blur effect to keep attention on the most important details. (Kryukova, 2018) In my opinion, this type of picture is a trend and Facebook page of Aateli should also have implemented something like this. The text in cover picture can attract people attention at the moment they open a Facebook page. For those, who are not familiar with Vuokatin Aateli, little description like we made for VK would make a difference. Moreover, it influences the brand value. One of the most famous Finnish actors in Russia wearing a hat with a logo of Vuokatin Aateli. Does not it show the luxurious of the brand and the company? This is a reason why customers will pay more, for the brand equity, that celebrities choose Aateli instead of other hotels in Vuokatti.

The logo is the same for Facebook and VK. It is logo of the company. There is no reason to change a logo of social media pages if it is an official logo of the company. It is something that some clients can associate Aateli with.

Posts

It was possible to create a post on VK promoting one of the cottages. First sentence gives the translation of the name of the cottage. Second tells how many people can stay there. The third one tells about the wonderful view that cottage has. Forth sentence gives the information about facilities like a grill outside and high speed Wi-Fi. Moreover, the tracking link was used to see how many people went to the web-site and checked the cottage. In addition, the link was attached to the picture, thus when people click on the picture and it immediately transfers them to web-site where they can see all the pictures, detailed information and book this cottage or another if they want to visit Aateli. Attraction of more customers who generate the revenue definitely increases the brand value.

First thing that company needs to complete is a content plan for VK. This Social Media platform differs from Facebook, Instagram and others. As well as the mentality of Russian people who follow the VK page and Finnish who are mostly on Facebook. If there is no content plan, then there is no goal and no a long way to it. It is just a waste of time to run VK without a content plan. Unique and useful publications for people - this is the key to success, which will give a long-term and lasting result.

There are 8 steps which can help to build a competitive content plan, therefore VK as social media platform can positively influence the brand value:

Have a goal

Published content should have a purpose. There are various type of posts. Informative might be to increase brand awareness. Entertainment posts are for improving brand image.

Define a target segment audience

Analyze of Vuokatin Aateli's target audience, because the company interacts with it through content. Think about what problems the audience has, how the company solves them. As a result, offer the company's solution to the problems. Also, the company should not forget about interests of its audience, some people prefer longreads, some pictures, therefore it is possible to mix it to satisfy all parties.

Choose the type of the content

- Useful: tips, ski tutoring, instructions, lifehacks

- Entertaining: fun pictures, videos, quotes
- Involving: polls, contests, discussions in the comments
- Image: reviews, cases, interviews, opinions
- Promotional: company news, special offers and promotions

Analyze competitors and leaders in other industries

Find out what Allteli's competitors are writing about, how followers interact with publications, which posts are more popular. Pay attention to what the leaders of other industries do, find out their formats. Learn how often other brands publish, analyze publications on likes, coverage, reposts, number of comments. All these statistics is in a free access.

Define the number of posts per a specific period of time

Define the company's resources. How much budget it can spend for Social Media Marketing and how many people can be involved in moderating community. Currently, there is only one person in Vuokatin Aateli who moderates VK. It is definitely not enough. There are should be at least one more person who creates content and constantly moderate the page in the case of any comments or question by followers which require immediate reaction.

Choose the time of day when to post

Success of posts also depends on publishing time. Different audience use VK on different time. However, the statistics shows that VK users are most active since 11:00 am till 1:00 pm and since 9:00 pm till 10:00 pm (Stepochkina, 2018). Therefore, Vuokatin Aateli should consider this time for posting on VK.

Define the theme of publications

It is important to choose the theme of posts which can be interesting for the target audience. In the case of Aateli, they can use AdWords in order to define what people usually search on Google and Yandex with luxury vocation.

Public and not be afraid to experiment

When the content plan is ready it is crucial to not be afraid of failing. Post, try something new, experiment and then find the best content the audience might be interesting in.

4.4 Implementation of Facebook

Facebook

Current status of Vuokatin Aateli Facebook page (Appendix 8,9,10):

- 5,622 people liked the page
- 5,585 people follow the Page,
- 4.7 out of 5 – current rating of Vuokatin Aateli.
- Latest reviews: 4 during the Summer 2018, 5 during the Autumn 2018.
- 22.8 thousand page reaches within last 28 days
- 640 page views within last 28 days
- 58 new followers within last 28 days
- 1 click on web-site link within last 28 days

There are 5,585 who can potentially see the content of Vuokatin Aateli's Facebook Page. It is a significant amount of people and a great opportunity for Aateli to attract more and more people to visit its hotel, villas, cottages and island.

4.7 is quite high rating considering the fact that it is an average among 58 visitors who left a review. However, there are not so many reviews within last summer and autumn. In total, there are 9 reviews which is definitely just a small percentage among the clients who visited Aateli during this period of time.

Facebook page has 640 page views with 22.8 thousand reaches. That means each 35th user who saw the post went to the Facebook page. However, this number is not certain because some people might just come to Aateli's Facebook page through referrals or directly by the link.

One statistics that is not great for Vuokatin Aateli is 1 click on web-site link within last 28 days. It sounds too little for page with hundreds of visitors. Low amount of people who went through the link means that there are no bookings coming from Facebook, thus no revenue.

There are some things company can do in Social Media to enhance brand equity and brand value.

First of all, it is important to post in multiple languages. Currently, the company runs Facebook only in Finnish language. Definitely, it is not time consuming to translate some of sentences from Finnish to English. This little detail shows to customers that Aateli is an international resort that cares about its international visitors. Undoubtedly, it would be even better if they translate posts into all languages which their web-site has. So, potential customers who enters the Facebook page from the web-site keep understanding what Vuokatin Aateli writes about. Moreover, the brand equity of Vuokatin Aateli will benefit from that. So far, it is a local company that offers facilities to Finnish and few International guests. However, Vuokatin Aateli wants to attract more clients from abroad. Furthermore, multiple languages on Facebook is one of the fist and easiest things they need to implement.

Second, Vuokatin Aateli can change its cover picture on Facebook. It definitely looks pretty, but it does not give any informational value. By including some basic information about the company is able to deliver the first impression the company wants to give to its potential customers. Moreover, there is a trend to have a descriptive cover picture. Also, the company can create a more positive brand image if it makes a modern, well-design picture.

Third, I would make a content plan for the Facebook page. Their posts are chaotic, there is no structure at all, the company posts everything and any time they want. It would be a significant change that can improve the position of their posts in News Feed of followers. Thus, more people can see it, comments, share and, therefore, attract more visitors to Aateli. I believe that three posts per week are good amount of content for the company's business page. One of them should be engagement where people participate in poll, answer to given question or any other condition that can generate the activity of customers on Monday. In addition, second posts should be about offers and different possibilities which Vuokatin Aateli offers and people cannot miss it on Wednesday. In addition, the third post would be an entertaining one, as Facebook has a feature called Instant Articles where businesses can post longreads. Therefore, Vuokatin Aateli writes some articles about its restaurant, outdoor activities or other things with a fancy title that makes the followers open the article. This is another way of Aateli to communicate with customers. On weekends, no posts are needed as the activity of people is lower than within Monday – Friday period.

	Theme	Description	Time
Monday	Engagement	Poll, quiz, question-naire	13:00
Tuesday	-	-	-
Wednesday	Informative	Hot offer, Call-To-Action post	13:00
Thursday	-	-	-
Friday	Entertainment	Longreads about Vuokatti, Finland	13:00

Table 1. Content plan

Third, all successful marketing campaigns begin with experiments. It is a rare opportunity to start posting on Facebook and immediately get a positive reaction of audience. Usually, posts require some changes within time, it depends a lot on what Facebook Insights and Analytics will show after a week or two of posts which were planned. I cannot be confident that the content plan I offered in previous paragraph will work perfectly. I assume that the plan will need to be modified according to the received data.

4.5 Analysis of Social Media Marketing campaign

After a few weeks of following the content plan, it is crucial to analyze the audience's feedback. Firstly, describe who customers are, using various factors for analysis like their habits, demographic, geographic information and other data that Facebook and VK Analytics provide. In addition, check the social media pages performance though Facebook Insight is also a key to success. It is possible to see there information about post reach and post engagement. Also, allocating the resources right is an important asset for Vuokatin Aateli. The company should not waste much time and human resources at the beginning. It would be better if they start with less then they should start with to define which areas need to be improved. The company easily can find needed information by looking at social media ROI. It is equal to revenue divided by investments. While creating own marketing campaign, the company should remember about competitors what moves they do, thus take the best they implemented into their social media accounts

and adapt it to the Aateli's business. In addition, the company needs to be reactive at the beginning, if it sees someone posts about them and mentioned using hashtag or account name, Vuokatin Aateli needs to react immediately to improve its brand image. Thus, the company will show that they care about customers and ready to answer their questions and comments online whenever it is needed.

4.6 Relationships with Brand

Brand visibility is a key factor of brand awareness. Through social media Aateli can show to its customers the relevance of its company. Up-to-date posts which describe how Aateli works, informative flow for subscribers who see Aateli's posts a few times per week. Answering to the comments, feedback and complains of the customers will influence the creditability of the brand in a positive way.

Positive and emotional posts are a part of brand associations. If Aateli provides entertaining posts online, there is a chance that when subscribers think of a luxurious vocation, first thought will be about Vuokatin Aateli due to its positive brand image, high class brand media strategy. The brand media strategy is the whole process since the creation of business page for promotion till the first subscriber to visit the Aateli.

Customer loyalty is significant for Vuokatin Aateli Aateli because people choose the value instead price if they are loyal to the brand. Building of strong customer relationships is not easy. It requires time to deserve people's trust. Thus, social media can be a starting point of building the customers relationships. It is the place where the journey from a person who first time hears about this place to the loyal customer starts. And if the page is run professionally, more likely subscribers will visit the place and bring revenue.

In general, brand value and brand equity are influenced by many factors. In social media marketing, there is a chance to influence it the way the company wants before the real interaction of a client and the company. Therefore, for Vuokatin Aateli social media is a chance to build a new customer base, people who believe in digitalization and word of mouth though various networks.

5 CONCLUSION

Social media marketing, brand management and hospitality industry are big topics which got hundreds of books, written articles and researches done on them. The issue was to find the right book to be a plot for the whole work. Fortunately, “The Art of Digital Marketing” happened to be a great book to be a plot for the thesis. Both theoretical part and practical parts could not be completed without this book. Also, it has other fascinating and useful information for further digital development. Digitalization is a rapid process, it is complicated to find a trustful recourse on this topic. Even though, the book was published 2016 year, it contains structures which can be perfectly used in 2018.

Also, there are various articles online. Articles contain up-to-date information on themes which were discussed in the thesis. It was exciting to search for different articles for one topic to see the common opinion of writers or totally opposite. For example, there were found a few articles on the topic of social media marketing trends 2019 and all of them presented almost the same ideas. Whether it means they copied from each other or coming trends are well-known for marketers. However, this information was significant to complete development plan.

The development plan was completed in order to increase my comprehension of influence of social media marketing on brand. Plenty of read articles and books gave me an understanding how the brand can be modified using only online sources such as social media. Moreover, the real company case is undoubted advantage for development method.

The collaboration with commission party – Vuokatin Aateli, was on high level. The company representative was very helpful from the very beginning. She provided me with all information I needed to complete my thesis paper well. For example, the full access to the data of Aateli’s VK page was given. I got assigned for a role of the page administrator. The open-minded representor was a key to the changes to improve VK. There are no doubts about positive future of Vuokatin Aateli on VK. Russians who will come to this page in the future will see effort that the company makes to provide the best service to its clients and subscribers.

Facebook was not influenced that much because of the restrictions to do something with that social media network. However, the company was motivated to get a plan for possible improvements of Facebook. Thus, it can become a business page of a luxurious brand.

Moreover, I had a chance to implement a few of my ideas about the advancement of Social Media platform VK which can influence the brand. Therefore, I describe all of them in development task and plan. Even though, it does not seem that there were many changes, I believe that the improvements which were completed will increase the influence of Social Media and enhance the brand of Aateli in the close future. Undoubtedly, it is only possible if the company makes every effort on social media.

The content plan is something that any company that runs Social Media must have. As it was explained in theoretical part, the social media pages are useless if the company does not do everything there according to some plan. It is the same with any other offline marketing campaigns. I am pretty sure, Vuokatin Aateli would not like to waste its resources. The content plan and its influence on social media page are definitely worth to spend recourses on. Hopefully, the thesis will be able to convince the company representatives in necessity of the content plan.

Brand can be influenced by social media activities. If the company sets up a goal and prepare everything for a long online journey, the company has a chance to significantly improve its brand equity and brand value. Deserve people’s trust online is not easy but it should be beyond the capacity of Vuokatin Aateli.

I believe that most of the things which were planned worked out. It was fascinating to get insights about the company and its brand and social media accounts. This experience will definitely be useful for my upcoming working life.

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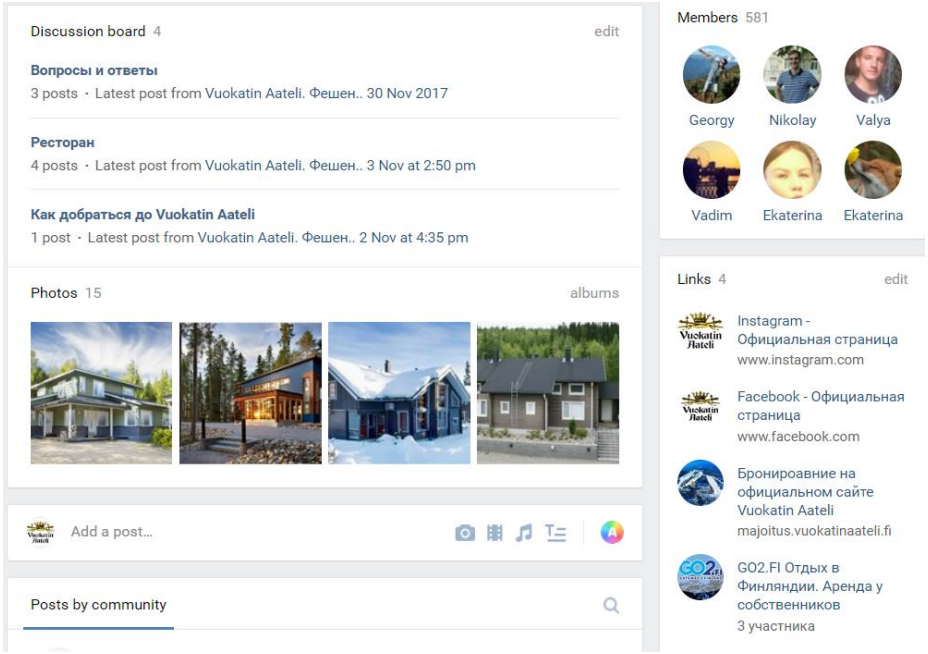
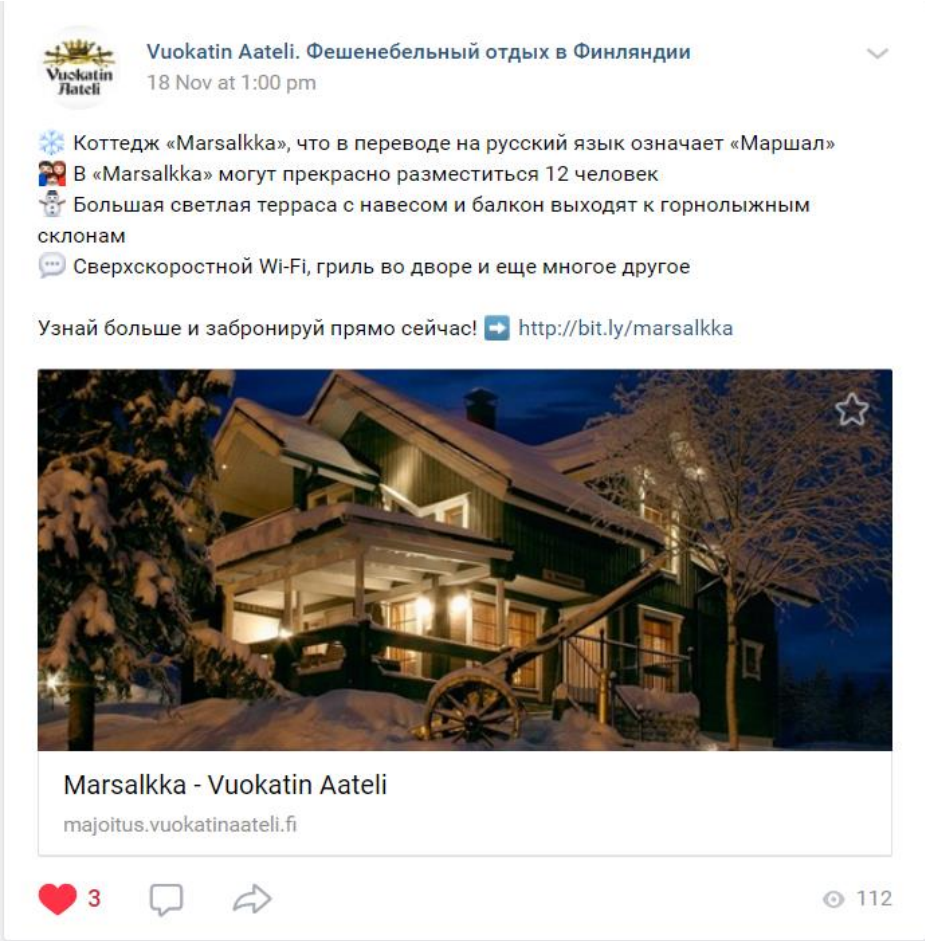
LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Appendix 2



Appendix 3



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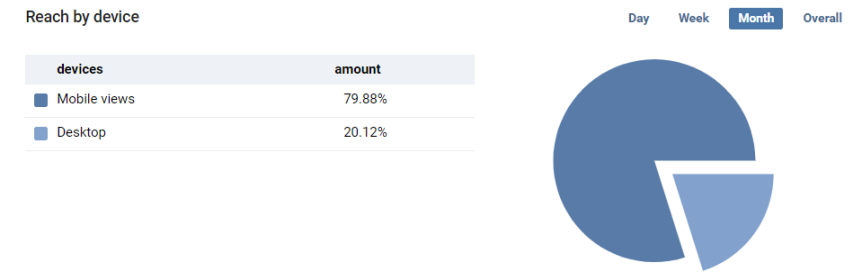

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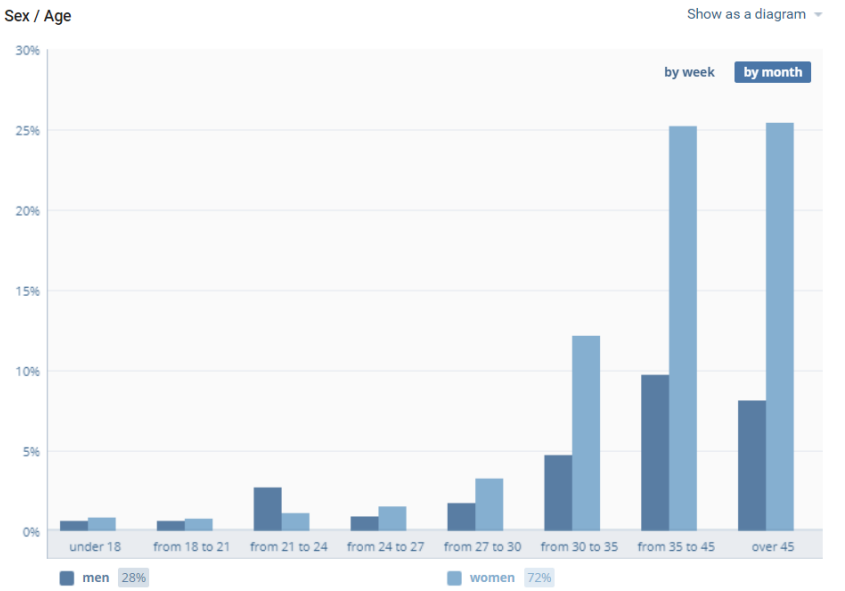
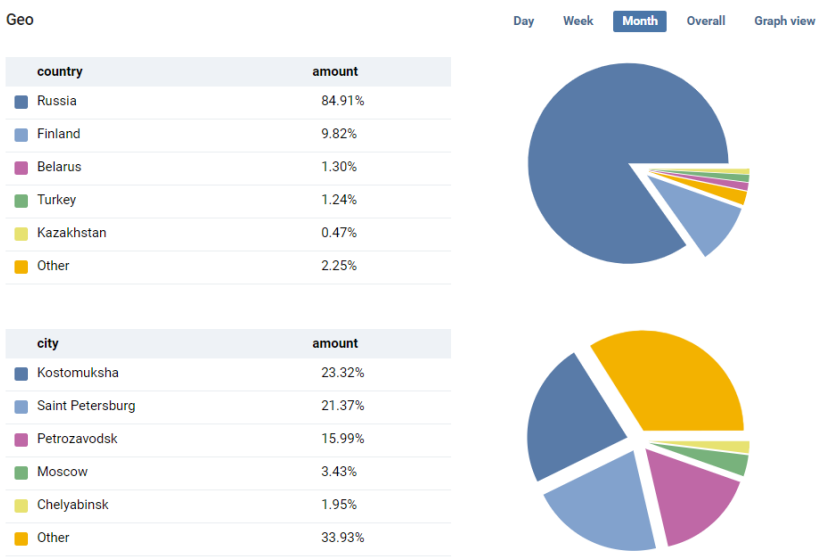
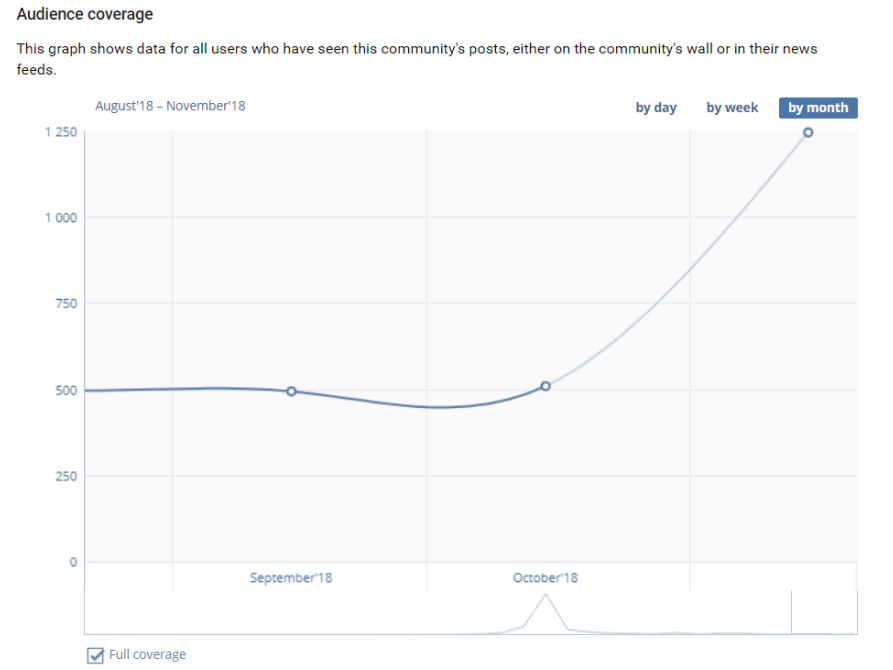


Appendix 6



Appendix 7



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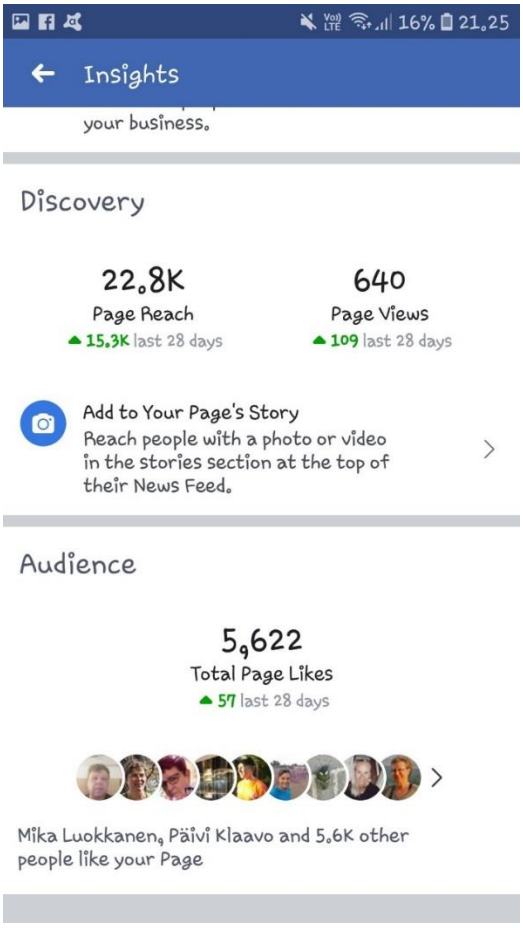
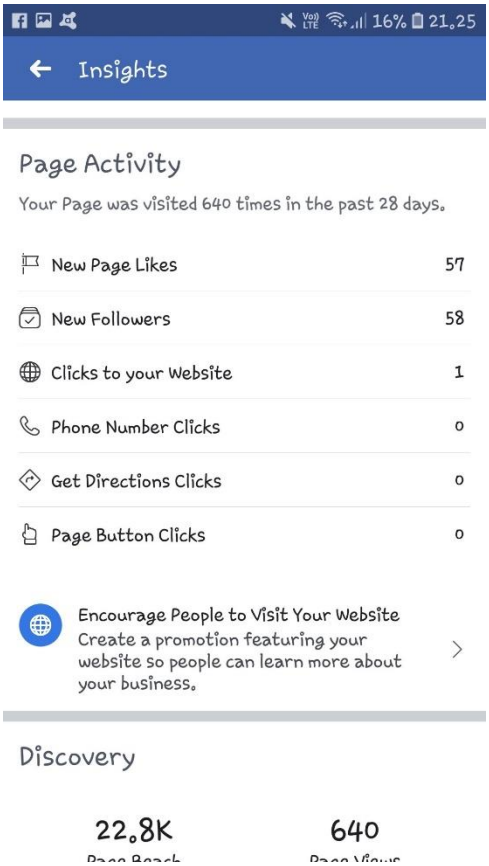
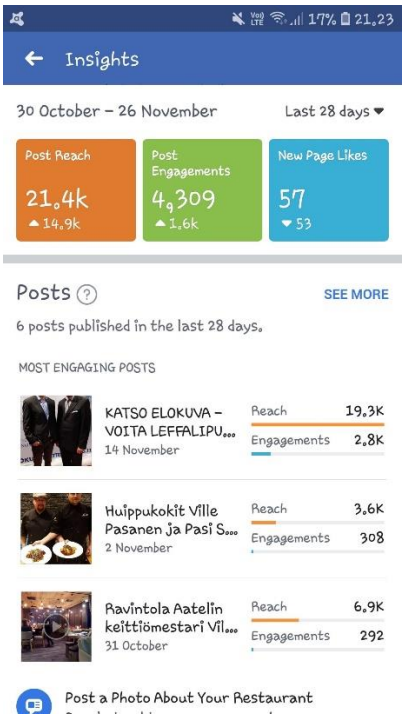


Appendix 9



Appendix 10