

# **The Impact of Digital Marketing on the Sales Process**

Case Oy Hako Ground & Garden Ab



Bachelor's thesis

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#### ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the impact of digital marketing on the sales process. The commissioner company of this thesis Oy Hako Ground & Garden Ab is creating a new digital strategy for 2020 and the results of the thesis are intended to contribute to the creation of the strategy. The thesis is limited to the company's golf business unit. Based on the results, it is possible to copy the study to other business units.

In the golf industry, B2B sales is a very hands-on job and requires a lot of time and resources from the sales force. This thesis looks at how digital marketing could enhance the sales process. Utilizing digital channels can streamline the sales process and increase customer engagement with your business

The theory part of this thesis deals with different models of sales processes and the different channels of digital marketing which are relevant to this research. During the research part, a customer survey was conducted for clients of Hako Ground & Garden's Golf unit. The purpose of the survey was to find out what digital channels customers are using and what content is relevant for the target audience of the company.

The survey answers provided useful insights into the company's golf customers, and the results also allowed conclusions to be drawn about which channels and the content of digital marketing the company should invest in achieving the results. The survey responses obtained useful information. Based on the results, conclusions can be made which channels and what kind of content company should use in marketing for its golf unit's customers.

**Keywords** Digital marketing, Sales process, B2B marketing

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## TIIVISTELMÄ

Opinnäytetyö käsittelee digitaalisen markkinoinnin vaikutusta myyntiprosessissa. Toimeksiantaja yritys Oy Hako Ground & Garden Ab on luomassa uutta digistrategiaa vuodelle 2020 ja opinnäytetyön tuloksia voidaan käyttää siinä apuna. Opinnäytetyö on rajattu koskemaan ainoastaan yrityksen golf-liiketoimintayksikköä. Tulosten perusteella tutkimus on mahdollista kopioida myös muihin liiketoimintayksiköihin. Golf-toimialalla B2B-myynti on hyvin käytännönläheistä työtä ja vaatii paljon aikaa ja resursseja myyntihenkilöstöltä. Tässä opinnäytetyössä selvitetään, miten digitaalisella markkinoinnilla voitaisiin tehostaa myyntiprosessia. Digitaalisen markkinoinnin hyödyntämisellä tavoitellaan myynnin tehostamisen ja kasvattamisen lisäksi myös asiakkaiden sitouttamista yrityksen tuotteisiin ja palveluihin.

Opinnäytetyön teoriaosuudessa käsitellään myyntiprosessien eri malleja sekä digitaalisen markkinoinnin eri kanavia, jotka ovat oleellisia tähän tutkimukseen. Tutkimusvaiheessa suoritettiin asiakaskysely toimeksiantajayrityksen golf-asiakkaille. Kyselyn tarkoituksena oli selvittää: Miten digitaaliset kanavat tavoittavat asiakkaat ja minkälainen sisältö on relevanttia yrityksen kohderyhmälle?

Tutkimuksen vastausten perusteella saatiin hyödyllistä tietoa yrityksen golf-asiakkaista ja tulosten perusteella pystyttiin tekemään myös johtopäätöksiä siitä, mihin kanaviin ja millaiseen sisältöön yrityksen kannattaa panostaa digitaalisessa markkinoinnissa tulosten saavuttamiseksi.

**Avainsanat** Digital marketing, Sales process, B2B marketing

**Sivut** 33 sivua, joista liitteitä 5 sivua

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Before the spread of the Internet and digital era, corporate marketing and advertising was very one-sided. Companies advertised their own products and services and customers had no real opportunity to search for information independently. The main advertising channels were print media, television and radio advertising. Personal sales visits and various events and fairs played a major role in the marketing and sales of companies.

Today, customers have almost unlimited information available anytime, anywhere. Instead of one-way advertising, marketing is now more multidimensional and can be done through a variety of channels. This has also given companies different ways to do sales and marketing faster, more cheaply and more efficiently. Digital channels have also provided companies with more data about their customers and their behaviour and needs. This allows companies to better target their marketing, react faster, and track the results of their actions.

Especially in B2B business, you can't overlook traditional marketing channels and relationships between business customers, but digital channels give you the tools to manage and connect with your customers more easily and efficiently. (SAS, n.d.)

## 1.1 Introduction of the commissioner company

The information in the next paragraph is compiled from the company's website (Hako, 2019) and based on an interview with the commissioner company (Aaltonen, 2019).

The commissioning company of this thesis is Oy Hako Ground & Garden Ab. Hako Group was founded in 1948 in Germany and its business is the manufacture and supply of high-quality cleaning and property maintenance machines. With more than 2,000 employees in 60 countries, Hako Group generates annual revenues of approximately EUR 440 million. The Hako Group is part of the Possehl Group, this industrial group with total of 12,000 employees and a turnover of EUR 3.5 billion.

Part of the Hako Group is also Hako Ground & garden, which operates in the Nordic countries, and its subsidiary in Finland is Oy Hako Ground & Garden Ab, established in 1997. The company operates throughout the

Finland as well as in Estonia and with 30 employees it generates an annual turnover of approximately EUR 10 million.

The company is divided into four business units: Clean, Golf, Grounds and After service.

The Clean business unit is supplying indoor cleaning technology and machines manufactured by Hako. In addition to selling products, the company also offers rental machines to cleaning companies of all sizes. The Clean department is the largest business unit of the company, accounting for nearly 40% of net revenue.

The Grounds business unit sells machinery and equipment for the maintenance of outdoor areas. The largest customer groups for multifunctional outdoor cleaning machines, mowers and utility vehicles are property management companies, parishes and park- and sports departments of municipalities.

The Golf business unit represents and imports professional mowers and all types of other golf course maintenance equipment and machines. In addition, the product range includes irrigation systems for golf courses. The biggest imported brand is The Toro. The Toro company is the world's leading manufacturer of golf course maintenance machines. Toro has been manufacturing machines for a century and the brand has been representing in Finland by Oy Hako Ground & Garden Ab since the year 2000.

The product range also includes South Korean Kioti tractors. The range of 20-90 horsepower tractors is also available at the grounds business unit customers. Kioti tractors manufactured by Daedong Industrial Group have been represented in the Nordic countries since 2009.

Hako is also the distributor of the American grinder machine manufacturer called Foley Company. Lawnmower blade and reel sharpening equipment is an important part for Hako Ground & Garden being able to provide golf customers with comprehensive equipment to maintain the entire golf course.

The latest addition to the business unit products has been Yamaha golf carts, which were launched in 2017. In addition to direct sales, these products are also offered with various rental options. Other golf car suppliers have long been active in the industry, so bringing a new product to the market requires a special market to gain market share. This product group brings synergies to the company in addition to offering other golf equipment and increasing overall sales.

After service business units of the company is responsible for servicing all other units' machines and for selling spare parts for all machines. The nationwide service network has its own service and maintenance facilities

at headquarters in Vantaa, dozens of mobile service vehicles and forty partnerships with private service companies. After service business unit is the fastest growing area for Hako Ground & Garden.

### **Structure of the thesis**

The first part of this thesis consists of the theoretical part, which deals with topic-related material mainly from written and internet-based sources. These topics delimited, taking into the account the field of industry of the commissioner company and its target groups. The business areas of the company are divided into four different units, so this thesis is limited to concern only the golf business unit of Hako Ground & Garden.

The second part of this thesis is the research section. This part includes a customer survey for business unit clients. In this case survey respondents are the head greenkeepers of Finnish golf courses, who play a role during the procurement process.

The third part concludes with a summary of the results obtained from theory and research. Based on these results, suggestions have been made to the commissioner company. The company can use material and results from the thesis to create a digital marketing strategy which is planned to be done by 2020. If necessary, a corresponding customer survey can be conducted for the target groups of other units of the company.

## **2 BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS SALESPROCESS**

There are different kinds of sales processes, but the basic principles are almost the same in all of these. The processes include different stages and from the sales point of view the goal is always to increase the sales of products or services. The following section introduces some common models that can be used by business-to-business companies. However, not all methods can be directly copied for business use. The company needs to know and consider the characteristics related to its industry before applying it to its own process.

### **2.1 Current sales process of the commissioning company**

Hako Ground & Garden's current sales process is a traditional model for business-to-business sales. In the golf industry, prospecting is about mapping customer needs, marketing products and services, and attracting customers to the company. In general prospecting is done at trade shows and in other golf industry events, the company also acts as a partner with golf industry associations and organizations, as well as arrange own

customer events. In addition, some digital marketing is done on Facebook. (Strandberg, 2019)

Targeting is generally done by sales staff. Once the customer's interest in the company's products has been determined, the sales process will be promoted through demo events and test drive opportunities in the customer's own facilities. During the purchase phase, the seller and the buyer often agree on the terms of the deal, financing and delivery, either at a meeting or via email or phone call. Once the customer relationship is established, digital channels are not utilized significantly. Spare part sales and additional purchases are often made over the phone or via email.

It is in the nature of the golf industry that annual sales are not steady throughout the year but are divided into different phases. Depending on the location, the golf courses are open from April to November. In northern Finland the season is slightly shorter.

In general, the year is divided as follows. During the summer, customer relationships are created and maintained, and customer needs and future acquisitions are surveyed. During the autumn, there will be a trial run of the machines and machinery demos. Generally, from November to January, the purchase phase will be agreed upon and the purchase conditions will be confirmed. In the Spring, sold machines are delivered to customers and operational training is given. There are also some annual seasonal machine sales. (Aaltonen, 2019)

## 2.2 AIDA

AIDA is a process model consisting of four steps as follows:

The first is the awareness phase. In the beginning, a customer has a problem that needs a solution. From the seller's point of view, the first step is to make the customer aware of the existence of the company and to know responsible persons for the procurement process from the buyer. The company can raise awareness by marketing in the right channels where potential customers are.

The second step is to generate interest. The buyer is aware of his problem and starts looking for solutions. Almost every business area has a lot of competition and other companies also want to reach the customer. The challenge for the seller is to make their own offerings available to the customer and this can be facilitated, for example, by ensuring the company is visible on search engines or if the seller already has contact with the customer also email marketing is a good option. At this point, visibility alone is not enough; you need to get customers interested in the products or services your company offers.



During the consideration phase, the buyer has identified suitable options and contacted the seller company. The importance of digital marketing is diminishing, and especially in business-to-business trade, the seller and the customer meet, and demonstration and product testing can be arranged.

The fourth and final step is closing and executing the trade. In business-to-business trading, the different people are often responsible for the different phases and the confirmation of the purchase is often done by a higher employee.

In addition to the AIDA model, similar processes are called AIDAS (attention, interest, desire, action and satisfaction), AIDCAS (attention, interest, desire, conviction, action and service) and TIREA (thought, interest, risk, engagement and action). (Kananen, 2019, p 50-55.)

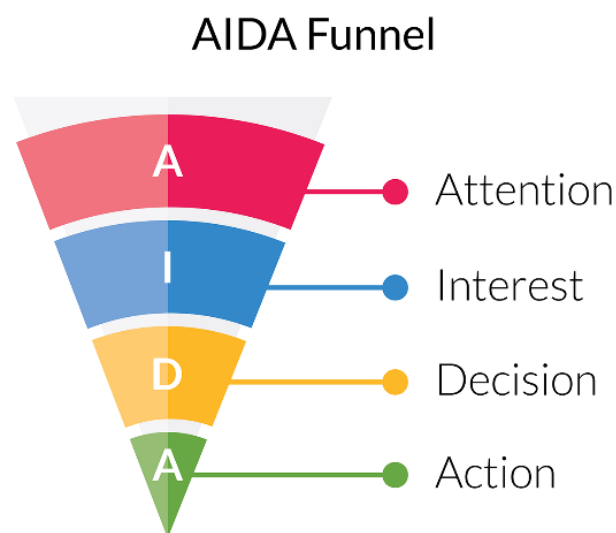


Figure 1. AIDA Funnel. CIENCE. (n.d.).

### 2.3 Rain group funnel

According to the Rain Group model, it is important to understand the different stages of the sales process from the perspective of both the seller and the customer. According to this method, the sales process consists of six steps, each with specific points for both parties.

In practice, this model from the customer's perspective starts with the problem. The customer already has a problem which they need to solve or something they want to develop or improve. In the second step, the customer analyses the situation and causes of a problem. In addition, company must evaluate its own resources to eliminate the problem. The third step is to identify alternatives for suppliers and their products and services.

The fourth step is to decide based on options selected in the third step, choosing a partner with whom the process can be completed. In the fifth phase, a commitment is made to the supplier and practical issues such as delivery of the product or service and financing are agreed upon. The sixth and final step is a process evaluation. Is the desired result achieved and what are the differences with the current situation compared to the starting point?

From a sales perspective, the six steps of the process follow same pace as the buyers' process. For the seller, the first step is prospecting and identify potential customers. This can be done through a variety of marketing activities which attract the customer's attention and create needs for the company's products and services. In the second step, the seller must already know the customer's needs and provide solutions for these. In the third step, the customer is looking between different providers. At this point, the seller can provide customized options and bring out the best solutions to the customer's problem

In the fourth step, the customer intends to commit to only one supplier, so the seller still has an opportunity to win the customers trust by highlighting the company's strengths and ensuring that offered solutions are the best option for the customer or the seller can provide last-minute discounts to close the deal.

In the fifth stage, the trade is won. The seller prepares necessary contracts and practical arrangements can be made. In the sixth step, the seller makes sure that the customer gets value for money by taking care of after-sales activities and maintains an established customer relationship. (Schultz. n.d.)

## Rain Group's Buying Process

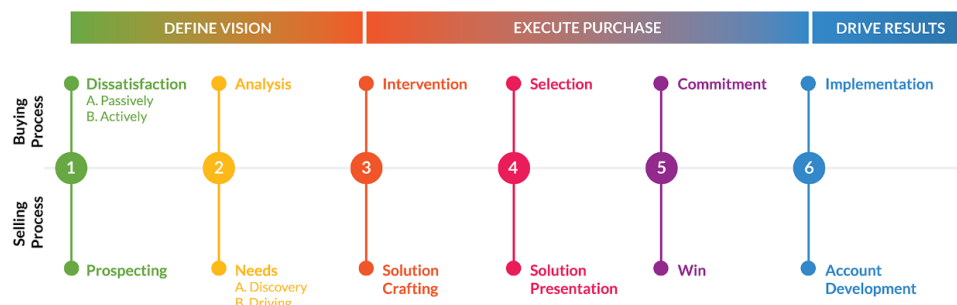


Figure 2. Rain group funnel. CIENCE. (n.d.).

## 2.4 Forrester model

In addition to a variety of funnel processes, there is a Forrester model that is designed to represent a customer's life cycle in a circular graph. This model utilizes the customer life cycle and customer needs in marketing.

At the centre of the model are four main elements: discover, explore, buy and engage.

Under discover, a customer who have needs, find a company to join. Discovering can happen through active or passive marketing. In the explore phase, the customer becomes familiar with products offered by the company, both in terms of features and price information.

Buying step, the customer has selected a company which corresponds to its needs. The last thing is engagement. A well-executed process can continue as a long-term customer relationship and a circle will start all over again and it will bring more purchases.

The difference with this process over other models is that it considers the customer's commitment to the company. Especially in B2B-business, maintaining existing customer relationships is especially important. (Berthiaume. 2013.)



Figure 3. Forrester model. CIENCE. (n.d.).

## 2.5 Customers buying journey

According to brand consultant Tom Westerén (2019) earlier, before the rise of digitalisation, the salesman and the customer made contact after the customer had followed a purchase path 20%.

In this case, a role and presence of a salesman was more important when the customer needed help with product features and availability and to make comparisons between different providers. In this model, personal skills of the seller and the features of the product played a bigger role. So, if a customer ended up with a company product, the seller was involved in the buying process most of the time.

Nowadays, when customers can act more independently and have more information available, the seller will encounter the customer for the first time after 80% of the purchase path. At this stage, the customer is often able to familiarize himself with the features of products and make comparisons between providers. The salesman's share of the customer's purchase path is thus much smaller, which is why it is important for companies to succeed in marketing and to make it as easy as possible for the customer to find the information they need.

Often the role of the seller is to bring out the last details and to arrange practical arrangements such as preparing contracts and agreeing on financing options.

## 3 DIGITAL MARKETING CHANNELS

### 3.1 Digital marketing

There are some differences between B2B- and B2C -marketing. In a B2B business, a seller and a buyer of a product or service is always a company. This can also be called industrial marketing. In B2C business, the company sells products and services directly to the consumer. In both cases, the products sold may be the same for the consumer as well as for the company, but the marketing arguments are different (Kananen 2019 s.11)



Figure 4. Digital marketing. (Kuulu, n.d.).

### 3.2 Search engine marketing

Information about products and services is often searched through the internet search engines. The most common search engine service is the Google. The purpose of search engines is to show the most relevant content to the applicant, so it organizes the search results by following a variety of factors such as site content, popularity and link structure. Because of the huge amount of information on the Internet, it is important for companies to rank as high as possible in search engine results. This can be influenced by search engine optimization and the search engine marketing which is also called keyword advertising. (Karjaluoto, 2010, p. 133)

Search engine marketing should always think about the customer's point of view and think about what keywords the customer could look for information on the subject. In search engine optimization and keyword advertising company should utilize customer data in planning operations. Analytics tools can help you track how your customers interact online and how they search for information.

There are several free and paid versions of analytics tools. The programs can track the quantity and quality of the keywords that people use to find information on the internet. The Google Trends analytic tool can track search results by region and track keyword seasons across the year and can be used by companies to design various campaigns and other targeted marketing. Other similar tools are for example: Keyword Everywhere and Wordtracker.com (Komulainen, 2018, p. 37)

### 3.2.1 Search engine optimization

When it comes to search engine optimization, it is important to consider a structure of the website to make it search engine friendly. This should consider the functionality of the site, the keywords and the content of the pages that correspond to the description. Poorly made pages reduce visibility in search results. The difference between keyword advertising and search engine optimization is that optimization is free, but it requires work and skill from a company website administrator. It is also important for the visibility of the search engine results that the content of the web pages is constantly updated and can also be linked to other channels that help to increase the position in the results. (Hall, 2017, p. 131)

Search engine optimization can increase sales without increasing your marketing costs. Search engine optimization enables a company to stand out from its industry competitors and increase its visibility in search engine results. This is also an ongoing process, so it is a good idea for a company to review and update their web pages and their keywords and links at least once a year to ensure they are visible on search engines. (Komulainen, 2018, p.158)

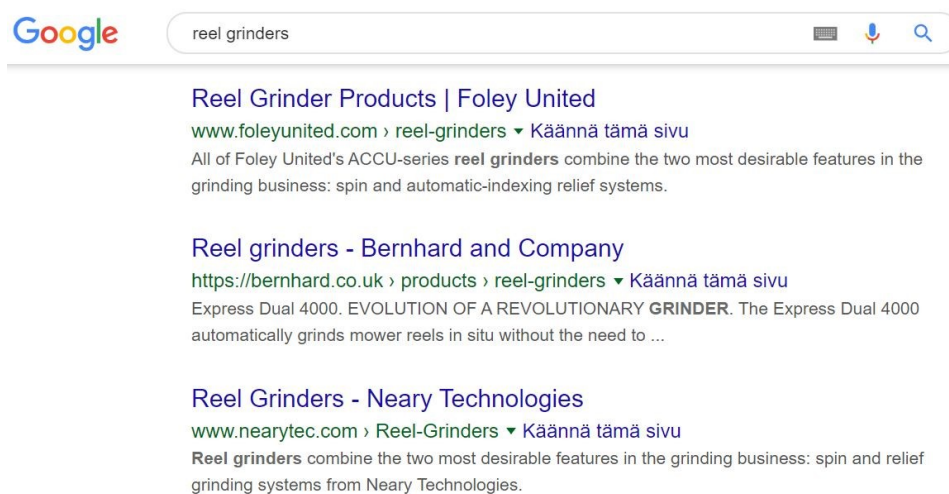


Figure 5. Google search results.

### 3.2.2 Keyword advertising

The most commonly used keyword advertising service is called Google AdWords. When you search with certain set keywords, your business pages will appear in the search results, which can get more visitors to your business website. The cost of keyword advertising is determined by, among other things, the site industry and how competitive the keyword is. The keyword advertising company can either do it itself or use the services of other companies offering it. The benefits of keyword advertising include fast customer reach and precise search targeting. (Piippo,2017)

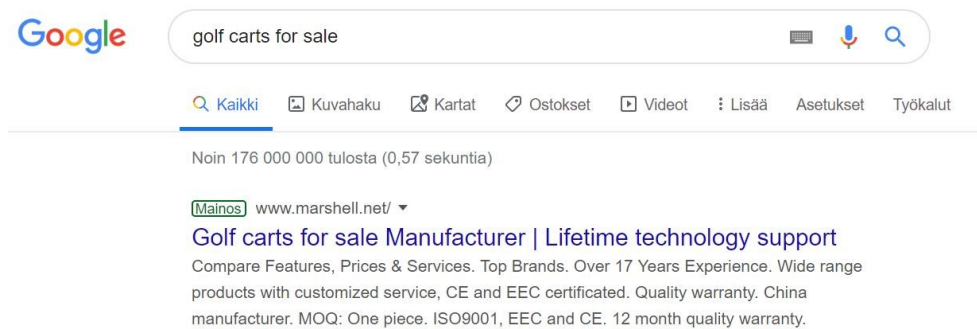


Figure 6. Google AdWords.

### 3.3 Social media

Social media can be defined as a digital platform that utilize information technology to interact within communities, create content, and maintain people-to-people relationships. Social media concept is wide which is constantly changing and growing. Social media is accessed through various websites and applications on the internet from a computer, various handheld devices or mobile phones. (Sanastokeskus, 2010).

In addition to people-to-people communication, social media is also growing as a marketing channel for businesses. Certain social media channels are playing an important role in business-to-consumer marketing as well as growing as part of business-to-business marketing. Different channels have different features and user groups, so business-to-business marketers should consider the suitability of the channel to your business. (Kananen, 2019. p. 124)

The use of social media should also be well planned in the company's marketing efforts, especially when multiple channels are used. the company should know what each channel is seeking and what it wants to communicate to its customers. Especially in B2B business, selling products and services alone is not the most effective way to engage customers.

In social media there are many different templates that can be used to produce content, and depending on the business sector and target audience, digital marketing content could consist of 80% guidance and information on products and industry in general. The remaining 20 percent can focus on selling products and services.

Another model for content design is 10% of a company's own operations, 20% sharing of industry-related content, 50% generating traffic to a blog or website, and the remaining 20% selling products and services.

The third model consists of one-third of product and service sales, one-third of customer interaction and the rest of the industry-related discussion and influence. (Komulainen, 2018, p. 138)

The following sections describe the most common social media channels found to be relevant to this thesis. In addition, there are numerous other popular social media channels like Pinterest, TikTok and Twitch. These channels have been eliminated from this section based on interviews with the commissioner company and the target groups of these channels do not match the company customer base.

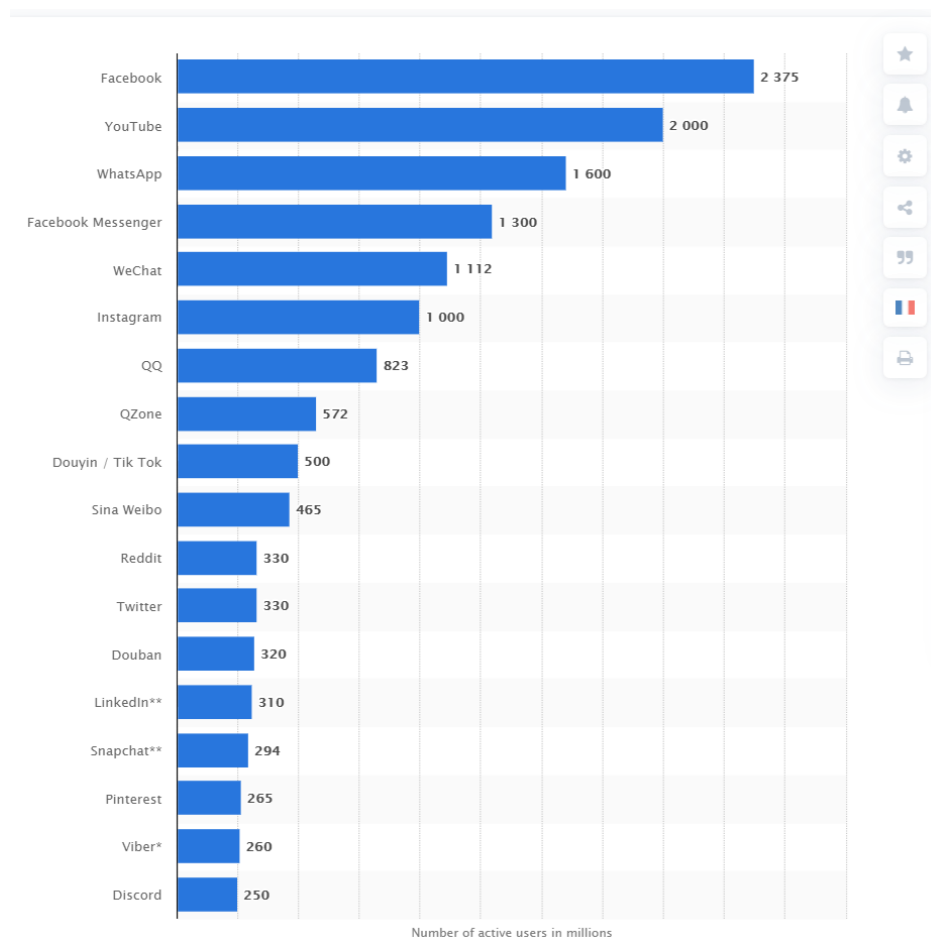


Figure 7. Social media users worldwide. Statista (n.d.).

### 3.3.1 YouTube

YouTube is internet-based video sharing platform, founded in 2005. YouTube is generally an entertainment service for users, but its importance as a marketing channel for companies has grown, with 5.5% of Finns using the channel to follow companies and brands. Companies can market on YouTube by creating content or buying paid ads. (Salminiitty, 2017)

Video marketing has a high degree of engagement and can provide the content your business wants, such as educational videos and product tips. Company-created videos can easily be shared on other social media channels and can help increase visibility in search engine results. As with



other digital platforms, the effectiveness of YouTube marketing can be measured by various analytics tools. (Perus, 2019)

### 3.3.2 Facebook

The world's most popular social media platform is founded in 2004. Facebook's idea is to create communities and give people the opportunity to connect with friends and family by sharing things that can be messages, pictures, videos and other produced content. (Facebook, 2019).

Statistics show that there are almost 2.4 billion users worldwide and (Statista 2019). Regarding to research of use of social media in Finland made by DNA and Nepa there are 2.7 million users in Facebook. That is 65% of the country population.

Because of its enormous popularity, Facebook is also an excellent marketing platform for B2C and B2B companies. Through Facebook, companies can capture followers. The site can be used to share content about products and services of the company and to stay in constant contact with customers. In addition, a company's Facebook pages can make positive influence its search engine presence. (Dunay, Krueger, 2010, p.16-17)

Corporate customers are also a significant source of revenue for Facebook. Facebook provides companies with training and comprehensive analytics tools to support marketing. Analysing tools to track customer target groups, impact of marketing to make marketing effective for the right customer groups. These tools are also available outside of Facebook. (Facebook, 2019.) Facebook has made significant acquisitions on social media channels, having bought Instagram in 2012 and WhatsApp in 2014 (Facebook,2019).

### 3.3.3 Instagram

Instagram is a social media channel based on visuality. The app allows users to share photos, a series of photos, short videos called stories and live videos. Users can follow other users as well as different hashtags, which allow you to easily follow material related to different topics. Users can like, comment on, and send private messages to other users. In recent years, Instagram has grown to become one of the most popular social media channels and plays a significant role in business marketing

Statistics show that there are one billion users worldwide (Statista 2019). Regarding to research of use of social media in Finland made by DNA and Nepa (2019) there are 1.6 million users in Instagram. That is 40% of the country population.

### 3.3.4 Twitter

Twitter is a communication service established in 2006. As a social media platform, it has been especially used to send short messages and messages and share information on current affairs. Statistics show that there are 330 million users worldwide (Statista 2019). In Finland there is 0.9 million Twitter users (DNA & Nepa, 2019)

On Twitter, communications are designed for short and fast messaging. The number of messages is limited to 140 characters but increased to 280 characters in 2018. In addition to messages, twitter can share photos, videos and links to different websites. On Twitter, you can tag topics in posts with hashtags, and this helps users find posts about topics of interest.

In business, Twitter can also be used as a channel for customer service, employee recruitment, and information on company and industry news and topics. (Louhimies, 2012)

### 3.3.5 LinkedIn

LinkedIn is social media platform, which has 310 million users worldwide (Statista 2019) and it is established in 2002 by Reid Hoffman, Konstantin Guericke, Eric Ly, Jean-Luc Vaillant and Allen Blue. LinkedIn differs from other social media channels by its strong focus on networking among business professionals. It is possible to make a private or corporate profile on LinkedIn and like with other social media applications, people can share own posts, images, articles and other content that can be commented on by other users. (LinkedIn. n.d.)

LinkedIn users have created a profile mainly for professional reasons or they may be students who are just starting their career. In addition to networking, the platform is used a lot for personal branding and searching of new job opportunities. LinkedIn company profiles can promote business relationships, help with employee recruitment, and strengthen your brand and employer image. Although LinkedIn users are smaller than other social media channels, it is considered a reliable and effective marketing channel, especially for business-to-business marketing. Before using LinkedIn as your company's marketing channel, it's a good idea to consider the reach of your potential customers and to develop a strategy for using that channel and set goals to track what your actions have achieved. (Kananen, 2019, p. 144-149)

### 3.3.6 Snapchat

Snapchat is a social media service launched in 2011. The idea behind the app is that users can send pictures and videos to other users, either

publicly or via private messaging. Sent pictures and messages are shown to the recipient for a short time, about 10 seconds, after which they disappear and are not stored in the phone memory. That is why snapchat messages are designed for spontaneous and fast message sending. Snapchat users are often young and over half of its users are under 30 years old.

With Snapchat, companies can market organically without any additional paid services. In this case, the company uses its account as an individual to create content for their followers.

Marketing on Snapchat can be done with paid advertising space. Snapchat also offers Geofilters and lenses for business use. In Geofilter, a company logo or other desired content can be used in a geographically defined area for users and used for example in event marketing. In addition, companies can market on Snapchat with lenses added to pictures and videos. However, this requires a great deal of expertise and money and may not be suitable for all business sectors. These actions can lead users to visit your company's website or generate interest in your business for potential customers. (Somemark, 2019)

### 3.3.7 WhatsApp

WhatsApp is a communications service established in 2009. The company was acquired by Facebook in 2014 and is now the most popular messaging app in the world. (WhatsApp, n.d.). In Finland WhatsApp have 2.8 million users which contain 68 % of population. (DNA & Nepa, 2019)

The app can send normal messages just like SMS. It can also send pictures, videos, information and locations. WhatsApp has been popular in private communications, but the launch of WhatsApp for business in 2018 has expanded its potential for business use. Companies can use it especially as a channel for information and customer service.

WhatsApp for Business features allow you to create a company profile with contacts and account verification. In addition, business version of the app provides broader communication tools as well as analytical tools for monitoring communications.

## 3.4 Email marketing

Email marketing is marketing communications through email to new or existing customers. A company can post content used for marketing purposes in both B2C and B2B business. In general, email marketing can include campaigns, news or newsletters, product information,

promotions, event information, or other content that a company wants to share with its customers.

Compared to traditional paper letter mail, the benefits of email marketing are: it is measurable, with various software's and analysis tools it is possible to follow clickthrough rates, responses, and how many customers have landed on a page or have done other wanted call to action. Return of investment is also easier to measure compared to traditional mail. Also, the effectiveness of the messages can be tested, for example, with A / B testing, which can test the functionality of the message content, title and images. Testing can be done first on a smaller target group, after testing it is possible to edit the message and choose the best possible option for the message.

Maintaining, updating and targeting email lists is easy and fast in digital format. Email marketing is relatively cheap but not free. The costs may include the software used, the graphic work and its design, and the collection of the address register. As with all digital marketing channels, actions must be planned and targeted. The challenges of email marketing are choosing the right content and design for your customers. Executing the email marketing requires a skilled person who understands the steps you need to take, such as the timely delivery of messages and the functionality of call to action.

In digital marketing, email marketing can be used at every step of the buying process. Initially, to reach out to customers and drive them to a website to search for information or to generate interest in a company's products. It can be used during the lead phase, for sharing additional information, and finally, after the purchase, for post-marketing.

The email marketing also plays an important role in retaining existing customers by providing them with relevant content and engaging them in company products. It is also a great way to communicate regularly with your customers. It can also be part of product support, after marketing, and holistic multi-channel marketing with other digital marketing channels. (Chaffey, 2006, p.25, 44, 134)

In the era of social media, email marketing has also remained an important marketing channel for companies. benefits of email marketing in comparison with social media marketing is its ease of use, the ability to direct customers to websites efficiently, as well as e-mail marketing visibility is not dependent on the algorithms. Email marketing is therefore relatively inexpensive and has a higher efficiency and return of investment than other channels. (Komulainen, 2018, p. 193)

### **3.5 Content marketing**

According to Joe Pulizzi (2012) "Content marketing is the marketing and business process for creating and distributing relevant and valuable

content to attract, acquire, and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience – with the objective of driving profitable customer action.” Content marketing can consist of almost any created content that could concern the target audience of the company. Common content can be example videos, blogs, webinars and trainings, and other written publications. Content can be distributed through traditional marketing channels but nowadays by using digital marketing channels has been found to be an effective way. There are also some differences between B2B and B2C content marketing. Content produced in business-to-business marketing is based more on facts and details, while consumer marketing can be more emotional.

Consumer-generated content can be used more like ads. B2B content should be used, for example, on social media channels, where you can stimulate discussion in different communities and gain more reach for the people who are responsible for purchasing. (Hall, 2017, p.140-141)

### 3.6 Websites

Company websites are often the most important digital channel. The website should always be accessible to the customer and should contain all relevant information for the company such as industry, products and services that company provides and information or function to contact, so the customer can reach the company. In practice, a company's website is the place, the focal point of all channels, where customers are led from other channels. (Muurinen, 2016).

When designing websites, special attention must be paid to the visual appearance and usability. In terms of site usability, download time should not be long. Websites are a goal that other channels aim to get customers to visit and get to know about the company and its products and services. Other digital channels lead customers through a variety of call-to-action actions to commit to the company, whether it be a website visit, email listing or online shopping.

In addition to the main page, different sub-pages such as campaigns can be linked to the web page. Campaign pages are effective in bringing the desired things to the customer. Campaign pages are different from standard web page content and can commit a customer for a longer period, such as a new product or a seasonal offer.

Nowadays, a lot of people visit websites on devices other than computers, so businesses should consider the functionality of pages on mobile devices as well. When using a mobile device, three out of four users will leave the website if they are not mobile optimized.

In business, websites can also be linked to a chat service. In chat the company can handle example customer service, and especially in B2B business, real-time chat service has been found to increase contacts. This also works well as a contact channel. Chat can also be used in marketing and on websites to open a conversation. In addition, the chat service can be automated, programmed with ready-made answers and with the help of artificial intelligence, it is possible to independently have conversation with the customer and, if necessary, direct the conversation to the customer service staff. There are many different types of chat programs. The most sophisticated chat software also offers fully automatic services. Chatbots, powered by artificial intelligence, can serve customers nowadays in an almost human manner. Chatbots can be leveraged to create a personalized customer experience that enhances customer confidence in the company. Chatbots are also able to collect and analyse feedback and customer behaviour on the website. In addition to chat services, a variety of other applications and services can be connected to websites. In addition, there are free and paid analytics tools on the website and their tracking that can track customer behaviour on the website. (Komulainen, 2018, p. 209, 315)

## **4 RESEARCH PART**

The following section presents the research part of the thesis. The research section includes a customer survey conducted for golf unit customers of commissioner company.

### **4.1 Choosing a Research Method**

The aim of this thesis is to study the impact of digital marketing in the sales process. Given the client's goals to take digital channels more broadly into account when developing a new strategy for the future. The study decided to focus on the impact of digital marketing channels on the company's golf unit customers.

Because the purpose of a customer survey is to determine customer behaviour and habits, this is a quantitative research. In quantitative research, the analysis is based on a summary of statistics. (McDaniel & Gates, 2006, p. 79)

Based on this information, it was decided to conduct the research as a customer survey.

## 4.2 Design of the survey

The aim of the survey was to get answers to the questions: “Which digital marketing channels are relevant to target audience”? And “What kind of content on digital channels is relevant to the target audience?” To make the survey easy and quick to answer, but still provide the information needed to draw conclusions, the following seven questions were selected.

- Which social media channels are you actively using?
- What kind of information related to your work you have recently searched from digital channels?
- What kind of information related to golf course machinery you are usually looking for from digital channels?
- where did you searched work-related information last time?
- where do you usually search information related to golf course machinery?
- what would be the easiest way to order spare parts?
- Have you used online shops for purchasing products or services related to your job?

Whole of the surveys target group is from Finland; the survey was conducted only in Finnish. The full questionnaire as attachment.

## 4.3 Implementation of the survey

Due to the financial and time resources of the study, it was decided to conduct the survey in the form of Microsoft Office Forms. Microsoft Office Forms is a free software that you can use to create various queries. The use of this questionnaire tool was also supported by its comprehensive analytical tools to make the processing of the results and the drawing of conclusions as easy and clear as possible.

The customer survey was conducted using a pre-existing customer register to obtain contact information.

The questionnaire was sent to the customers via an email link, and the email included a cover text explaining the purpose and objectives of the survey. Customers have 2 weeks to respond to the survey.

## 5 CONCLUSION

The survey was sent to 100 different Finnish golf courses. By the deadline for the survey, a total of 41 responses were received, representing a response rate of 41%.

According to the register of the Finnish Golf Association, there are 129 golf course companies. Considering the survey response rate relative to all golf courses in Finland, this covers over 30% of all golf course companies. With this response rate, reliable and relevant conclusions can be drawn.

### 5.1 Digital marketing SWOT- analysis for Oy Hako Ground & Garden Ab

SWOT analysis is a simple business evaluation tool. The analysis is applicable to the development of companies and their operations. The tool can facilitate the performance of decisions and overall perception.

SWOT analysis consists of evaluating strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, as the name implies. (Suomen riskienhallintayhdistys. n.d.)

This analysis is based on the current state of the company and results of the research on the impact of digital marketing on the company's operations and sales process.

In this Swot analysis, the company's strength is rated as its strong and well-known brand. All brands and products represented by Hako are known for their reliability and quality, so these features can also be used in digital marketing.

In addition, the company's strength is the desire to innovate and try new ways to increase sales and improve operations. The company is already a pioneer in the field of products and innovation, so the same mentality can be used in marketing.

The company's weaknesses are the lack of experience and expertise in digital marketing. When designing digital marketing, you need to consider how and what you want to do internally and how much outsourcing you can get from marketing professionals.

Weaknesses may also be internal constraints within the company. The company has several business units that are slightly different. It is important to consider how marketing fits into each business unit. The Finnish company is part of the Nordic group, so international guidelines must also be considered in the market

Digital marketing as part of the sales process also opens new opportunities. Content marketing can increase awareness of your business and products and increase customer engagement with your business. It is also seen as an opportunity for all digital marketing activities to be measurable and easy to follow with various analytical tools.

There may also be threats to digital marketing, such as misallocating resources, which will add extra costs to the company. There are also common threats on the Internet, such as hacking and security risks. The company can use this SWOT analysis as part of digital strategy.



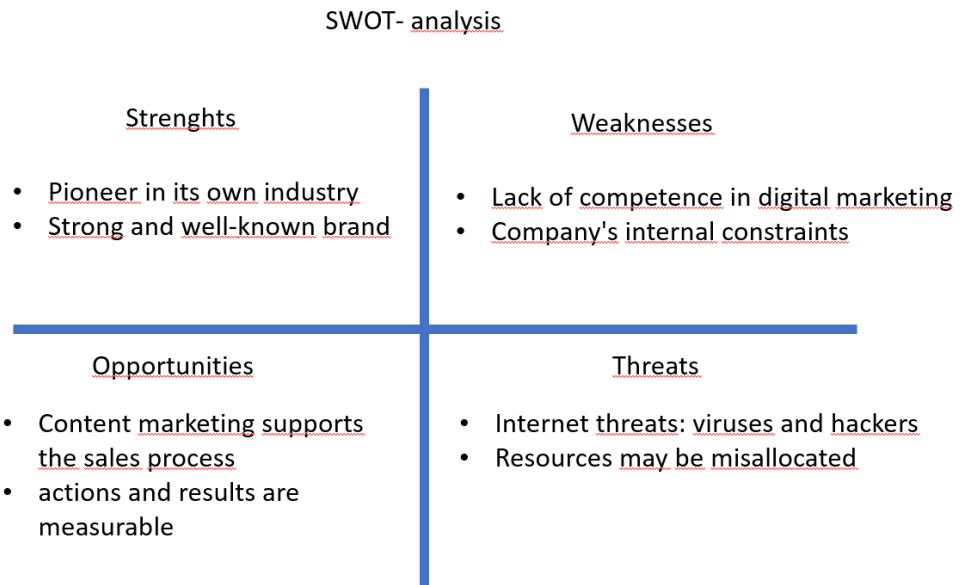


Figure 8. SWOT-analysis.

## 5.2 Suggestions for digital marketing to support sale processes

Research shows that almost all respondents are using some social media channels. Only 1 respondent who didn't use any social media. The results of the survey show that the target group mainly uses the following channels: YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram. The company can leverage this result and focus on operating on these social media channels to reach and communicate with customers on.

There were also a few users on Twitter and LinkedIn, but not a significant amount that those would be useful marketing channel for the company.

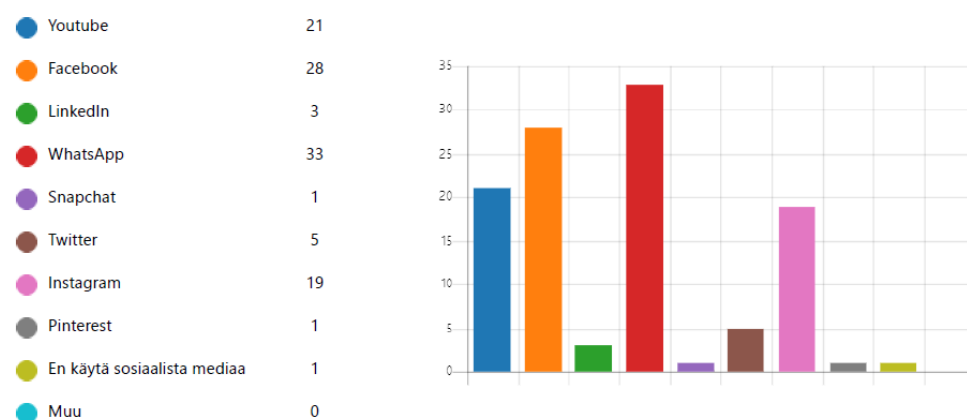


Figure 9. Which social media channels are you actively using?

When comparing responses to what customers are looking for in digital channels, we find that general job-related information and machinery related information-seeking are almost similar. Mainly information is sought on the technical features of the products, new products, as well as industry events and training. Typically for B2B business, customers look for the least price information, and often purchasing is a longer-term process and prices are given to customers in the form of quotes.

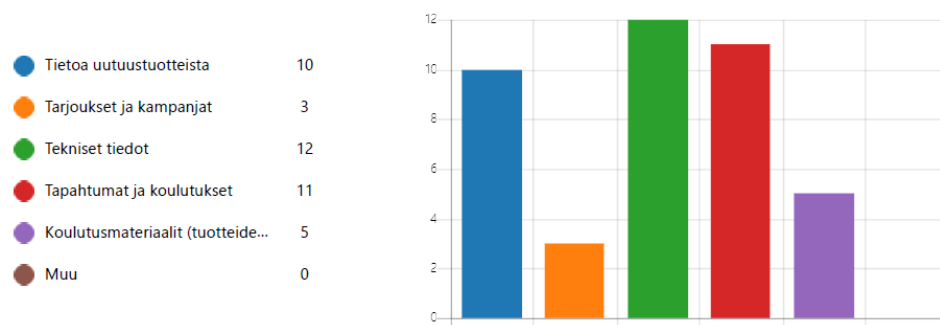


Figure 10. What kind of information related to your work you have recently searched from digital channels?

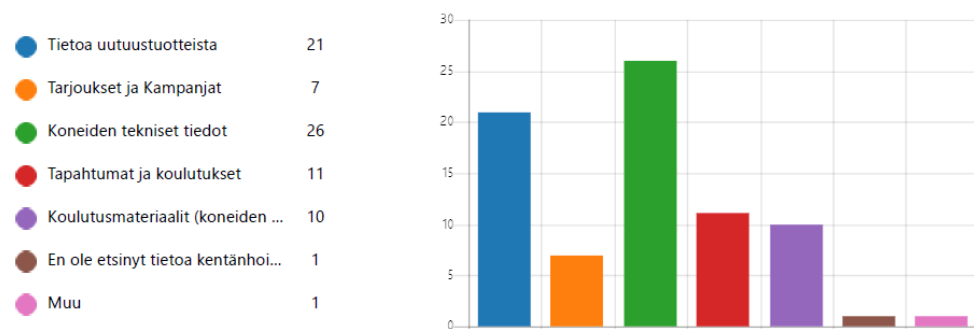


Figure 11. What kind of information related to golf course machinery you are usually looking for from digital channels?

Examining the answers to the questions most recently sought for work-related information gives a real answer to the methods that respondents have used. This is where google and business websites come first. This emphasizes the importance of search engine visibility, so that customers can find the company's website. When looking at where respondents are looking for information about machines, this highlights not only google and websites, but also more traditional ways such as colleagues, brochures and catalogues, and industry events. This also verifies that not all activities can be digitized, and customers look for information about machines also outside the Internet.

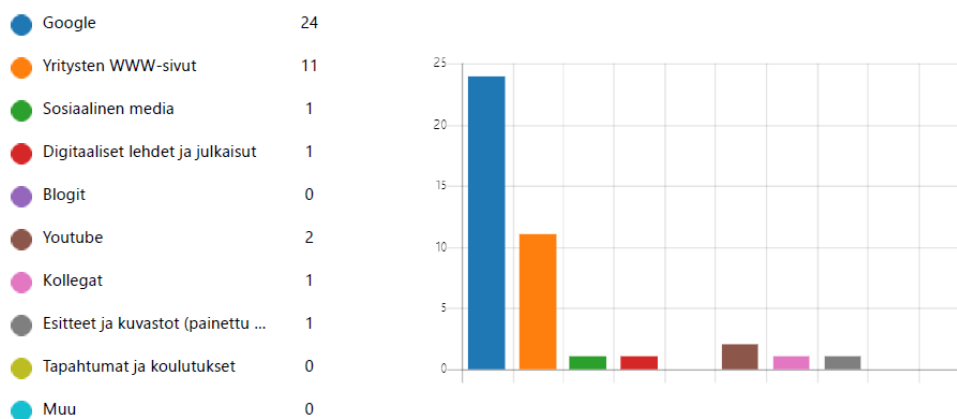


Figure 12. Where did you searched work-related information last time?

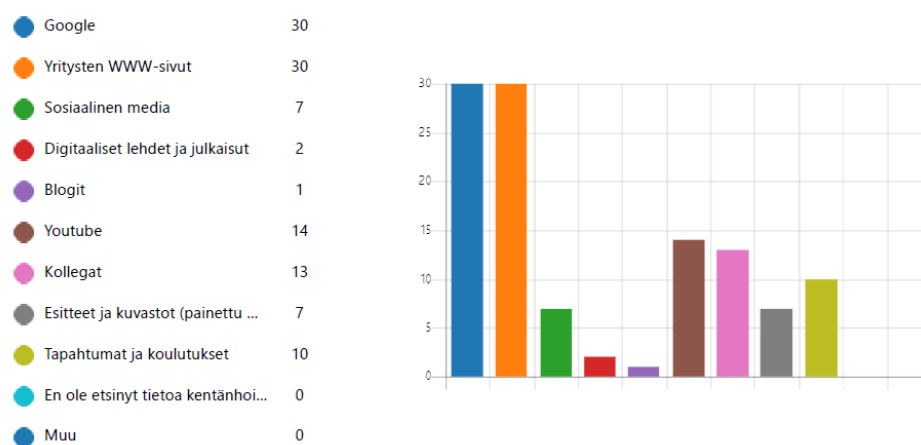


Figure 13. Where do you usually search information related to golf course machinery?

The company's current methods of selling spare parts for field maintenance machines have been telephone and email ordering. However, the survey shows that it would be easier for customers to place spare parts orders also through the online shop, and about 40% of the respondents have already used the online shop to order work-related products and services. A large part of these orders has been spare parts and product orders related to maintenance equipment. It might be worthwhile for the commissioning company to consider the possibility of starting a Spare Parts Online Store.

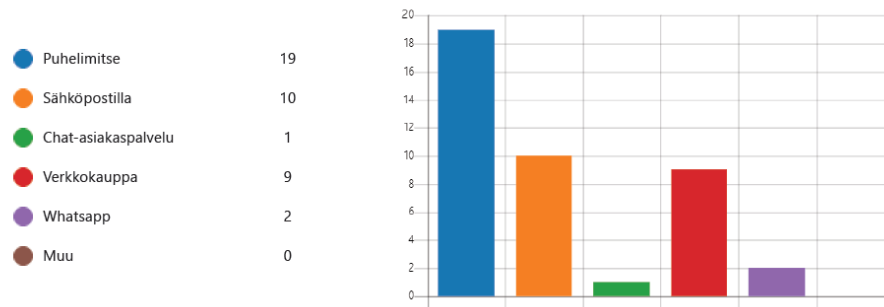


Figure 14. Where customers are buying spareparts?

### 5.3 Digital marketing in sales process

The company's current sales process has been working well and has also used some of digital channels. It is not profitable for a company to rebuild the sales process, but by leveraging the current process of digital marketing, it is possible to improve the productivity of each step. Particularly in the early stages of the process, digital marketing plays an important role. With a relatively small customer base, digital channels allow the company to increase product awareness, increase commitment to the company, and stay in close contact with customers daily through social media.

It is recommended that the company focus on the relevant channels shown in the chart below. In order to take advantage of the channels, there should always be a call to action or lead to a company website. In addition, you need to make sure that the information on the company website is up to date and includes contact forms or ways the customer can reach the company

In the second and third stages of sales, the importance of digitalisation is diminished, and personal promotion is emphasized. Offering the right machine choices for customer circumstances and organizing test drives and demonstrations usually require practical work. And usually in B2B sales, the final agreements on trading, financing and other terms are usually agreed in person between the seller and the buyer.

As the results of the study showed. Customers are already used to using e-commerce in their own work. For a company, an online store for spare parts and other supplies could bring additional sales and facilitate the customer experience for the company. In sum, digital marketing does not reduce job tasks, but can better allocate resources to tasks where personal skills and performance are more relevant to the sales process.

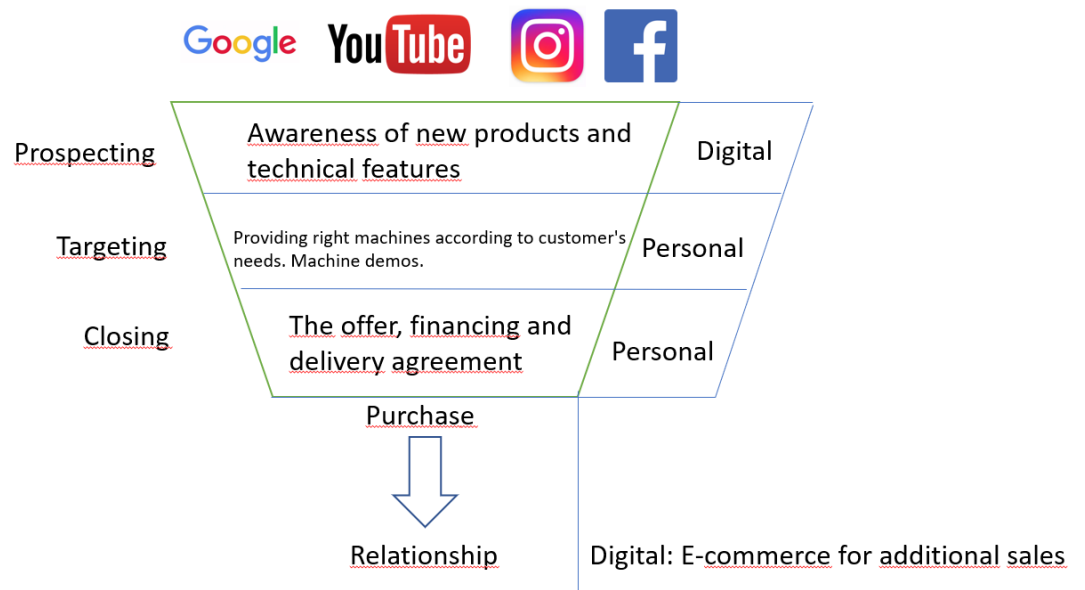


Figure 15. Sales process with digital marketing.

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## Customer survey

Forms

Golf asiakkaat: asiakaskysely - Tallennettu

? TV

## Golf asiakkaat: asiakaskysely

41

vastausta

02:53

Keskimääräinen vastaamisaika

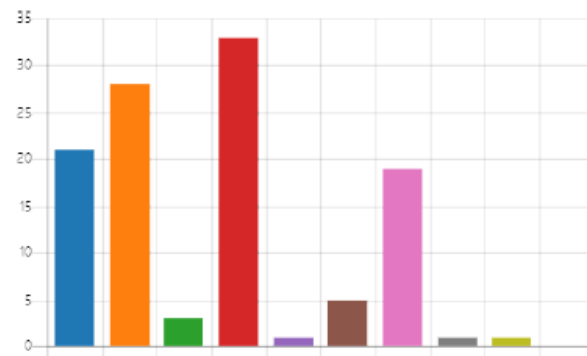
Aktiivinen

Tila

Ideat

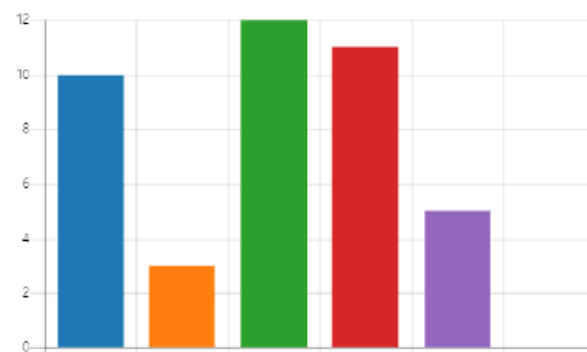
## 1. Mitä sosiaalisen median kanavia käytät aktiivisesti ? (voit valita useita)

● Youtube	21
● Facebook	28
● LinkedIn	3
● WhatsApp	33
● Snapchat	1
● Twitter	5
● Instagram	19
● Pinterest	1
● En käytä sosiaalista mediaa	1
● Muu	0



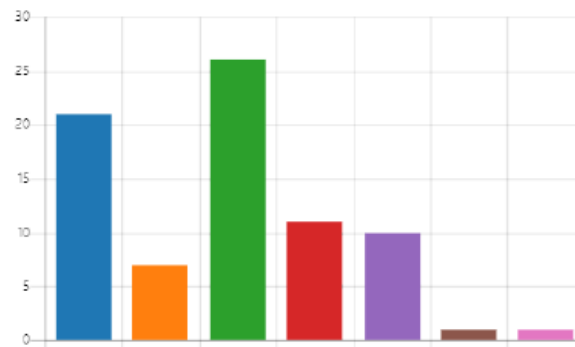
## 2. Mitä työhösi liittyvää tietoa olet viimeksi etsinyt digitaalisista kanavista?

● Tietoa uutuustuotteista	10
● Tarjoukset ja kampanjat	3
● Tekniset tiedot	12
● Tapahtumat ja koulutukset	11
● Koulutusmateriaalit (tuotteide...	5
● Muu	0



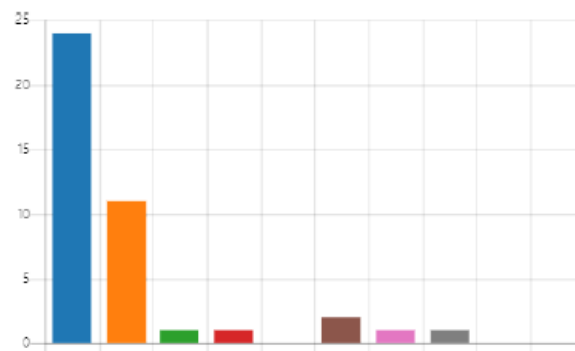
3. Minkälaista kentänhoitokoneisiin liittyvää tietoa yleensä etsit digitaalisista kanavista ? (voit valita useita)

● Tietoa uutuustuotteista	21
● Tarjoukset ja Kampanjat	7
● Koneiden tekniset tiedot	26
● Tapahtumat ja koulutukset	11
● Koulutusmateriaalit (koneiden ...	10
● En ole etsinyt tietoa kentänhoi...	1
● Muu	1



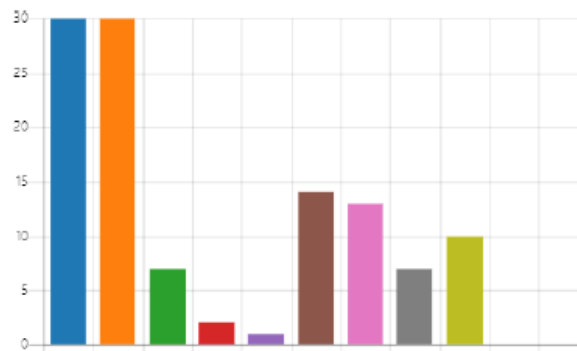
4. Mistä etsit viimeksi tietoa työhösi liittyen?

● Google	24
● Yritysten WWW-sivut	11
● Sosiaalinen media	1
● Digitaaliset lehdet ja julkaisut	1
● Blogit	0
● Youtube	2
● Kollegat	1
● Esitteet ja kuvastot (painettu ...	1
● Tapahtumat ja koulutukset	0
● Muu	0



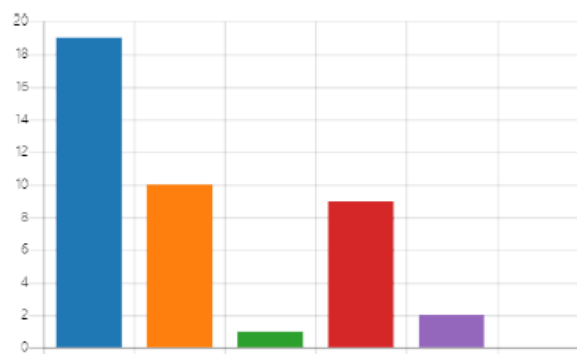
## 5. Mistä etsit yleensä tietoa kentänhoitokoneisiin liittyen? (voit valita useita)

● Google	30
● Yritysten WWW-sivut	30
● Sosiaalinen media	7
● Digitaaliset lehdet ja julkaisut	2
● Blogit	1
● Youtube	14
● Kollegat	13
● Esitteet ja kuvastot (painettu ...	7
● Tapahtumat ja koulutukset	10
● En ole etsinyt tietoa kentänhoi...	0
● Muu	0



## 6. Mikä olisi sinulle helpoin tapa tilata kentänhoitokoneiden varaosia?

● Puhelimitse	19
● Sähköpostilla	10
● Chat-asiakaspalvelu	1
● Verkkokauppa	9
● Whatsapp	2
● Muu	0



## 7. Oletko ostanut työhösi liittyen tuotteita tai palveluita verkkokaupasta?

● Kyllä	16
● En	25



8. Jos vastasit edelliseen "kyllä"; Mitä työhösi liittyviä tuotteita tai palveluita olet ostanut verkkokaupasta?

15

vastausta

Uusimmat vastaukset

8. Jos vastasit edelliseen "kyllä"; Mitä työhösi liittyviä tuotteita tai palveluita olet ostanut verkkokaupasta?

14 vastausta

Tunnus ↑	Nimi	vastausta
1	anonymous	Suihkulähteitä
2	anonymous	varaosat
3	anonymous	Varoitusnauha, työkalut
4	anonymous	putkien osia, varaosia koneisiin
5	anonymous	Painotuotteita
6	anonymous	koneiden varaosia ebayn ja amazonin kautta
7	anonymous	torjunta-aineita
8	anonymous	Varaosia
9	anonymous	työkaluja
10	anonymous	Varaosia, työkaluja
11	anonymous	harvinaisempia työkoneiden varaosia
12	anonymous	Varaosia
13	anonymous	elektroniikkaa, pienkoneita ja laitteita ja työvälineitä.
14	anonymous	pienkoneiden osia