

# **Social media marketing in the beginning of the customer journey**

## **Case: Personal training services**

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<p>In a modern digitalized world small businesses, such as individual personal trainers, turn towards the social media digital tools for the promotional purposes. Various social media tools and features enable companies to provide strong assistance for the prospective customers through the purchasing process, also known as customer journey. Accompanying the prospective customers through the steps preceding the purchasing decision (pre-service) is essential for every company. Increasing own visibility, raising need awareness for the services, providing all the essential information, monitoring what is being said about the company, supporting purchase consideration, and creating connections, - all these objectives can be greatly assisted by different features and tools that social media provide nowadays.</p> <p>This master's thesis studies features and tools delivered by different social media platforms that can be utilized by individual personal trainers during the first part of a modern customer journey. The main goal of the study is to create guidelines on using different features and tools that can help personal trainers to manage a better structured, appealing, informative and ease-to-navigate social media business profile on various platforms for marketing own services to the prospective customers in the beginning of their customer journey.</p> <p>Literature review covers selected theories and definitions for the modern customer journey and the pre-service stage, as well as introduces different theories and practices on various social media features and tools.</p> <p>The project was conducted as a constructive research, gathering both qualitative and quantitative data using benchmarking and survey methodology, by looking into the functional solution and obtaining new knowledge related to the field in question.</p> <p>The result of the study is presented in the form of guidelines on social media features and tools as well as the examples on social media activity to help individual personal training entrepreneurs to accompany prospective customers in the very beginning of their customer journey.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> Social media marketing, social media features, customer journey, pre-service stage, personal training, customer awareness	

## Table of contents

1	Introduction .....	1
1.1	Personal training business in the health and sport related industry .....	3
1.2	Research objectives and research questions .....	4
2	Customer experience and customer journey mapping .....	6
2.1	General thoughts on customer experience and customer journey .....	6
2.2	Key concepts of customer journey map.....	8
2.3	First stage of customer journey: pre-service.....	12
2.3.1	Steps of customer journey's pre-service stage .....	13
2.3.2	Trustworthiness and perceived risks .....	17
2.3.3	Requirements and propositions for managing the customer search and choice process during the pre-purchase stage .....	19
2.4	Modern customer journey.....	20
3	Social media marketing: features and tools .....	25
3.1	Blogging.....	29
3.2	Microblogging (Twitter).....	31
3.3	Social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn).....	33
3.3.1	Facebook .....	34
3.3.2	Facebook for marketing personal training services.....	44
3.3.3	LinkedIn .....	45
3.4	Media-sharing sites (YouTube, Instagram).....	46
3.4.1	YouTube .....	47
3.4.2	Instagram.....	49
3.5	Social media integration.....	51
3.6	Importance of social media marketing in the beginning of customer journey .....	53
3.7	Social media usage in Finland.....	54
4	Conducting the research .....	58
4.1	Constructive research .....	58
4.2	Methodology .....	59
4.3	Collecting and analysing data: surveys .....	62
4.3.1	Survey for personal trainers .....	62
4.3.2	Survey for prospective customers .....	65
4.3.3	Matching and evaluating the surveys' results .....	67
4.4	Collecting and analysing data: benchmarking .....	69
4.4.1	Facebook .....	70
4.4.2	Instagram.....	71
4.4.3	Summary on the benchmarking.....	73
4.5	Review on the research findings in correlation to the pre-service stage .....	74

5	Constructing the social media marketing guidelines .....	75
5.1	Social media content.....	75
5.2	Social media on-going activity.....	77
5.3	Calls to action .....	78
5.4	Campaigns and offers .....	80
5.4.1	Examples for the campaigns by personal trainers .....	80
5.4.2	Examples for the sales promotions and offers by personal trainers .....	82
6	Conclusion .....	84
6.1	Study process and the results of the thesis research .....	85
6.2	Validity and reliability of the research .....	86
6.3	Reflection on own learning .....	88
	References .....	90
	Appendices .....	95
	Appendix 1. The customer journey canvas.....	95
	Appendix 2. Summary of annual content calendar (example for individual personal trainers).....	96
	Appendix 3. Channel Plan (example for individual personal trainers) .....	97
	Appendix 4. Benchmarking Facebook .....	98
	Appendix 5. Benchmarking Instagram.....	102
	Appendix 6. Questionnaire for personal trainers (4 pages).....	105
	Appendix 7. Questionnaire for prospective customers (3 pages) .....	109
	Appendix 8. Questionnaire results (personal trainers) .....	112
	Appendix 9. Questionnaire results (prospective customers) .....	125
	Appendix 10. Guidelines for personal training service providers on social media marketing .....	130

# 1 Introduction

In the modern world of developing marketing communications, industry service providers have more options of staying visible, raising awareness and developing own businesses along with the industry in general. Social media tools are used widely to not only tell about the company and services but also to evolve the customer relationships. Thus, the question here is how small businesses in general and personal trainers in particular, can accompany and support the potential customers with the help of social media in the beginning of their customer journey towards purchase decision.

This master's thesis studies what features and tools delivered by different social media platforms can be nowadays utilized by individual personal training service providers, during the first stage of modern customer journey. The main goal of this paper is to create guidelines for personal training services social media profiles on ways to be organized and managed with the help of different features and tools to raise awareness, support consideration and attract more potential customers, leading them through their customer journey towards the purchasing decision.

There is a wide range of different social media platforms available and numerous amounts of features and tools delivered by them that can be reviewed. This thesis focuses on several chosen social media platforms that are stated to be the most popular with the audience.

The need to research the matter is preliminary coming from my own interest in marketing communications in sports and its integration with social media nowadays. Personal training, just like any other small business service provider delivering intangible product, is going through difficulties connected to raising awareness about itself and its services. As a part of their customer journey, prospective customers are going through the series of steps before coming to the purchasing decision. These involve raising need awareness, information search and consideration. For individual personal trainers outstanding among the large amount of similar service providers should become a major marketing objective in order to become visible and appealing for prospective customers on their pre-service stage of customer journey. Learning on how to use the benefits that social media provide nowadays could become a serious competitive advantage. There have not been found any similar study. Thus, it was interesting to concentrate on particular industry and chosen social media platforms for researching the variations of their features and tools that could

help personal trainers in accompanying prospective customers during the pre-service stage of their customer journey towards the purchasing decision.

The study topic is of personal interest to me as I am particularly interested in social media marketing in health and sports industry. There was no exact similar study conducted before, so it has a lot of potential, and I believe that it provides a good ground for even further researches. The study covers a theoretical framework on the research objectives as well as answers the main research question based on the analysed results of the data gathered throughout of the research process.

This part of the thesis begins with the brief introduction of the personal training business in the health and sport related industry.

In literature review, several topics are introduced in two different chapters. At first, it covers key concepts and theories linked to the customer experience and customer journey map. The main focus of the research here is on the first stage of the customer journey, called pre-service stage. Such aspects as customer's need awareness, information search and consideration are closely looked into. The other part of literature review covers theories and practises regarding different social media platforms, features and tools that they deliver. To conclude the literature review, the statistics on social media usage in Finland is analysed.

This thesis is a research-oriented, gathering both qualitative and quantitative data. The study, conducted as constructive research, aimed at solving a real-life problem of personal trainers' social media marketing accompanying potential customers through the pre-service stage of customer journey towards the purchasing decision, by looking into the functional solution and obtaining new knowledge related to the field in question. The result of the study is the guidelines on social media features and tools that could potentially be utilised by any small business service providers and individual personal training entrepreneurs in particular.

Benchmarking was chosen as one of the main methods for the research. The idea was to analyse best practices and strategies used in different social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram. It is important to understand what practices and tools have already been in use by some of the successful businesses. Several gyms, personal training studios and individual personal trainers were targeted for the study. The successfulness was initially determined by the amount of followers and subscribers

comparing to the majority of similar profiles. The main focus was on Finland, specifically on Uusimaa region. The analyses are presented in a form of tables and a figure.

Additionally to benchmarking, there were two questionnaires conducted for different parties – one for potential customers of the health and sport industry services and another one - for individual entrepreneurs, called personal trainers, in the personal training industry.

The final part of the thesis presents the results of the study in a form of constructed guidelines, the examples and ideas for the social media activity for personal training service providers and conclusions.

### **1.1 Personal training business in the health and sport related industry**

Health and sport marketing is a huge industry offering numerous products and services. The key principles and definitions for marketing in the health and sport industry are practically the same as for any other industry. The most important aspect of marketing is satisfying customer needs. Customers' needs should be the primary focus during the planning, production, distributing, and promotion of a product or service. Marketing strategies must include monitoring the competition and consumer trends and making improvements that meet the latest customer demands. (Kaser & Oelkers 2016, 34-35.)

Nowadays, people are more and more coming to the point of realizing the high importance of health and sport related issues. The connected services create a particular interest and have become rather popular among people. Nevertheless, depending on the country, the awareness, acceptance, consideration and popularity of such services may still differ. What is already a trend and for a long time a common thing in some countries, may still be relatively new issue in others. Culture, mentality, economic situation, and lifestyle – all those issues affect the perception and the development of the health and sport industry.

Finding new customers is one of the preliminary tasks for any business, and health and sport industry is not an exception. However, accumulating new potential customers is preceded by the initial stage of customer journey, called pre-service or pre-purchase. It involves raising customers' awareness and interest in the product or service, supporting the information search and customers' consideration that further leads to the purchasing decision.

Personal training business is one of the service providers in the health and sport industry. Personal trainers are certified coaches that help people to set and achieve their personal health and fitness goals by delivering the deep knowledge in exercising, training and nutrition issues, by motivating and supporting them during their training process.

Personal training is one of those businesses that highly and almost completely depend on its customers. There is a high competition in this area as there can be quite a lot of different personal trainers on the market working independently or in the various fitness centres and gyms, thus making it important to diversify oneself from others, be visible, raise awareness about own services and reach out for prospective customers.

Social media offers a number of features and tools that should help personal trainers to improve own social media presence in order to be able to accompany prospective customers during their first pre-service stage of modern customer journey towards the purchasing decision by forming and maintaining relationships with them, raising the awareness and interest to own products and services, and strengthening the communication with them.

## **1.2 Research objectives and research questions**

Why the first stage of customer journey (the pre-service) is so important? It covers the exact period when customers get to know about the business and its products and services, and after a consideration, are ready to make a purchasing decision.

The objective of this thesis research is to define different features and tools of chosen social media platforms that can help individual personal trainers, as well as any small business service provider, to raise awareness and stimulate purchase consideration during the first stage of modern customer journey. The thesis provides guidelines for personal training service providers for analysing own current social media presence and being able to make improvements or adjustments for more successful accompanying the customers through the first stage of their individual customer journey towards the purchasing decision.

Although the main focus of the thesis is on individual personal training services, all research issues and conclusions can be used by any other small business involved with intangible products and services.

The main research question of this thesis is:

RQ: Which social media features and tools best support the beginning of the customer journey in marketing personal training services?

There are following sub-questions that support the study objectives and open up the main research question in more details:

1. What social media platforms and features do personal trainers in Finland use in their work?
2. What social media platforms do potential customers use and what do they expect or like about health or sport related businesses, including personal trainers, presented in social media?
3. What social media features and tools can help individual personal training service providers to raise awareness, provide information and support purchase consideration for the prospective customers?

In terms of this thesis, benchmarking and two different connected surveys were conducted to support the theoretical review and help answering the sub research questions. Reviewing Statista business data source reports provided data for analyzing the social media usage in Finland by looking into the most popular social media platforms among Finnish residents that accordingly should be taken into consideration in social media marketing by any small service provider company operating in Finland.

## **2 Customer experience and customer journey mapping**

In this chapter, I introduce the main theories and key concepts related to customer experience and customer journey mapping. It includes the definitions of customer experience and customer journey map, the elements and stages of customer journey, with the thorough look onto the first stage of customer journey called pre-service.

### **2.1 General thoughts on customer experience and customer journey**

One-way communication costs too much and produces too little. Nowadays, companies should always use face-to-face or digital communications for getting as close as possible to the customers. Interacting with each customer and treating the customer as an individual should become the primary concern for companies and brands. Each such encounter is a source of insight into the customer's processes, thoughts, needs, wishes and values. This summarizes all the customer information that is most often unused. (Grönroos 2015, 11.)

Further on, addressing in the study to brand awareness, brand image, brand attitudes or brand loyalty requires giving the definition to an important related concept in marketing – brand or branding. The brand is “a name, term, sign, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller's product or service as distinct from those of other sellers”. Branding is an essential issue for service organizations. However, the definition misses the key characteristic of services as processes, and it excludes the customer. The services are processes, and the customer is assumed to participate in the consumption of services, or process consumption, that creates a distinction between the service of one provider and that of another. The planned marketing communication involved with brand development for physical pre-produced goods usually excludes the customers, expecting them to form an image of the brand that corresponds to the intended brand. Nevertheless, it is not working the same way for the services. With service being a process, the situation changes and the importance of customer involvement increases as customer participating in the process create the basis for brand development. However, companies should not become too preoccupied with branding as it is only a means of doing better in a competitive advantage. (Grönroos 2007, 329-330.)

Creating a strong customer experience is nowadays a paramount objective for any company or brand. The increasing focus on customer experience takes place because of the customers interacting with companies through the wide range of touch points (“the

instance of communication between a customer and a service provider”) in multiple channels and media, resulting in more complex customer journeys. Moreover, customer-to-customer interactions through social media are creating both significant challenges and opportunities for companies.

Nowadays companies end up having less control over the customer experience and the customer journey. It brings the complexity of creating, managing and controlling the experience and journey of each customer. (Lemon & Verhoef 2016, 69; Halvorsrud, Kvale & Følstad 2016, 846.) All that result in necessity to move along with the new trends and changes these provide to the customer journey mapping, and be aware of the modern digital communications tools, as well as both threats and opportunities those tools provide.

Abbott (1955, in Lemon & Verhoef 2016, 70-71) and Alderson (1957, in Lemon & Verhoef 2016, 70-71) early on pointed out that “what people really desire are not products but satisfying experiences”. Further on, in the 1980s the experimental theorists talked about a broader view of human behaviour, recognizing the importance of the emotional aspects of decision making and experience (Lemon & Verhoef 2016, 70-71).

Later on, Meyer and Schwager (2007, in Lemon & Verhoef 2016, 70) broadly defined customer experience:

Customer experience encompassing every aspect of a company’s offering – the quality of customer care, of course, but also advertising, packaging, product and service features, ease of use, and reliability; it is the internal and subjective response customers have to any direct or indirect contact with a company.

Lemon and Verhoef (2016, 70-71) tried to combine several theories and definitions of customer experience together. There are multiple perspectives from which the design, delivery and management of the customer experience can be viewed: the customer’s point of view, the company’s point of view (when the company designing and crafting an experience for the customer to receive) and the co-creation perspective (customer’s experience is seen a culmination of a customer’s interaction with other actors in a broader ecosystem, while recognizing the customer’s role in the experience co-construction). Nevertheless, an experience can as well relate to particular aspects of the offering, for instance, a brand. Experience consists of individual contacts between the company and the customer at certain points, called touch points. Many channels and touch points are highly interactive and provide multiple opportunities for customers to engage with the company. An experience is built up through a set of these touch points in multiple stages of a customer’s decision process or purchase journey. Therefore, Lemon and Verhoef

(2016, 71) came to conclusion, that “customer experience is a multidimensional construct focusing on a customer’s cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensorial, and social responses to a firm’s offerings during the customer’s entire purchase journey”.

In 2010s, with new digital tools and digital independence involvement, a scope moved to a term called “customer engagement”, or recognizing the customer’s role in the experience. Customer engagement attempts to distinguish customer attitudes and behaviors that go beyond purchase. Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan (2012, in Lemon & Verhoef 2016, 73) defined customer engagement as “the intensity of an individual’s participation in and connection with an organization’s offerings or organizational activities, which either the customer or the organization initiates.”

The digital and social media revolution has strengthened the importance of customer engagement behavior. Digital communications empowered customers to engage more with companies and brands in both positive and negative ways. Customers became active co-producers or possible destroyers of value for the companies. It brings us towards the recognized value of non-purchase interactions. Co-creation, social influence through word of mouth, and customer referrals are all the examples of what goes “beyond purchase” in the customer engagement. (Lemon & Verhoef 2016, 73; 76.)

Incorporating social media, recognizing the value of non-purchase interactions and the customer’s role in the experience, aiming at the improving customer’s experience at each touch point by the company is crucial for any company or brand nowadays (Lemon & Verhoef 2016, 75). Visualizing touch points and, therefore, managing them more effectively is carried out with a strategic tool called customer journey map (Kalbach 2016, 252).

## **2.2 Key concepts of customer journey map**

The exact origin of the term customer journey map (CJM) is unclear. Meyer & Schwager (2007, in Micheaux & Bosio 2019, 130) defined a customer journey as a sequence of a customer’s direct and indirect contacts with a product, service or brand, each of which, according to Berry, Carbone & Haeckel (2002, in Micheaux & Bosio 2019, 130), constitutes a positive, negative or neutral experience.

Basically, CJMs is a type of diagram or blueprint. The chronological structure in a form of a sequence of phases is mostly the same for different customer journey maps, while there can be differences in point of view, scope, focus, and use (Kalbach 2016, 249). It

describes a “journey” that customer has during the purchase cycle with a company across multiple touch points. The value of the customer experience at each touch point influences the perceived relationship quality (Fournier 1998, in Micheaux & Bosio 2019, 130), which in turn affects commitment (Palmatier, Dant, Grewal & Evans 2006, in Micheaux & Bosio 2019, 130).

Customer Journey Map is a very helpful tool for any organization and company. Bruce Temkin in his blog post “It is all about your customer’s journey” (2000s, in Kalbach 2016, 252) pointed out the importance of CJMs:

Companies need to use tools and processes that reinforce an understanding of actual customer needs. One of the key tools in this area is something called a customer journey map...Used appropriately, these maps can shift a company’s perspective from inside-out to outside-in.

CJMs can be perceived as visualization of customer’s processes and needs throughout their relationships with a company (Kalbach 2016, 252). Moments or interactions / service encounters when customer experience is being crucial for the future of the relationship are called key moments, or “Moments of Truth”. They can be divided into three subgroups featuring “Zero Moment of Truth” on consumer searching different channels for information on a product or service, followed by first moments of truth when the customer chooses a product or service, and second, when the customer tries the product. All these moments together are incorporated into the customer’s digital journey. (Micheaux & Bosio 2019, 129; Grönroos 2007, 308-309.)

Customer Journey Maps are often used to better understand ways of improving the customer’s experience with the company, its products and services over time during the customer journey, as well as to model the effects of different touch points on the customer’s experience and loyalty. CJMs seek to understand how an offering (product or service) is actually perceived by customers.

Nevertheless, customer journey cannot be considered only through the prism of digital marketing. Touch points can involve any digital and direct contacts through the media, interactions with points of sale, or any other agent in the company. It is just so that digital channels and tools nowadays allow collecting a large amount of data on customer interactions with the company and the brand, its products and services, different agents, as well as customer-to-customer interactions. (Micheaux & Bosio 2019, 129.)

Below is the figure, picturing some of the relevant questions that CJMs help companies to answer (Figure 1).

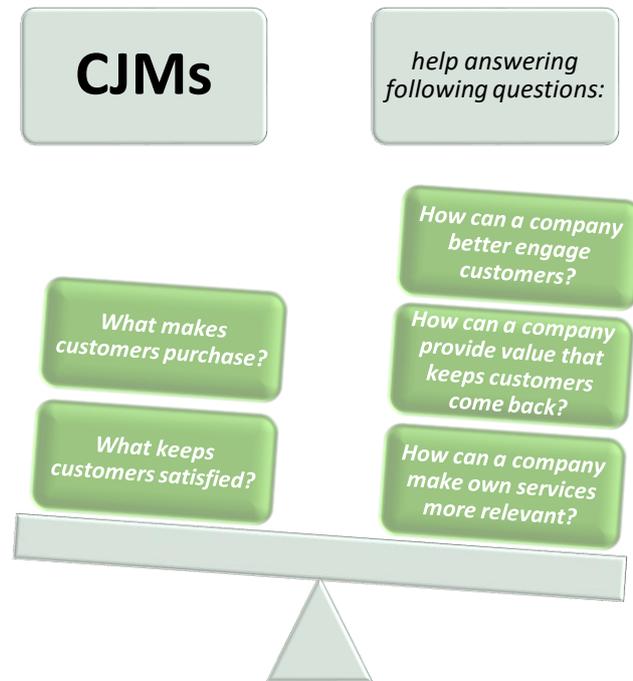


Figure 1. Relevant questions that CJMs help to answer (Kalbach 2016, 252).

There are three stages of the customer experience or, so-called, service consumption: pre-purchase or pre-service (including search), purchase (service encounter) and post-purchase (after-service). Both past experiences (including previous purchases) and external factors are incorporated into this process. Therefore, not all the touch points are under the company's control. (Lemon & Verhoef 2016, 76; Kalbach 2016, 252; Wirtz & Lovelock 2018, 39.)

According to Kalbach (2016, 262) there are following elements of CJMs:

- It presents customer's point of view (as individual), and, frequently, highlights some decision-making process;
- It is chronologically structured;
- Should include aspects appropriate to a company's needs;
- Its scope is on end-to-end experience, from recognizing a need to ending the relationship;

- The prior focus is on the customer's experience, motivations and attitudes, and very little – on backstage processes (usually leaving out internal processes and parties);
- It is simple to understand, suitable for co-creating with teams and stakeholders;
- Used for touch point analysis and optimization as well as strategic planning for customer experience management, marketing and branding initiatives.

CJMs are about particular type of engagement within the customer lifecycle. Customer lifecycle maps describe the overall lifetime relationship between a customer and the company. While a customer lifecycle map reflects overall brand loyalty and the emotional connection to a company as a whole, customer journey map reflects on a specific journey for a specific product or service. (Kalbach 2016, 256.)

Figure below (Figure 2) well reflects how customer lifecycle and customer journey map relate to each other.

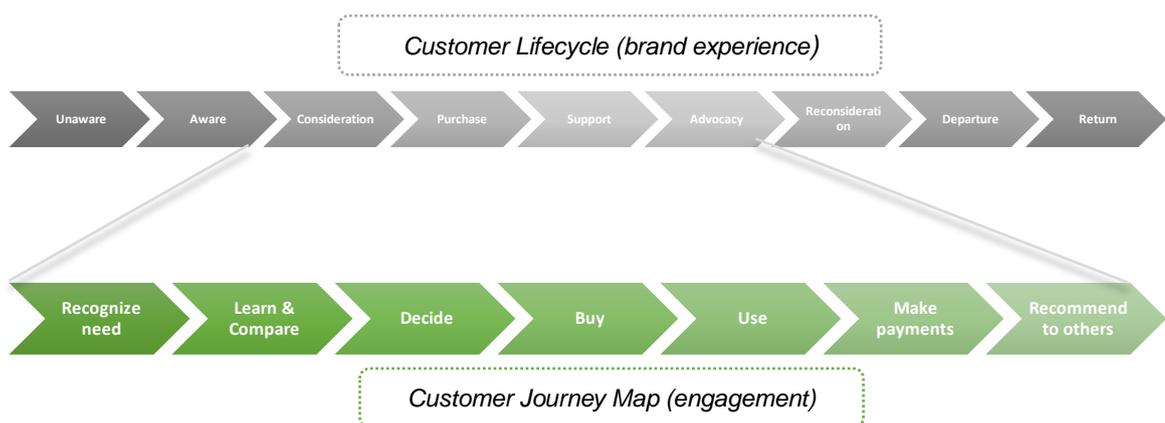


Figure 2. Customer lifecycle and customer journey maps in relation to each other (adapted from Kalbach 2016, 258).

The customer journey canvas is a variation of a CJM with an open canvas-style template, arranged for getting contribution from the entire team and joint auditing the customer's journey. The customer journey canvas was created by service design experts Marc Stickdorn and Jakob Schneider (adapted from Kalbach 2016, 255). The basic format of the customer journey canvas includes both frontstage and backstage components to the service experience. It combines pre-service actions of the provider to customer expectations, as well as how the provider will manage customer relationships over time

after the service encounter. (Kalbach 2016, 255.) The full customer journey canvas is presented in Appendix 1.

Further on, in terms of this thesis, the main focus is concentrated on the first stage of the customer journey, called pre-purchase or pre-service period.

### 2.3 First stage of customer journey: pre-service.

The first stage of a customer journey, called pre-purchase or pre-service, includes all aspects of the customer's interaction with the brand, product or service, and environment before a purchase. In theory, this stage could include the customer's entire experience before purchase. In practice, however, this stage covers the customer's experience from the beginning of the need, goal or impulse recognition to consideration of satisfying that need, goal or impulse with a purchase. (Lemon & Verhoef 2016, 76.)

Taken from the customer journey canvas, is the part describing pre-service period touch points (Figure 3).

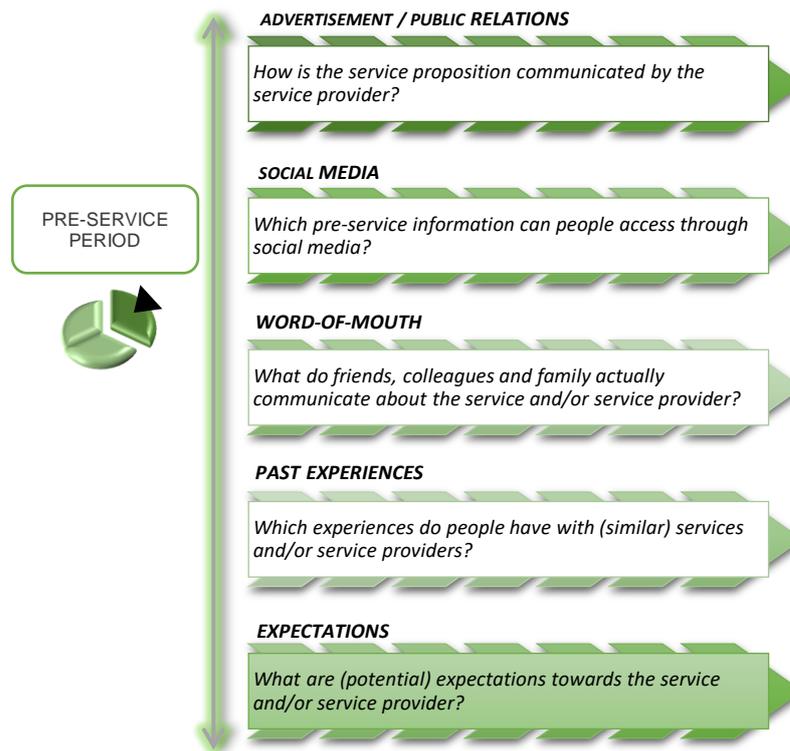


Figure 3. Pre-service period of customer journey canvas (adapted from Kalbach 2016, 255).

As was mentioned before, the canvas is a bit different from the actual customer journey map, as it allows the joint auditing of the customer's journey. It is presented here in order to see the main touch points, such as advertisement, social media, word-of-mouth and past experiences, and the arising questions along the pre-service stage of customer journey.

### 2.3.1 Steps of customer journey's pre-service stage

The conversion marketing funnel (Figure 4) represents the decision making process showing progression through the customer journey. The exact steps along the journey in the funnel can vary, depending on how the funnel is conceived. According to Kalbach (2016, 260):

People enter into a wide opening and get funneled into making a purchase; but at various points, there are decisions to leave the process, thereby reducing the number of people that continue all the way to conversion.

The first three parts of the funnel represent the pre-service stage of the customer journey, when customers are going through following stages: awareness, consideration and intent. It is visually well presented, that not all prospective customers being aware of the need for the services are having the intention to actually encounter the service at the end of the pre-service stage.

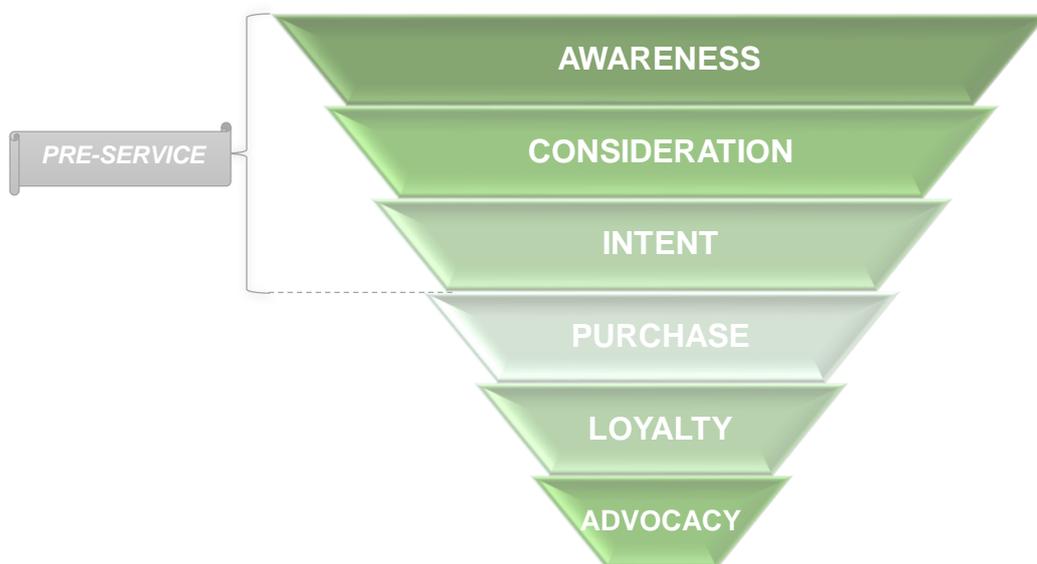


Figure 4. Typical marketing funnel showing progression through the customer journey (adapted from Kalbach 2016, 260).

Supporting the customers along these pre-service steps means accompanying them towards the purchasing decision. This corresponds to the following communication tasks:

- Ensuring the customers are fully aware about the products and services (providing awareness);
- Being memorable for all the right reasons – become an object of interest to others;
- Providing information and consultation;
- Concentrating on the long-term relationship building, through nurturing the customers to ask for advices, expertise, opinions, etc.;
- Allowing two-way communications with customers (e-mail, chat rooms, messaging);
- Being helpful – “one needs to give to get”;
- Providing different options on how the customer can engage the company;
- Being available and staying in touch with the audience;
- Encouraging product trials;
- Being proactive rather than only reactive (passive);
- Enabling customers to place orders for products, book the services;
- Measuring the effectiveness of specific advertising or promotional campaigns.  
(Willmot 2014, 32-33; Wirtz & Lovelock 2018, 208-209.)

The pre-purchase stage begins with need awareness, continues through information search and evaluation of alternatives, towards considering of the purchase decision (whether or not to buy a particular service).

#### 1. Need awareness

The decision to purchase the product or service is triggered by need awareness. The awareness of a need leads to information search and evaluation of alternatives before the purchasing decision is made.

Needs can be aroused or triggered by:

- people’s unconscious minds (e.g., personal identity or aspirations);
- physical conditions (overall bad physical feeling or bad physical shape could drive consumer to a personal trainer)
- external sources (e.g., social media).

Needs are continuously evolving. The need can arise with an innovative service experience or new trend appeared in a particular industry.

The example for a health and sport industry is the latest trend called CrossFit. CrossFit involves using the top nine exercise trends in continuously varied workouts. High-intensity interval training associated with Cross Fit includes: body weight training, strength training, exercise and weight loss, functional fitness and group fitness training. CrossFit is rapidly gaining followers. (Kaser & Oelkers 2016, 174).

## 2. Information search

After the need recognition, consumers are motivated to search for information on solutions to satisfy the need. Different alternatives form the evoke set (past experiences, external sources such as social media, reviews and recommendations, online searches, advertising, news stories, retail displays). However, a consumer is unlikely to use all the alternatives from the evoke set. The chosen alternatives form the consideration set. During the search process, consumers as well learn about service attributes that should be considered, and form expectations about how companies or brands in the consideration set are likely to perform on these attributes.

## 3. Evaluation of alternative services

- a. Review service provider information (e.g., advertisement, brochures, social media accounts, websites, etc.);
- b. Review information from third parties (e.g., published reviews, ratings, recommendations, comments, complaints, awards, etc.);
- c. Discuss options with service provider;
- d. Get advice and feedback from third party advisors or other customers.

When the key service attributes are understood and the consideration is set, the consumer makes a purchase decision. (Wirtz & Lovelock 2018, 39-40; Lovelock & Wirtz 2011, 58-61.)

The multi-attribute model assumes that potential customers can evaluate all important attributes before making the purchase decision. These attributes are search attributes, experience attributes, and credence attributes.

- Search attributes

Search attributes are tangible characteristics that customers can evaluate before the purchasing decision. For personal trainer services these could include the services offered, location, pricing, reviews, level of expertise in terms of information provided (blog, articles, posts, videos, etc.), free consultations, etc.

- Experience attributes

Experience attributes cannot be evaluated before the purchase. Service must be personally “experienced” to analyze the level of service, compatibility, ease of use, customer support, reliability and liking. For example, only after the training (or the meeting), a customer can fully understand whether training with this particular trainer is to his/her liking, or whether they are compatible and able to work together.

- Credence attributes

Credence attributes are hard to evaluate even after the service consumption. The customer is forced to believe or trust that certain tasks have been performed at the promised level of quality. (Wirtz & Lovelock 2018, 41-42.)

For better understanding the customer journey’s pre-service period, the parallel with a related model can be made. Everett Rogers (1960s, in Kalbach 2016, 259) described the innovation-decision process after uncovering the complexity of adoption of new products (Figure 5). This process shows resemblance with the typical phases of the CJMs.



Figure 5. The innovation-decision process, first described by Everett Rogers (adapted from Kalbach 2016, 259).

The individual’s attitude is critical during the persuasion phase. There are five key factors that influence the decision-making process. They relate to typical questions that decision makers ask before adopting a new product or service.

1. Relative advantage: “Is it better than existing alternatives?”
2. Compatibility: “Is it appropriate? Does it fit into my beliefs and values?”

3. Complexity: “Is it easy to comprehend and use?”
4. Trialability: “Can it be tested without penalty?”
5. Observability: “Can it be observed and understood?”

Similarly, CJMs seek to understand how an offering is actually perceived by customers. (Kalbach 2016, 259.)

### **2.3.2 Trustworthiness and perceived risks**

When evaluating competing services, customers try to assess the likely performance of each service on service attributes that are important to them. High proportion of experience and credence attributes result in customers worrying about the trustworthiness and risks of making a purchase. According to Grönroos (2015, 28), there are three types of customer benefits in a relationship with a company. The first is confidence as in reduced anxiety, faith in the service provider, and feeling of trustworthiness of the service provider. The second is social benefits defined by personal recognition by employees, customer being familiar with employees, or the development of friendship with employees. The final benefit is a special treatment as in extra services, special prices, or higher priority than other customers. Confidence types of special relationship benefits were considered as most important by customers across all categories of services studied. (Grönroos 2015, 28.)

There are following perceived risks in purchasing and using services from a customer’s point of view, based on Wirtz & Lovelock (2018, 43), with the developed examples in correlation with personal training services:

- Functional (unsatisfactory performance outcomes)
  - Will this personal trainer or training course / program be able to help me in achieving the results I need?
  - Will this personal trainer or training course / program be able to help me in achieving my fitness goals?
- Financial (monetary loss, unexpected costs)
  - Will my investment in personal training services be relevant with the result I receive?
  - Is buying a bigger training package a good investment in terms of being able to use all the trainings?

- Temporal (wasting time, consequences of delays)
  - Will there be appropriate time for my trainings available from this personal trainer?
- Physical (personal injury or damage to possessions)
  - Is this personal trainer competent and experienced enough to train me with the injures I have?
  - Will this personal trainer be able to help me through the training with my injures?
- Psychological (personal fears and emotions)
  - Will we go along with this personal trainer?
  - Will I enjoy the trainings with this personal trainer?
  - Will I look badly or poorly perform on the trainings with this personal trainer?
- Social (how others think and react)
  - Will my family, friends or colleagues disapprove of me buying a personal training service?
  - Will others disapprove my choice of the personal trainer?
- Sensory (unwanted effects on any of the five senses)
  - Will the showers, saunas be clean in the training area?
  - Will I sense the unpleasant sweat smell after the others in the training premise?
  - Will the training equipment be clean and ready to use?

Customers tend to choose the service with the lower perceived risks. Not necessary all the prospective customers experiencing the same perceived risks, however, the companies and brands need to proactively work on reducing the risk perceptions and uncertainty, therefore, increasing the chances to be the chosen service provider. There are certain strategies that may vary according to the nature of services and may include some or all of the following:

- Encourage prospective customers to preview the service through brochures, websites, social media, and videos;
- Encourage prospective customers to visit the service facilities, to meet with the service provider in advance of the purchase;

- Offer free trials that are suitable for services with high experience attributes (an example for personal training business can be a free trial subscription for a limited time to a video channel or a mobile application that provides training and nutrition tips, training programs, industry insights, etc. that normally costs to subscribe to);
- Advertise: provides with an interpretation and value of any product or service;
- Display credentials: these might be personal degrees, certificates that can qualify the expertise;
- Use “evidence management”: an organized approach of presenting the company’s targeted image and its value proposition (pleasing décor, the appearance of the facilities, behavior, the appearance of social media accounts, blog, etc.);
- Have visible safety procedures that build confidence and trust;
- Give customers access to online information about the status of an order or procedure (examples for personal training business: confirmation of a booking sent to an e-mail or mobile phone, confirmation of the used training from the package sent to e-mail or mobile phone, etc.)
- Offer service guarantees such as money-back guarantees and performance warranties. (Lovelock & Wirtz 2011, 64.)

### **2.3.3 Requirements and propositions for managing the customer search and choice process during the pre-purchase stage**

To conclude and summarize all that was said above about the steps preceding the purchasing decisions, here are certain requirements and propositions for the individual entrepreneurs and the employees of the companies for managing the customer search and choice process that could become useful if taken into consideration during the pre-service stage of a customer journey:

- Understand the full relationship the company has with its customers;
- Understand and accept customers’ role in forming and maintaining these relationships;
- Be customer-focused in the work environment;

- Have the skills to interact and communicate with customers;
- Be motivated to interact and communicate with the customers;
- Feel rewarded for interacting and communicating in ways that support customer-focused behavior and thus successful interactive marketing performance (Grönroos 2015, 411.);
- Encourage customers to explore the company's website or social media accounts;
- Develop liking, preference and conviction for the service or brand through convincing potential customers about the company's superior performance and favorability of the service;
- Reduce perceived risk by providing information and service guarantees;
- Encourage product and service trials, free samples by offering promotional incentives;
- Create memorable professional images of brands and services;
- Allow two-way communications with customers;
- Create consumer awareness, knowledge and interest in the service or brand;
- Enable customers to book services, or to place orders (Wirtz & Lovelock 2018, 199; 208);
- Demonstrate own ideas, opinions, and insights into the problems, challenges, and issues prospective customers consider important and relevant to them;
- Provide the audience with a sample of own expertise, making them to want more and willing to contact you;
- Offer the possibility of having the conversations about the wants and needs that the prospective customers have and that must be addressed. (Willmot 2014, 44.)

## **2.4 Modern customer journey**

A major objective related to using social media marketing for promotional purposes is to assist in moving the consumer through the purchasing process. The pre-service, or consideration stage, is the focal point of the social media program (Evans 2012, 174). Various stages of this cycle are targeted on increasing brand awareness, enhancing brand liking and image, building brand equity, prompting desire, and moving consumers to action in a form of products and services purchasing. Influencing consumer attitudes and movement through the process is possible with promotional messages targeted throughout the social media channels. (Tuten & Solomon 2013, 18.)

Social technologies make it easy for people to reach out for the information, to create and publish content, to share ideas, to vote or to recommend products and services based on their own experience. The pre-service stage is the point where prospective customers make the most intensive use of social media (Evans 2012, 174). Figure 6 shows the classic purchase funnel, connected to the Social Web through social media. The loop from expectation to trial to rating to sharing the actual experience is nowadays a part of almost every purchase process. People are turning to people like themselves for the information to make smart choices. Customers look at these new sources of information for guidance alongside traditional media, combined with advertising and brand communications. This social feedback cycle is important to understand as it forms the basis of company's ability to manage social customer experience. (Evans & Cothrel 2014, 5-6.)

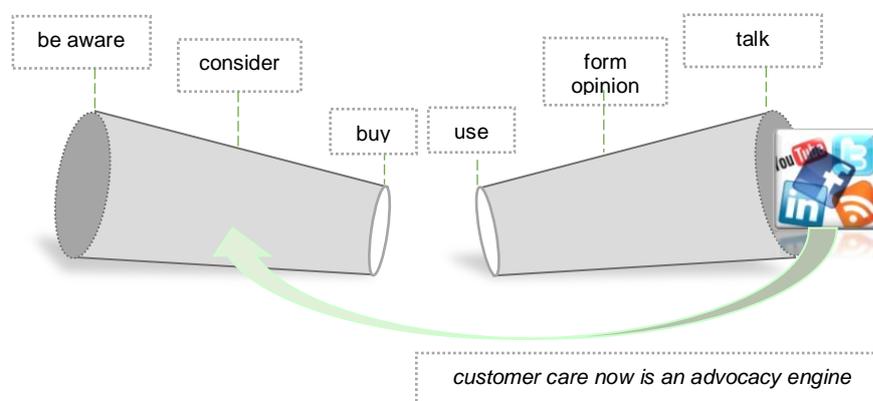


Figure 6. The social feedback cycle (adapted from Evans & Cothrel 2014, 5).

The part of the social feedback cycle regarding awareness and consideration is of main concern in terms of this thesis.

According to Tuten & Solomon (2013, 39), below are some of the basic marketing objectives that social media marketers pursue in different companies:

- Generate brand awareness;
- Improve brand or product reputation;
- Increase website traffic;
- Amplify or augment public relations work;
- Improve search engine rankings;
- Improve perceived customer service quality;
- Generate sales leads;
- Reduce customer acquisition and support costs;

- Increase sales/sales revenue.

Marketing consultant LaChusa (in Lynn 2003, 86), points out that the basic principles to use in marketing personal training services are the same as for any other business. Marketing is a creative thing, and it is recommended to try new things. After tracking them, it is possible to find out what is working and what is not. The goal is to convey to prospective customers the existence of business and the services' quality. (Lynn 2003, 87.)

There are certain basic social media marketing objectives that correspond to the focus of this thesis in relation to the pre-service stage of the modern customer journey. These are presented below, based on Tuten & Solomon (2013, 18) and De Pelsmacker, Geuens & Van Den Bergh (2018, 263), with the brief remarks in relation to the personal training business.

1. Increasing awareness

Brands and companies can increase awareness with social media marketing by maintaining an active presence in the social media platforms where targeted audience is present. That means engaging in social communities, publishing content, and encouraging word of mouth communication and consumer reviews.

2. Influencing desire

Social media promotions can be used to persuade consumers to recognize a sense of desire. Going forward, for personal trainers it could become the photos and videos taken on trainings, participation stories from major sport events, photos of before/after, news on current trends in the health and sport industry, etc. That could potentially make some of the audience want to join, do the same, or achieve similar results with an assistance of this particular personal trainer.

3. Shaping brand image and brand attitudes

The brand needs to be differentiated from the competing products or services with improving customers' knowledge and judgment about a brand.

When it comes to individual personal trainer, the personal experience and expertise should be emphasized and visible in a form of accessible information. Reviews and recommendations might possibly strengthen the brand image.

#### 4. Encouraging trial

Social media can support sampling and loyalty programs. This could potentially attract new potential buyers to the company (customers of competing companies or customers who have never tried the product or service before).

Those could be a free trial of product or consultation on a service promoted through social media networks. For example, personal trainers can deliver free consultation for anyone using specific #hashtag in Instagram during particular time period.

There are another two objectives that go beyond the focus of the thesis, but are to be mentioned briefly for an overall picture of the main social media marketing objectives that go along with customer journey:

#### 5. Facilitating purchase

Social media platforms serve as a distribution channel for many sales promotions including deals and special offers. Many customers “like” or follow brands and companies in order to qualify for special deals.

#### 6. Cementing brand loyalty

Social media offers engaging activities for consumers to ensure them spending more time with the brand, potentially resulting in higher levels of brand loyalty. The examples are social games offering rewards for the most loyal visitors, open discussions, live streaming, and so on.

Companies are keen on influencing customer’s purchasing decision and behaviour in the sense of increasing the number of satisfied and committed buyers. Retaining customers is cost-saving comparing to the constant searching and attracting new customers.

All that once again brings the study to its main slightly modified research question: how can social media marketing communication tools and features be used in the pre-purchase stage to trigger a need, get a service into evoke and consideration sets, reduce perceived risk, and move the prospective customer towards buying decision?

On the pre-stage of the modern customer journey it is essential not only to provide all the important information that customers might be looking for, and to simplify the process of

looking for and accessing that information in an engaging and interesting way, but also to provide the “space” for customers to share own opinions, ideas, reviews and recommendations, to ask questions and get answers. All that would help to build the essential level of awareness, trustworthiness, and expertise and most probably accompany the potential customers towards the purchasing decision. Besides, well-structured, informative and appealing account on the social media platforms would ease the process of supporting the content, monitoring and reacting to the comments, feedback and questions from the potential or current customers for the company or brand itself.

Social media offers a various number of different features and tools on different platforms that could help companies and brands to arrange the own accounts in the most engaging, easy to navigate and informative way. The next chapter of this thesis is focusing on such features and tools for specific social media platforms.

### **3 Social media marketing: features and tools**

This chapter covers the key definitions of social media marketing. Each subchapter is devoted to a particularly chosen social media platform and its features and tools that can be addressed to by the prospective customers in the beginning of their customer journey. This chapter only introduces the most interesting and valuable features and tools, while further in this study, the most precise correlation of these analyzed social media features and tools is covered according to each particular step of the pre-service stage of customer journey.

Social media can be defined as “the online tools that people use to share content, ideas, thoughts, opinions, experiences, and media itself” (Campbell, Conare & Hernandez 2010, in Sharp 2013, 415).

Modern digital technologies have made it easy for anyone to connect and interact, to create and distribute their own content, and, most importantly, get instant feedback for it. There is no need to budget enormous amounts of money for paying to publishers or distributors to embed own messages. Social media are the online means of communication, conveyance, collaboration, and cultivation among interconnected and interdependent networks of people, communities, and organizations by technological capabilities and mobility (Tuten & Solomon 2013, 2; Weinreich 2011, 209; Wood 2017, 202.)

According to Nuttney (2010, in Sharp 2013, 415), social media has become a mainstream mass media platform, giving advertisers access to eighty per cent of global consumer expenditure. Businesses nowadays are greatly benefiting from turning to social media and integrating it into own marketing, communications, and customer service strategies.

Social media allows businesses to “humanize themselves”. Companies have easy access to consumers by communicating through social media. Using the right marketing tools, companies can create engaged and solid relationships with customers by delivering product or service information, as well as other valuable messages, such as helpful tips. However, companies should carefully plan how to use social media as pointless exchanges with customers can damage the relationships. (Kaser & Oelkers 2016, 189). Besides, being active in social media enables companies to, according to Chris Brogan, “grow bigger ears” (Levy 2010, 4). Social media platforms provide virtual place for people to talk about the companies, brands, products and services they use. There are multiple

conversations going on constantly in social media, and some can be about your own business, your brand, your services, and your industry in general. It is virally valuable to be able to monitor it in real life and have the possibility to respond. (Levy 2010, 3-4; Sharp 2013, 163.)

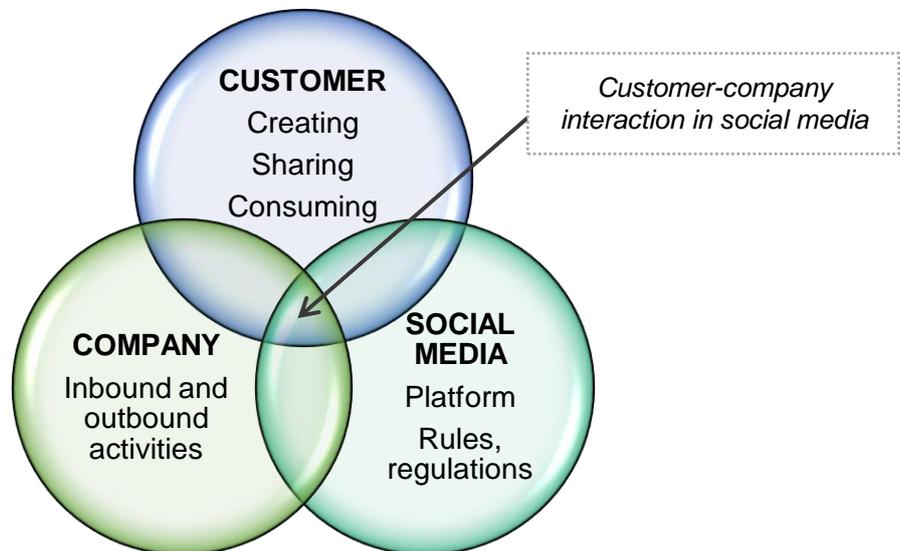


Figure 7. Customer-company interaction in social media (adapted from Grönroos 2015, 361).

Figure 7 shows how three interdependent areas - customer activities, company activities, and social media platforms - create the sphere where customer-company interactions take place in social media. Both companies and customers are dependent on the social media platforms, its' rules, restrictions and regulations.

According to Weinreich (2011, 211), the wide range of social media uses can be combined in a series of words starting with the letter "C". Communicating your message, conversing with others, connecting with people with similar interests, collaborating and co-creating content, collecting and categorizing information online, customizing your online work environment, community building, consumer researching, customer service providing and collective wisdom being pooled on one place, - all that together is called the 10 "Cs" of social media (Weinreich 2011, 211).

Social media marketing should be distinguished from social media platforms themselves. Many companies focus on the variety and types of social media, instead of focusing on developing social media marketing plans. Small businesses are unable to be visible in every social media platform, thus, becoming reluctant to get involved in social media in

general. Social media incorporated into existing business objectives can have a significant impact; otherwise it cannot do anything for the business if implemented simply as an initiative by itself. (Wilson 2010, 3.)

Social media marketing as a process is using social media channels to understand customers and engage them in a way leading to the achievement of ultimate marketing and business goals, such as increase in sales, strengthening brand loyalty, and others. The ultimate goal of social media marketing is to use social media features and tools to reach a particular target consumer and to encourage engagement, social sharing, and advocacy among the customer base. (Zahay 2015, 75; Wilson 2010, 17; Weinreich 2011, 215.)

In this study, the focus of social media marketing lies on the very beginning of customer journey that was defined in the previous chapter. The case relates to personal training service providers, and them accompanying the prospective customers during the particular steps of the pre-service stage. Personal observations strongly supported by literature review on social media marketing are covered further on in this chapter when defining and analyzing the existing social media platforms, as well as related features and tools that cover the pre-service stage of customer journey.

Social media comes in different forms. Each platform has its own place in social media marketing campaign, depending on company's goals and objectives, as well as where the customer is. There are following most commonly used platforms:

- Blogs;
- Microblogs (Twitter);
- Social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn);
- Media-sharing sites (YouTube, Instagram, Flickr, Pinterest, Snapchat);
- Social bookmarking and voting sites (Reddit);
- Review sites (Google My Business, PowerReviews);
- Virtual worlds (Sansar). (Zarella 2010, 3; Tuten & Solomon 2018, 5.)

When we are talking about companies and their involvement with social media, each company can choose any platform that better suits its marketing purposes and objectives. Potential customers use social media, and companies should use them too, as it can have an enormous impact on the business (Zarella 2010, 8).

In terms of this study, the main focus further on lies only on several chosen social media platforms. These are blogs, microblogging (Twitter), social networks (Facebook and LinkedIn), and media-sharing sites (YouTube, Instagram). Other social media platforms, such as, for example, Pinterest, Snapchat, or Forums, are left out, because the range of variations is too wide and, therefore, it is impossible to cover everything in one research paper, thus, leaving options for further continuation of the research.

As we are talking about small individual businesses, such as personal training service providers, the main objective in the very beginning is to make the name for own company or brand. There is no need to spread too wide and use too many communication channels at once, as there is a cost in terms of time and resources; rather it is more important to concentrate on particularly chosen social media platforms for a better and regular content, and to remember about integration in order to cross the messages and save time on content creating. Small business, and, in particular, individual entrepreneurs such as personal trainers, usually cannot afford spending big financial budgets on marketing. Social media platforms offer a variety of different beneficial tools and features overall free to use. Therefore, free but still effective marketing tools can become of a great assistance.

When it comes to social media marketing, there are three core media types: paid, owned and earned. Paid media is advertising, “a paid placement of promotional messages in channels capable of reaching a mass audience” (Tuten & Solomon 2018, 21). In this study, the paid media is not looked into due to focusing on the free-to-use social media features and tools. That leaves owned and earned media. Owned media covers channels that companies or brands control. That would be corporate blogs, direct messaging, brand-owned social networks, branded content, brand-controlled media sharing sites, etc. For instance, blogs are related to owned media. Earned media is distributed at no direct cost to the company and by methods beyond the company’s control, such as word-of-mouth communication, conversations in communities, shared content, comments, likes, links, reviews and ratings, etc. Media-sharing sites possess earned media as their environments cannot be directly controlled by the person or company posting the content. Paid and earned media work together supporting each other, and creating traffic for owned media. Tuten & Solomon 2018, 21-22; 203; 219.) For this study, further on the focus of the research is on owned and earned media.

This study includes analyzing particularly chosen social media platforms in relation to the first pre-service stage of customer journey, covering awareness, information search and consideration (interest) steps. The point of interest in this thesis is what particular social

media features and tools are relevant and available in different social media platforms, and can be used for this part of the customer journey in order to help and motivate a customer to move further on towards the purchasing decision, in order to become a paying customer.

### **3.1 Blogging**

Andy Wibbels, author of a guide for small business blogging (in Kabani 2013, 24), defined a blog as “an instantly and easily updatable website, the hub of the social media strategy, enabling to grow own online presence as social media trends change and evolve”.

Basically all blogs are websites as they have web address and exist on the web. A blog is a type of content management system (CMS) that makes it easy for anyone to publish short articles called posts. For small businesses blogs can become a very attracting tool as potential customers subscribing can later be converted in to real customers. (Zarrella 2010, 9; Kabani 2013, 24-25.)

Blog content is broken into “posts” that are presented in a reverse chronological order (newest first). Blog is about regular fresh content, so it is regularly updated. Content is syndicated via an RSS feed (Really Simple Syndication), unique for every blog. It allows people to subscribe to the blog and read it using a “feed reader” or a “feed aggregator”. RSS feeds allow distributing blog content to multiple social platforms. (Kabani 2013, 24-25.) Blog can become a valuable tool itself for delivering valuable information and becoming a source of expertise for the prospective customers in the beginning of customer journey.

Blogs can integrate with nearly every other social media platform and tool. Blogging platforms provide a common variety of social features, including comments, blogrolls, trackbacks, and subscriptions that can be used for marketing purposes during the pre-service stage of customer journey.

- Posts

Blogs are made of posts of any length, from 100 words to many pages. Posts in the blog should stick to a single topic. Posts should be consistent and qualitative. Long posts should have subheadings, lists and images. It is advisable to make both short and long posts.

- Comments

Most blogs have a section for leaving comments below each post. This comment section can be used to build a community and get a feedback. Monitoring and

responding to the comments is important in order to show concern, answer questions, respond to negative comments, or being able to delete spamming, disruptive and offensive comments.

- Themes

It is essential to establish an image of a professional in the industry by creating a well looking and structured themed design for the blog. This would help to build the trustworthiness. There are different free or paid themes available to choose from.

- Archive and Category pages

Posts are displayed in reverse chronological order. Blog home pages typically show only the most recent posts. Archive pages make older posts easier to find by browsing through past content by day, week, or month.

Blogs can be labelled with one or more categories or tags. It eases the browsing process by topic. It is important to think in beforehand what topics users would want to navigate to, when creating the list of categories.

- Blogrolls

Blogroll is a list of links to other blogs that bloggers have in their sidebars as recommendations. A good way to use the blogroll is to link to popular sites in own niche. That could make those other bloggers and their audience notice and read your blog.

- Links

Links help a site rank better in search engines. Links are a form of communication: "if you link to me, I'll see it and will probably read what you said about me; if I like or dislike it, I may respond; either way, I now know your site".

- Trackbacks and Pingbacks

These are notifications from one blog to another upon linking.

- Subscriptions

Button is a useful tool to provide people with a simple click to add the blog to their subscription list. Both feed-based (RSS feed) and e-mail subscription options should be available. (Zarella 2010, 13-21.)

Based on Kabani (2013, 27-28) and Zarella (2010, 9; 27-30), below are certain guidelines for using blogging in order to accompany the prospective customers in the very beginning of customer journey:

1. Using keywords in the blog (for example, personal trainer's blog can include training tips, nutrition tips, industry news, fitness trends reviews, sport events reviews and so on);

2. Should blog two times a week, especially in the beginning;
3. Breaking, exclusive news is popular content possible by establishing real-world connections with people working in the same industry;
4. Content broken into short parts is easier to read (lists are perfect example: “10 best nutrition tips”, “5 most underestimated exercises that will get you ready for the summer”);
5. Tutorials is a good blogging content (“How-To’s”);
6. Using pictures in every blog post; integrating blog feeds into other social media platforms shows up the picture and is more attractive and captivating that way;
7. Using interlinks - linking certain phrases and words in the blog back to the web page that mentions about that particular product or service (for personal training services, the examples can be a certain set of exercises mentioned, the preparation programs for particular event, different training programs, nutrition plans and so on);
8. Connecting with other bloggers in the niche is crucial for building an audience and increasing the visibility of own blog (using links and commenting in blogging, or by meeting them on other social media platforms).

### **3.2 Microblogging (Twitter)**

Microblogging is a form of blogging that limits the size of each post. The best and most popular example of microblog is Twitter. It is a good choice for a company to be visible in Twitter. It requires little investment of time, and is easy to use. Microblogging has given rise to microcelebrities allowing having about 3,000 or 30,000 people reading the latest post.

Announcing offers, events, making promotions and sharing important news through Twitter can result in raising the awareness about the company and services, and followed increase in sales. It is noted that “official brand” twitter accounts are often highly followed. (Zarrella 2010, 31-35; Wilson 2010, 32-33; Kabani 2013, 101.) There are following metrics by Social Baker (statistics pool) that can be reported in Twitter: followers, following, change in followers and following (in Sharp 2013, 417).

According to research done by Zarrella (2010, 35-51) and some twitter basics described by Kabani (2013, 123-124), below are some important guidelines about managing company's twitter accounts by using twitter features and tools in the very beginning of customer journey:

1. Avoid using underscores and numbers in the name (as those have fewer followers on average);
2. Company's logo and colours should be used upon customization a background and avatar for a company account to be recognizable;
3. Accounts labelled "official", "founder", "expert" and "author" tend to have more followers than the rest;
4. "Bio" section:
  - marketers and entrepreneurs tend to have more followers;
  - avoid using emoticons in "bio" section;
5. Twitter search can be used to find people talking about your company, industry, interests; these accounts can be followed; Monitor who has mentioned your company's name (@username) in order to follow the messages and conversations;
6. Use Twitter to post / tweet about any new content, offers, campaigns, and news, as well as support any on-going communications by answering the questions from other users; add value to the tweets (helpful valuable details);
7. Be on the lookout for the valuable content to share with the followers;
8. Retweets allow messages to spread through Twitter, reaching more people, thus raising awareness (can sometimes politely ask for certain retweets);
9. Directly asking people to help you get more followers to reach a certain number should rather be avoided (instead, try "I would love to meet more people interested in CrossFit / hot yoga. Can you recommend any?");
10. For tweets to appear in the relevant topic search for raising awareness, use hashtags (words combined with the hash symbol #);
11. Certain Twitter applications make it easier to manage the account, lots of followers, to update tweets from the phone; some do even offer extensive analytics regarding clicks and mentions of your brand (TweetDeck, Tweetie, Twhirl, HootSuite social media tool).

According to the statistics on Twitter usage in Finland by the Statistics Portal (Statista 2019a), in 2018, 63 percent of respondents in Finland stated that they do not use the Twitter service. The remaining 37 percent used Twitter with varying frequency. Only 5 percent of respondents used service several times a day, another 5 percent – once or

twice a day, while 13 percent used Twitter less than once a week. Among Finnish respondents Twitter has mainly been used for news and entertainment purposes. Thus, Twitter seems to be not that popular at the moment in Finland. Therefore, Twitter does not seem to be the first relevant choice for personal training service providers operating in Finland as a platform for social media marketing in the pre-service stage of customer journey, and, thus, not of major interest for further analyses in terms of this study. Nevertheless, it still can be used for integrated marketing communications, and personal engage with the personal training industry trends and news.

### **3.3 Social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn)**

A social network is a site where people connect, whether they know each other offline or online-only. Social networks present a numerous opportunities for companies to interact and communicate with customers in the very beginning of customer journey. Each social network presents its own features, possibilities and challenges. ( Zarrella 2010, 53.) Further on, this thesis concentrates on Facebook and LinkedIn as two biggest and most relevant social networks for the study focus.

Social networks cells are user pages, known as profiles. There can be personal profiles for people, while page or group would be a better option for the company information. The most important action of a social network is the act of two people connecting. Facebook uses “friending” for individual people, and “fanning” when someone connects with a brand. LinkedIn calls all those actions “connecting”. For communication purposes, social networks use both private and public messaging. (Zarrella 2010, 58-59.)

For companies it is quite important to avoid spamming the public message sections, in order to not overload subscribers with the information as it might result in a loss of followers and negative attitude towards the brand. Therefore, option to leave comments on the posted content and stories should be utilized by companies in order to encourage content creating by the followers, as that would raise awareness and evoke the interest towards the brand among the people during the pre-service stage of customer journey.

Besides message exchange and posting content and news, social networks also allow creating groups, sharing photos or videos, and creating events. (Zarrella 2010, 58-59.)

### 3.3.1 Facebook

Facebook is considered to be the dominant social media platform and social networking site. In August 2018 Facebook had over 2.23 billion monthly active users (Kallas 2 September 2019). Facebook is constantly evolving. It has a number of features useful for the companies in terms of their social media marketing in the beginning of customer journey, that allows developing communities, humanize brands, increase online visibility for the brand, engage with potential and existing customers, provide information and own expertise, and giving many other benefits (Zarrella 2010, 67; Levy 2010, XIII; Kabani 2013, 63).

Nowadays Facebook has a much larger audience than traditional media. It is seen as a perfect place to be visible at and try a new marketing approach. Facebook can be an extension of the brand, if used properly. It is a highly competitive and fast-moving channel. Each post needs to be distinguished in order to outstand in newsfeed. It is not advisable to simply copy and paste from the company's webpage or email campaign. Posts should be specific, short and to the point.

Facebook offers a wide range of different tools and features to reach the audience in the very beginning of customer journey. Before that, one should think carefully about the target audience and specifically its segment on Facebook. (Zarrella & Zarrella 2011, 3-7.)

Social Baker statistics pool provides following metrics that can be reported in Facebook: number of fans, demography by country, population penetration, people talking about metric, engagement rate, average response rate, change in fans (growth/decline) (in Sharp 2013, 417).

There is an important first choice for the company when it comes to creating own Profile, Page or Group in Facebook. Each option provides specific features that can be useful and supportive for the business, if applied during customer journey and, in particular, during its pre-service stage. The descriptive lists of all features and tools of particular interest to this study are presented below. The data is based on personal observations and literature review of Zarrella & Zarrella (2011, 9-76) and Kabani (2013, 64-80),

#### 1. Facebook Profile

It is a way individual users represent themselves on the Facebook. In terms of companies, it might not always be the best option, as a company is not typically presented by one person. Besides, company cannot have hobbies, interests and other

features relatable to the individual, thus, losing the big share of information that can be shared with other users.

There are three main Facebook Profile Tabs:

- Wall (for interactions such as posting public messages, or commenting on the posts);
- Info (all of the personal information – likes, interests, hometown, contact information, etc. with no interaction);
- Photos (every uploaded or tagged on photo).

It might not be the best option for a company; nevertheless, one needs to create a Facebook Profile first before managing anything else on Facebook.

## 2. Facebook Page

According to Zarrella & Zarrella (2011, 35), Facebook Page is a key to most social media marketing, and most likely to be the central point for the company's efforts, interactions and promotions in the very beginning of customer journey. According to Levy (2010, 44), Facebook describes Pages as "a voice to any public figure or organization to join the conversation with Facebook users...a public profile lets users connect to what they care about." Facebook Terms of Service states that brand or entity should have a Facebook Page to represent the business even as individuals (Facebook 2019). Pages offer different features and information slots specific to companies, such as business hours and location, leaving out more personal details.

Facebook Page needs to have lots of content in order to attract and support followers on their customer journey, thus, company needs to develop a content activity to keep the page updated, informative and maintained. Maintaining the Page is time and effort consuming. As one option, it is possible to fill out the Page completely in the very beginning and make it full, interesting and engaging early on, in order to maintain it later on in a more relaxed mode (Zarrella & Zarrella 2011, 35).

Below is the starting look of the newly created Facebook Page (Figure 8). To start with, one needs to add Page name, business category (e.g., options for the personal trainer can be *fitness trainer*, *sports and fitness instructions*, *gym / physical fitness center*), and physical address (which, if needed, can be invisible). The choice of category

matters to the setup and display of the information, as different categories ask different types of questions and display different amount of information.

The Page name cannot be changed once the Page is created. Further on, there is a range of settings and features to work with in order to set up the Page to the liking. It is possible to not publish the Page right away until it is ready upon changing it in the settings. (Zarrella & Zarrella, 2011, 44-45; Facebook 2019.)

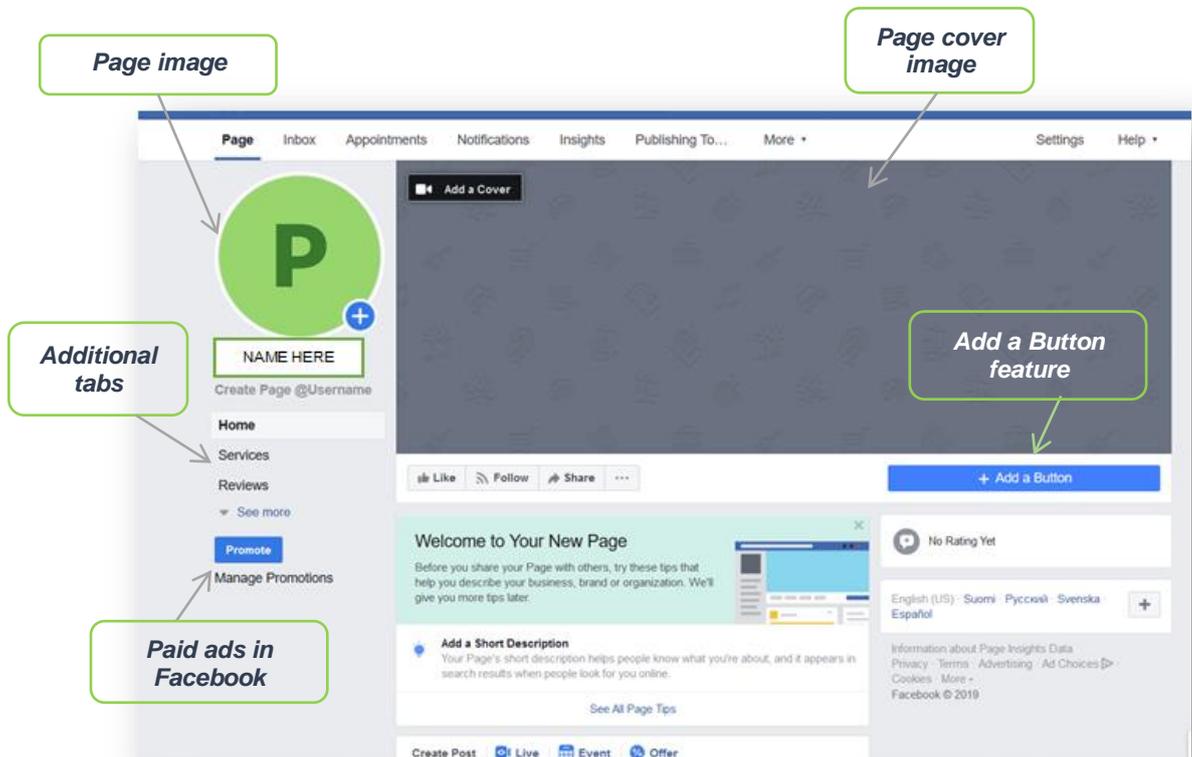


Figure 8. Creating the Facebook Page (Facebook 2019)

There is a number of additional tabs available for the Page to work with and display for the followers later on: Services, Reviews, Shop, Offers, Photos, Videos, Posts, Events, About, Community, Info and Ads, Manage Promotions (manage paid advertisement in Facebook). The customization and editing are quite clear and easy. All these tools and features help keeping the Page attractive and trustworthy to the new potential members.

Here are some of the most interesting features and tools for social media marketing in the very beginning of customer journey:

- Services
  - showcasing the list of the services (the service name, time duration, price and short description);
  - can be edited at any time, certain services can be shown or hidden at any period of time (e.g., comfortable for seasonal services);
- Reviews
  - includes rating and recommendations from the followers (former or current customers);
  - followers can “recommend” or “not recommend” the Page;
  - public recommendations appear on the Page for everyone to see;
  - for Page managing it is possible to report unfair recommendations (selecting “Give feedback” in the post menu);
  - very useful tool, can help in building trustworthiness, good image and better visibility (in a case of positive reviews and recommendations);
  - do not leave bad ratings unnoticed, take action, apologize if needed;
- Offers
  - special offers or deals for the customers in a separate section;
  - creating offer: can add photo, offer type (discount percentage, discount amount, spend X get Y off, buy X get Y discount), discount amount, discounted products/service with a description, expire date, can add promo code, and primary action regarding the offer (shop now, send message, get directions, call now, save) (Figure 9);
  - people who save the offer, will get notifications before the offer expires;
- Photos / Videos
  - can create specific photo albums, or add and manage all photos and videos in one place;
  - able to monitor video insights in a specific periods of time (today, yesterday, last 7/14/28 days, this month, this quarter, or other):
    - minutes viewed (total number of minutes the videos were played including time spent replaying videos);
    - 3-seconds video views (number of times the videos were played for over 3 seconds);

- Posts
  - allow adding and editing posts;
  - able to add attachments to the post: photo/video, “get messages” or “get bookings” buttons (followers will see “Send message” or “Book now” options accordingly under the post);
  - can as well create Live, Event or Offer posts;
- About (important to fill in as much as possible to show expertise, availability, and enable contacting by prospective customers)
  - general info (category, name and username), that can be edited at any time
    - choose the right category for the Page;
    - choose a good descriptive Page name and username, easy to remember and closely tied to the brand;
  - business info (pricing category, start date and business type);
  - contact info (phone number, e-mail, webpage, messenger, other social media accounts – Instagram, Twitter, YouTube etc.);
  - more info (short description of the company)
    - include keywords to tell what Page / company / brand is about to both users and search engines;
  - public transit (explaining how to get to the place), etc. (Facebook 2019.)

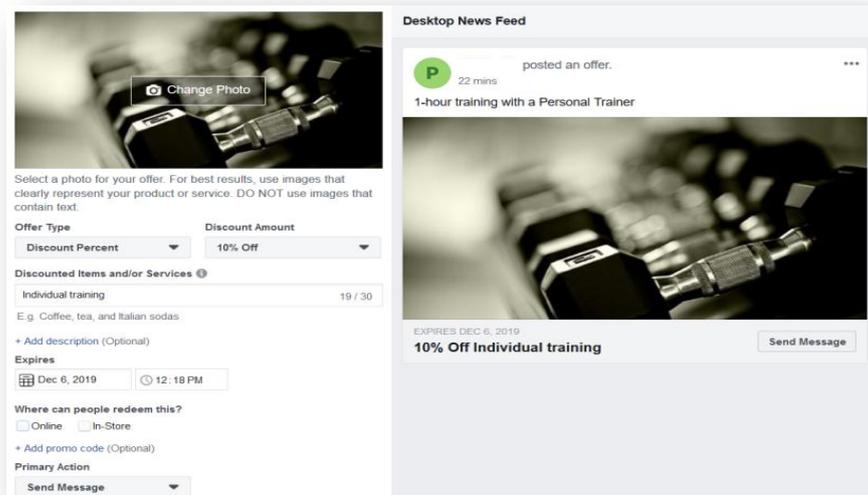


Figure 9. Creating the Offer on the Facebook Page (Facebook 2019)

There is no mass messaging with the Page. Page admin can only send Page updates to a specific hidden inbox for Page messages (Zarrella & Zarrella 2011, 71). There are different ways for members to interact on the Page (Figure 10).

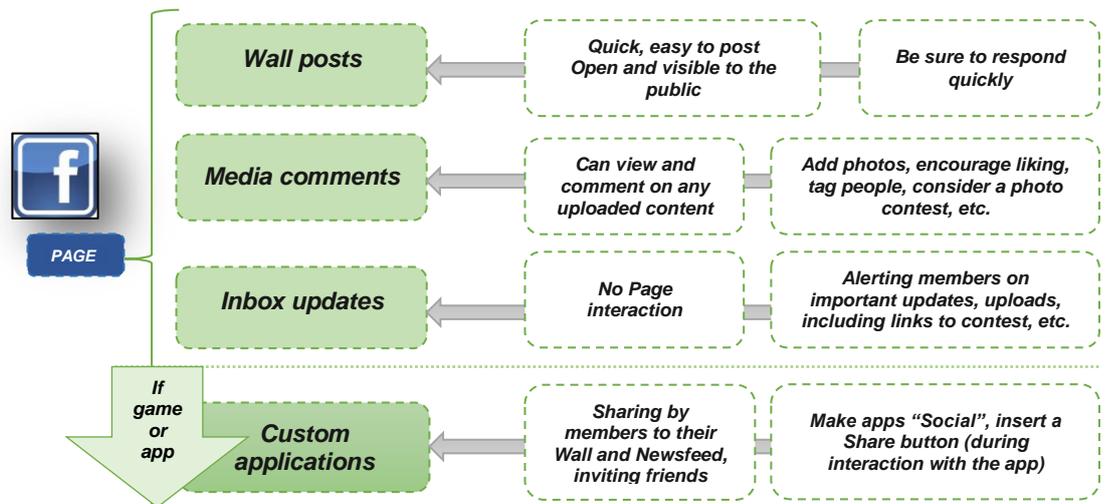


Figure 10. Page interactions (Zarrella & Zarrella 2011, 63)

There is another useful feature that can be utilized for customization of the Page to support social media marketing in the beginning of customer journey. It is called “Add a button”. It is important to think through what one wants to make visible as there can be only one button added. There are several options for added buttons to choose from:

- Book with you – allows immediate booking the service (“Book now”);
- Contact you (allows sending the message / call / send email / sign up);
- Learn more about the business (watch video / learn more);
- Shop with you (shop now / see offers);
- Download your app or play your game.

In relation to the personal trainer’s Page, it can be useful to add “Book now” or “Contact me” buttons for interaction available during the pre-service. Contacting the personal trainer can be organized with the private messaging or Wall posting, as well as direct contact via phone or e-mail mentioned in About tab.

“Book now” option seems rather important in terms of service offering. Booking settings have two options available to choose from: it can either transfer followers to the webpage or make appointments straight via Facebook that allows turning own followers into the customers. If the booking is organized via Facebook, it is important to keep in mind the synchronization of bookings. If the booking is available somewhere else, it is essential to avoid the double booking of the time.

“Appointments” in Facebook lets one share own schedule and availability for customers to book with, as well as customize all services that are available for booking. Figure 11 below shows three steps of customizing the Appointments feature.

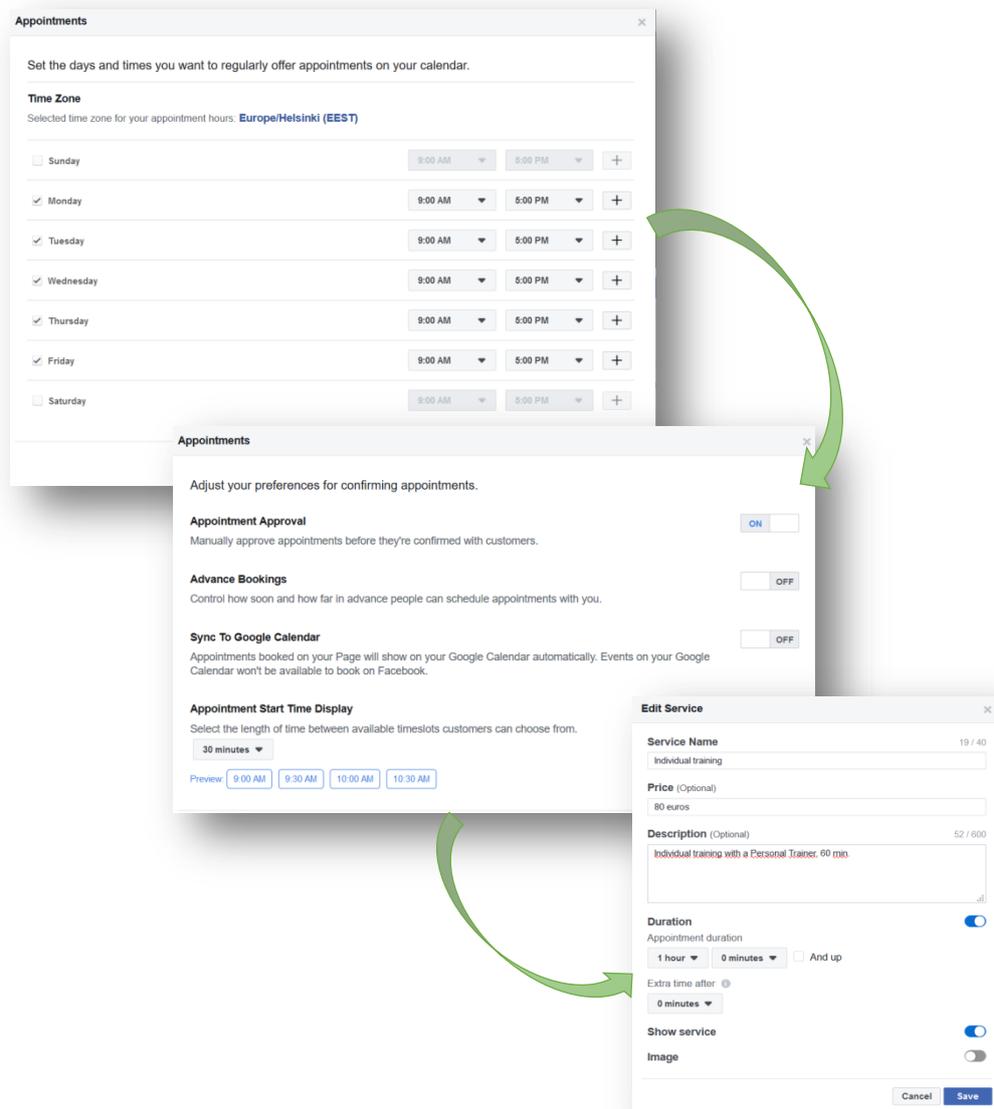


Figure 11. Three steps for customizing the Appointment feature on Facebook Page (Facebook 2019)

- *Facebook Group*

Facebook Groups are often customized by fans of a brand rather than brand representatives. Groups are easier and faster to set up, therefore they also offer less functionality and little or no customization at all. Groups are not good for long-term messaging, and rather used for discussions and temporary topics. It is a good choice for taking a quick action around certain issues that are time-sensitive, and it suits better for managing events. Groups allow followers to feel belonging, participating in discussions around particular topics of interest. Nevertheless, Groups do not work so well when there is a need to market a product or service, or build brand awareness (Kabani 2013, 73.)

All groups require Group name, Description and Group Type. Including the full description and contact information allows people to learn more about the Group from the beginning and have a chance to contact the admin (in our case, the personal trainer). One can add location for easier navigation in the search, and tags to tell potential members what this group is about (up to 5 keywords). These are the most important features to be available to the prospective customers in the beginning of customer journey, when searching for the information.

If a brand has a Facebook Page also, it is possible to link Group to that page in the settings. That would allow combining all the most useful features of both Page and Group for the company or brand. There is a number of privacy settings for accepting to the Group, and permissions for posting in the Group and Stories. Besides, it is also possible to add setting for the preliminary approval of all the posts.

Figure 12 shows the overall look of Settings page for a newly created Group. It is highly advisable to keep the Group open, so that anyone could join or invite their friends in. For any small business, and Personal Training in particular, it is important to spread the word out. The more people know about the group, the more potential customers a Personal Trainer can have access to.

Direct mass messaging to inboxes is allowed as long as the membership is fewer than 5,000 people. Group content is also included in the Facebook Newsfeed that is believed to be good in driving engagement, retaining interest and the keeping prospective customers up-to-date. All these also allow better managing Events via the Group, as it is best suited for posting about real and virtual events. (Zarrella & Zarrella, 2011, 67-73; Facebook 2019.)

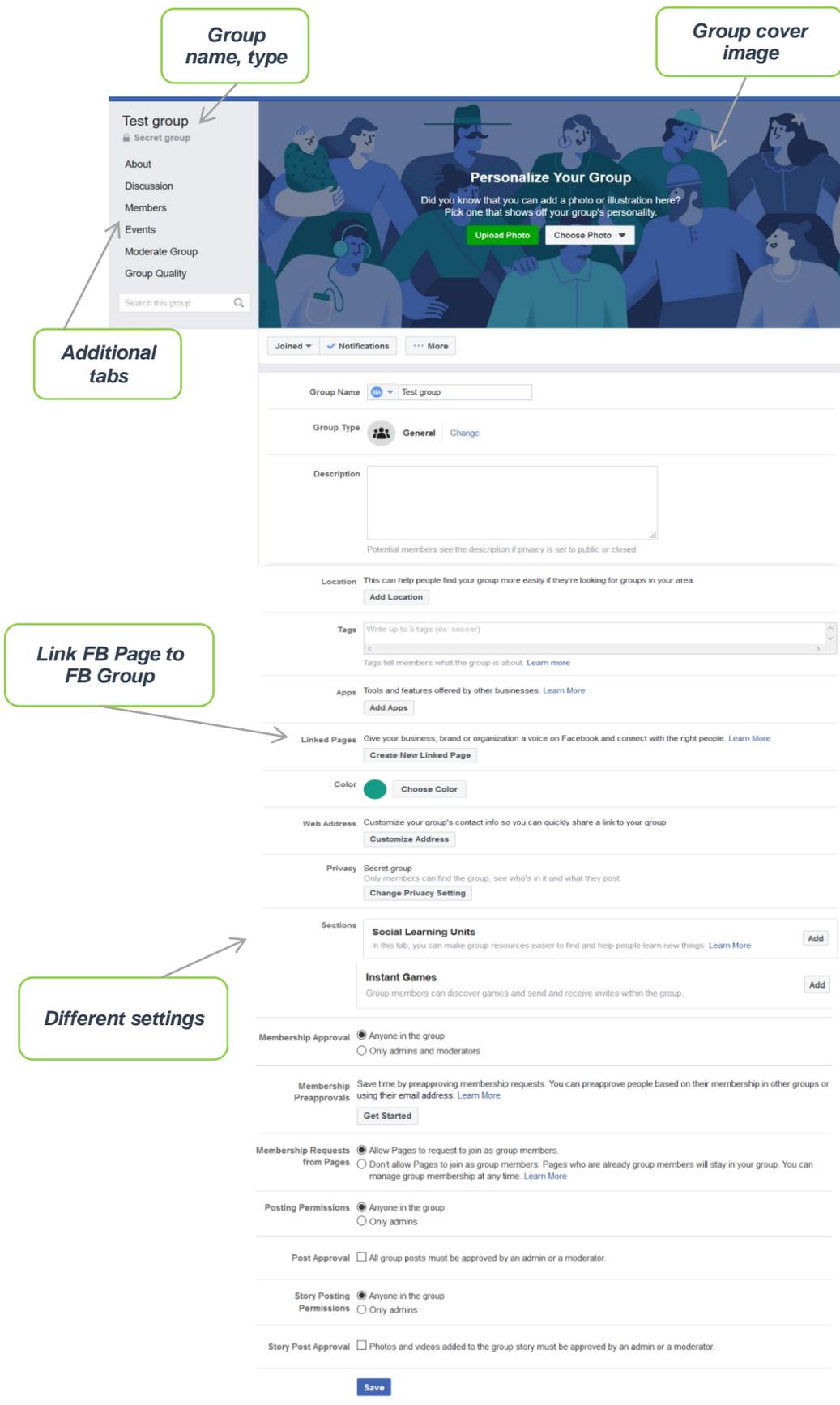


Figure 12. Creating a Facebook Group (Facebook 2019)

However, Groups are not ranked highly in a search, because there are too many of them in Facebook. They are easy to make, and that also makes them less trustworthy. According to Zarrella & Zarrella (2011, 75), making a Group is a better option when:

- *Time is a factor:* for time-sensitive initiatives that need to reach (to promote something to) a lot of people at once quickly;
- *You need control:* can set up restrictions for membership (who is allowed in and who is not), require permission to join the Group;
- *It is personal:* providing the feeling of more personal interaction and involvement.

As mentioned before, functionality in the Group is limited. Groups are rather similar to Profiles in Facebook, so it is advised to post more links, videos and photos to make the brand visual, and Group - alive with frequent posts. Nevertheless, members can also make posts, so it adds some work for the admin to monitor those posts and react to them in time (answering in behalf of the brand, or remove unrelated and offensive posts to exclude spam content). On the other hand, encouraging the members for asking the relative questions, sharing experiences, interesting articles and sites can become a significant contribution into the Group content creation.

To summarize all that was said above about Facebook Profile, Page and Group there is a table below (Table 1). It represents key points for each type of Facebook account, thus, allowing once again to make comparison and decide which one is better suited for the company or brand or, in particular for this study, for an individual personal training service provider.

Table 1. Key points of Facebook Profile, Page and Group (Zarrella & Zarrella 2011, 9-76; Levy 2010, 61-64; Facebook 2019; Kabani 2013, 64-80)

FACEBOOK		
PROFILE	PAGE	GROUP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ individual user's representation;</li> <li>▪ is not for business;</li> <li>▪ allows to add friends, make connections;</li> <li>▪ provides more personal information;</li> <li>▪ the first step to creating Facebook Page or Group;</li> <li>▪ privacy settings can allow adjustments and tailoring the appearance of the profile to individuals, or groups of people;</li> <li>▪ means of communications: wall-to-wall postings, private messages;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ to help create relationships with customers;</li> <li>▪ better for long-term messaging;</li> <li>▪ corporation-to-consumer interaction;</li> <li>▪ lots of features useful for business;</li> <li>▪ can be very informative if customized so;</li> <li>▪ more trustworthy;</li> <li>▪ are open to everyone;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ centered on discussions and more temporary topics;</li> <li>▪ to mass message the audience (cannot do that on Page);</li> <li>▪ quick and easy to set up;</li> <li>▪ offers less functionality;</li> <li>▪ little to no engagement or customization;</li> <li>▪ better suited for managing Events;</li> <li>▪ can have membership restrictions;</li> <li>▪ not highly ranked in Facebook search;</li> </ul>

### 3.3.2 Facebook for marketing personal training services

Regarding individual personal training business, the choice is not unequivocal. The major difference between Profile and Page is in compared verbs that Facebook uses to interact on the site: *friend* (for Profile) versus *like* (for Page) (Zarrella & Zarrella 2011, 39). While, it is still recommended to create a Facebook Page, the Facebook Profile can also be an option as personal trainer is an individual entrepreneur in majority of the cases, and can personally represent own services or, in a terms, him- or herself.

Creating the Facebook Profile would allow to share some more personal information opening up own personality through hobbies and likes. The trust is an important issue, and potential customers would more likely to be interested in the personal side of the

trainer, his education, work experience, expertise, and personal interests. When people decide to train with the personal trainer, they quite often choose the person, and Profile in that case allows trainers to be closer and rather humanlike to potential customers.

Another important feature to remember and utilize here is to share thorough contact information including email address, phone numbers, as well as links to all the additional personal websites such as a blog, Twitter account, Instagram account, YouTube channel, or LinkedIn profile. No matter the decision on whether to create Profile or Page, creating the Facebook Profile is always the first step to do before managing the Facebook Page or Group for the company or brand.

A solid choice for the personal trainer would be to create the Facebook Page. Any type of marketing on Facebook is good with a Page. According to Zarrella & Zarrella (2011, 41), brands (products, websites), services (services, organizations, clubs), people (celebrities) and stuff (places, music, games, movies, etc.) should all have Facebook Page and not a Profile. As mentioned before, maintaining and making the Facebook Page interesting and engaging is time consuming. Facebook Page provides a lot of features and tools that can be supportive when it comes to social media marketing in the very beginning of customer journey. Further in this study, more particular guidelines on Facebook features, tools and possible content will be defined in correlation to the pre-service stage.

### **3.3.3 LinkedIn**

LinkedIn is a social networking site for business professionals. It went live on May 5, 2003 with its five founders and 350 of their friends, having 4,500 members by the month end (Wilson 2010, 93). The core function of LinkedIn is professional networking. It is the most restrictive social network in terms of integration and customization. (Zarrella 2010, 71.) In August 2018, LinkedIn was on the thirteenth place among 15 top most popular social media platforms having 106 million monthly active users (Kallas 2 September 2019).

There are several features that could become useful supportive tools for personal training service providers or any other service providing company in the very beginning of customer journey.

LinkedIn has a specific feature called "Recommendations". With this feature, users can write short reviews and feedback on others, and these recommendations can function as a form of reference (Zarrella 2010, 73; Kabani 2013, 130). This can be utilized by personal trainers, as business profile with the references from former or current customers can help to attract more new potential ones, and make social media profile look more trustworthy

and professional. This is also the kind of information that prospective customers are potentially interested about when considering the purchase while looking for information and options upon need awareness raised.

Another feature that can be used by social media marketing purposes is “Answers”. Non-paying LinkedIn users can post up to 10 questions per month that will be answered by the community. Answering specific questions can help to build name recognition in the relative field. It is possible to subscribe to the RSS feed for concrete categories of questions and be alerted when a new question is added. If the answers are being “flagged” as the best answer, the profile is labelled as that of an expert. Most important is to remember to give detailed and informative answers, and not to use this feature to promote own services or products. (Zarrella 2010, 73; Wilson 2010, 62-63; Kabani 2013, 134-135.)

Below are some additional guidelines on managing the LinkedIn profile:

- Use keywords reflecting the business background, and the business industry to make it easier to find it, including, as well, different variants and the synonyms of the words;
- The visuals are important in terms of making the LinkedIn profile visually appealing and interesting;
- Adding connections in LinkedIn can help to increase the company or brand visibility;
- Making the LinkedIn profile public allows search engines to index it (upon creating a public profile, choose “Full View”, and customize public profile’s URL to include the actual name). (Kabani 2013, 139-142.)

Although, it is restrictive and has relatively less active users, LinkedIn is an important social media platform for businesses with its own specific features that can be well utilized in terms of creating and evolving the network and B2B as well as B2C connections.

LinkedIn provides features that support the company in showing the expertise that is very important for marketing in the beginning of customer journey.

### **3.4 Media-sharing sites (YouTube, Instagram)**

Media-sharing sites allow users to create and upload multimedia content (videos, photos, Power Point slideshows, graphs, etc.), also called user-generated content (UGC) (Zarrella 2010, 77). It has a huge potential for social media marketing during the pre-service stage

of customer journey, as it allows generating informative content, reaching wide range of auditory and initiating communication with the prospective customers.

According to Zarrella (2010, 81-83), there are certain features that can be associated with different social media-sharing sites and used for benefiting the marketing communications during the customer journey.

- *Tags*: a word assigned to a piece of content that helps describing it and is used to search content (possible to use several tags for a certain piece of content from specific to more categorical words);
- *Digital Asset Optimization (DAO)*: the process of getting own already existing digital content online and into the social media for displaying in search engine results (new engaging and unique for viewers content);
- *Organic content*: there are two ways of posting content to media-sharing sites. The first is when the company creates and publishes content; the second is when people outside the company create media about the content. Both are extremely important, and the latter is centric for social marketing. Encouraging people to remix the posted media and creating their own content about the company is an effective way to use social media-sharing sites for marketing communications and raising the awareness for the company, which can result in acquiring more new customers for the product or service.

### **3.4.1 YouTube**

YouTube exists since early 2005 (Wilson 2010, 98). It is currently the largest video-sharing site on the Web and the third most visited site on the Internet (Zarrella 2010, 83). In August 2018, YouTube was on the second place right after the Facebook among 15 top most popular social media platforms having over 1.9 billion monthly active users (Kallas 2 September 2019).

There are different ways to customize YouTube channels. Below there are certain guidelines on YouTube customization that companies and brands can take into consideration when marketing and reaching out the prospective customers in the beginning of customer journey:

- Company should choose own business name, while personal account could go with real name; if we talk about personal trainers, both options are relevant (username should be short, pronounceable and unique);
- Using company brand colours for background, ensure the page is visually readable;
- Being informative in description, using keywords and tags, include contact information;

- Prefer short engaging videos;
- Keeping contribution as non-commercial as possible (users are pitch-sensitive); can still make a little remark on personal name in the video for recognition at the end or in the beginning, for example;
- Including calls to action (CTAs);
- Tying the videos up with local tags and keywords for better visibility in the search;
- Allowing and encouraging embedding the video for spreading the word for the company (copying a line of HTML code from YouTube and then re-past it);
- Presenting the video at best by checking the thumbnail (capture that users see at first) image for each video;
- Promoting your video: integrate your content with all social media platforms that have the company's or personal profile (Zarella 2010, 84-85.);
- Monitoring the community features for measuring the standout topics and video content, as well as engaging the audience: likes, shares, favourites, subscribers, comments (Diamond 2013, 321-322).

YouTube allows uploading videos and sharing the video links to all other social media channels while dealing with no hosting fees. All the information provided in YouTube is properly sent to Google Search, thus, it is essential to provide the right keywords (provided of what the prospective customers might be looking for). (Diamond 2013, 321-322.)

There are following metrics by Social Baker (statistics pool) that can be reported in YouTube: channel views, subscribers, uploaded video views, change in channel views, change in video views (Sharp 2013, 417).

Personal trainers can utilize certain YouTube features as much for marketing during the customer journey's pre-service stage. One of the most important tools is CTAs that can be used in personal videos by calling for subscribing to the personal trainer's YouTube channel for more videos, or to other social media profiles of this personal trainer. That helps to better accompany the prospective customers through their information search, raising need awareness or intent of purchasing the service during their customer journey.

Among the other useful YouTube features is possibility of contacting the personal trainer or encouraging the prospective customers to leave the comment under the video. This could provide some useful feedback for personal training service providers.

The video content can be various depending on the area of expertise. For instance, videos can be about current trends in the industry, focus on peak seasons for trainings (September, January, March), holidays, or be prior to important local sport events (e.g., Helsinki Run, Tough Viking, Midnight Run, marathons). The good choice is instructional videos that showcase both the equipment and knowledge (training tips, short records of training, nutrition advices, etc.). All these videos can include the name of the personal trainer in the top or bottom corner.

It is essential for personal trainers to keep video content less commercial about the services, and rather use it for demonstrating own expertise and knowledge. It is crucial to be informative about the services, possibilities and options to correlate with the information that the prospective customers are most likely interested about in the very beginning of their customer journey.

### **3.4.2 Instagram**

Instagram is a popular photo and video sharing site. The platform also allows users to post video-based stories and real-life videos. (Statista 2019g.) Beyond all, Instagram allows adding captions, edit filters, explore, get feedback and communicate, which all makes it a great modern marketing communications tool. In August 2018, Instagram was on the third place right after Facebook and YouTube among 15 top most popular social media platforms having over one billion monthly active users (Kallas 2 September 2019).

Instagram allows engaging with the potential customers, and is a promising platform to have presence on in terms of marketing through the beginning of customer journey and stimulating the buying process by sharing good content. It is highly important to study the follower's behaviour and feedback to determine and apply certain changes to the marketing communications. (Asad 2 August 2018.)

Based on literature review (Asad 2 August 2018; Diamond 2013, 245-249) and personal Instagram observations, below are preliminary constructed guidelines on Instagram features and tools that could support the marketing process during the customer journey's pre-service stage.

- Designing images to capture attention (using filters or popular #nofilter, considering the squared boarders look);
- Telling a story with the caption: align the image with the product or service and the audience by adding a short attractive piece of text;

- Using tags to relate the content to certain keywords that could appear in the search results: the company can create own hashtags (#) or use the most popular ones;
- Using location tags with the photos allows their identification with a particular area and the search using that location (important for local business);
- Using push notifications (knowing who is looking at or commenting on the photos to be aware of all the engagements followers have with the pictures);
- Encourage users to create content for the company by providing with a special, unique tag to add upon uploading images to Instagram;
- Using CTA (short and triggering to encourage the potential customers for further actions);
- Following a similar admirable brands to benchmark their use of Instagram;
- Keeping posts informative by adding information or story under the picture / video to initiate the further conversation with the followers;
- Use Stories (a secondary feed of temporary content that is available for 24 hours or a day):
  - Ask for opinions on different questions (asking a question with an option to choose from two answers) to engage involvement and get some feedback on related issues;
  - New question-asking feature in Stories allows the followers filling a text box under the question to their heart's content which provides another option for gathering the feedback.

According to the survey on Instagram usage in Finland in 2018, 15 percent of users stated that they used Instagram several times a day, while 48 percent of the respondents did not use Instagram at all. Nevertheless, Instagram is among four most used social media platforms by Finnish people in 2018. (Statista 2019g.)

Instagram provides a number of features and tools that can support companies in social media marketing in the very beginning of customer journey. Various features described above are concentrated on catching the attention of the prospective customers, providing the platform for them to ask for expertise, reviews, and search for valuable information on the service provider's profile under relative control. Managing the Instagram account with proper features and tools allows accompanying the prospective customers through their customer journey step by step leading them towards the purchasing decision.

There is a number of additional useful tools that ease the content creating process for Instagram (such as, e.g., ShortStack), but it is out of study focus for now, and there is currently no need to go into the technical details.

As with YouTube, personal trainers can utilize calls to action in Instagram images to raise the attention for own services, trigger awareness of service need, and provide the prospective customers with the possibilities to get more information or to buy the service.

### **3.5 Social media integration**

Social media is not a stand-alone set of tools that must be dealt separately, it has to be integrated. It is important to remember, that if a company use both traditional media tools and digital ones, as, e.g. social media platforms, these channels can and should be integrated in order to have a solid marketing communications strategy. It is widely believed that a combination of media types can be more successful than those that only use a single media. Different media use different features that may complement each other. (Safko 2010, 699; Sharp 2013, 417.)

Although, now, in terms of this thesis, the focus is on social media marketing, it is highly recommended to not leave the traditional marketing tools out. The company needs to identify the best media with proper timing and for each demographic.

Thus, the message can always be shared in both traditional and social media channels, but after the essential modifications. What would be different is the language as we are addressing the different audience. For example, the traditional newspaper article or advertisement would and should be different from the one on Twitter feed. Nevertheless, the tweet can be shared on Facebook. (Safko 2010, 699.)

If company wants people to follow it on Social Media platforms, it needs to tell them how (Safko 2010, 701). Below there are some examples of relative integrations that company needs to think about (Figure 13). Those are well suitable for Personal Trainers as well.

- Place all of the major social media platform links to the stationery, print advertisement (brochures, leaflets), business cards (can use small avatar-type icons that represent those companies);
- When use e-mail, add all social media addresses into the signature (social media interactive e-mail signature);
- YouTube videos and Instagram posts can have links to web page, e-mail and other social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn);

- Create links to the social media profiles on company's web page for giving the webpage visitors multiple ways to stay in touch (Safko 2010, 701; Kerpen, Rosenbluth & Riedinger 2015, 173; Kabani 2013, 23.);
- If there is some promotion or campaign going on, make sure the information about it is shared on both traditional and digital marketing channels.

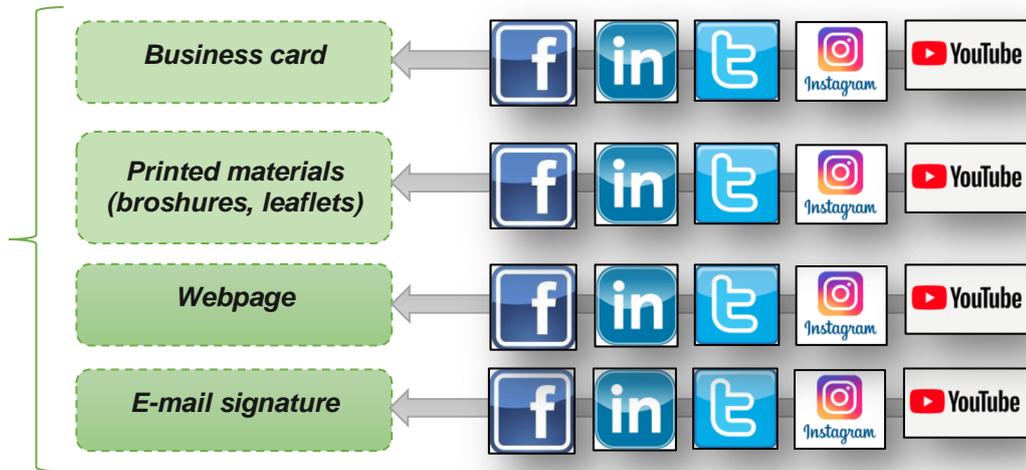


Figure 13. Traditional and digital media integration (logo images from Google)

The essential idea behind using different social media platforms is that web applications should be able to share data and integrate with each other. Besides that, the users of one kind of social media are likely to be the users of other types as well, thus, it is only sensible to invite those who interact with one of your platforms to join your other ones as well. (Zarrella 2010, 199.)

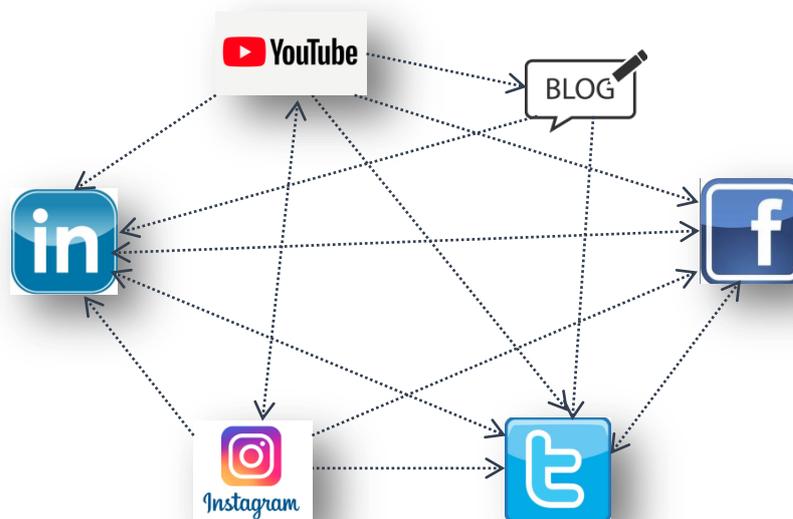


Figure 14. Chosen social media platforms integration (logo images from Google)

In order to save the time and effort on content creating and to have the maximum coverage for the content and news in the social media, it makes sense to integrate and connect the different platforms (Zarella 2010, 199). The examples of social media platforms marketing integration (Figure 14):

- YouTube videos can be embedded to Facebook page and blog, and have link on the Twitter or LinkedIn account;
- Twitter account can be added to LinkedIn account for sharing LinkedIn activity on Twitter, and sharing tweets on LinkedIn;
- Instagram posts can be shared in Facebook and Twitter;
- Facebook account can be connected to Twitter account to pull in the tweets;
- Blog posts can be automatically tweeted;
- LinkedIn can include recent posts from the blog;
- Facebook and LinkedIn accounts can be connected for sharing updates;
- Videos shared on YouTube can also be shared in Instagram.

Nevertheless, it is still important to maintain the certain diversity of the content on different social media platforms. While major information can be integrated among different platforms, it is highly recommended to include content that users cannot get anywhere else. Offering exclusive deals, campaigns specific for particular social media platforms, for example, for Facebook followers only, but mention about the campaign in Twitter or Instagram. That would help to keep excitement, interest of people and raise the amount of followers on every social media platform company choses to be visible on. (Zarella 2010, 69.)

### **3.6 Importance of social media marketing in the beginning of customer journey**

With evolving of digital communications, prospective customers are constantly receiving a lot of different information as they process through modern customer journey. Going through different steps, including need awareness rising, gathering knowledge and information, choosing among the alternatives based on personal liking, interest or preferences, followed by conviction towards the purchasing decision.

Creating informative and well-structured social media profile supports social media marketing for a service provider in the beginning of customer journey by creating the appealing platform for prospective customers on getting all the information valuable during the pre-service stage.

Social media platform profile needs to be visually appealing, informative, trustworthy, well-structured and easy-to-navigate. The prospective customers should be provided with all the features and tools that enable seeing and examining the offered services, learning about the service provider, getting the answers to all the questions of interest, supporting own impressions with the past experiences in a form of existing reviews and recommendations, and easily finding all the required information. All these are targeted on accompanying and easing their way towards the purchase decision during the pre-service stage in the beginning of customer journey.

Different social media features and tools should be applied to navigate (buttons, side tabs, visuals, CTAs, etc.) and enable two-way communication with the prospective customers. Demonstrating professionalism with supportive visual tools, providing the valuable information and preserving the friendly, however, based on expertise, atmosphere can become key issues for the successfulness of the social media business profile.

This chapter covered relative to the study features and tools for the chosen social media platforms. Further on, the theoretical knowledge received should be supported by the actual research with the chosen methodology in order to answer the main research question at the end. But before moving to the research process, there is some statistics on social media usage in Finland presented in next subchapter.

### **3.7 Social media usage in Finland**

According to the research by The Statistics Portal (Statista 2019b), in 2017 nearly 70 percent of the Finnish population aged 18 to 64 were engaged with social media platforms. Statista's Digital Market Outlook forecast stated that the number of social media users in the country was projected to be over 3.1 million users in year 2018, and only tend to increase annually thereafter. The annual increase in social media platform user numbers was forecasted to be between 30,000 and 70,000 users. Thus, in 2019, this amount was projected to be 3.17 million, over 3.2 million in 2020, and to reach 3.25 million in 2021. (Statista 2019c.)

According to a survey on digital media usage in Finland, daily social media usage grew by over 20 percent in 2018 (Statista 2019b). All that statistics once again support the importance for companies to be visible in social media in order to reach their audience, provide all the essential information, attract new potential customers and accompany them towards the purchasing decision.

The most popular social media platforms for Finns In 2018 were Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat. In all age groups, Facebook, Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp were the most frequently used platforms, with over third of individuals using the mentioned social media and messaging services several times a day. (Statista 2019b.) Out of the surveyed 15-74-year-old individuals, 53 percent used Facebook and Facebook Messenger daily. The second most used application daily in 2018 was Whatsapp at 49 percent, followed by YouTube at 30 percent and Instagram at 26 percent. (Statista 2019d.)

The figure below (Figure 15) presents the overall picture of main data on social media usage in Finland lately.

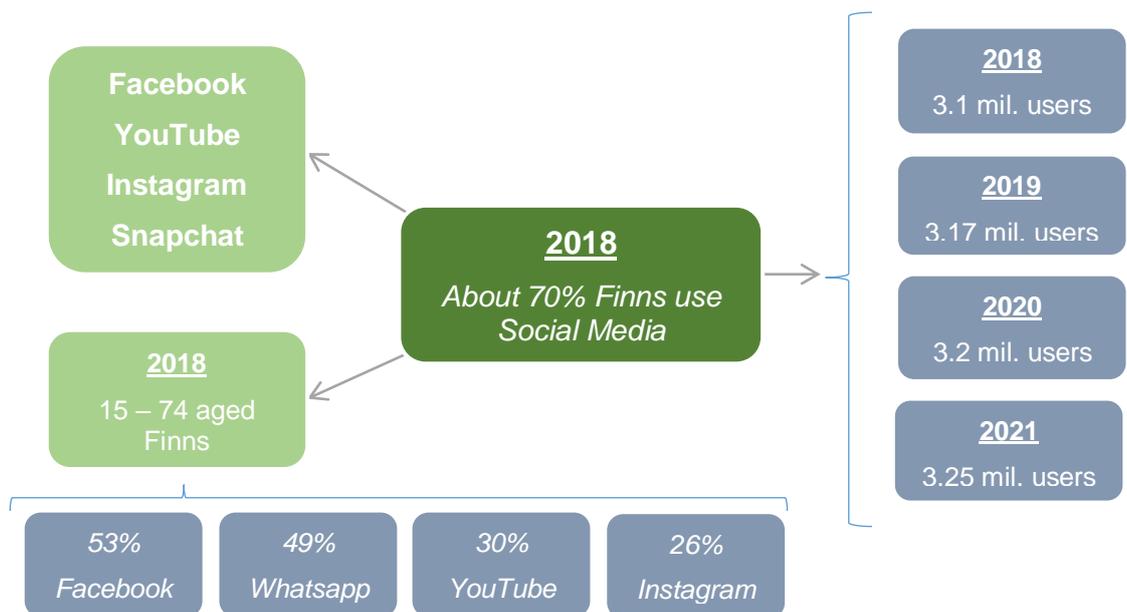


Figure 15. Statistics on social media usage in Finland by Statista 2019

Concentrating marketing communication planning on the most popular social media platforms on the targeted market would help to make marketing more efficient and should

result in the better result. Thus, small business such as personal training service providers marketing in Finland could invest efforts and time in only couple of chosen most important platforms like Facebook, YouTube and Instagram. Nevertheless, having a professional LinkedIn profile is important as well for possible B2B connections and networks.

Below is the diagram presenting the comparison of shares of population, who followed social media at least or nearly daily to the ones following it at least weekly in Finland in 2018 (Figure 16). According to Statista (2019e; 2019f), 57 percent of all respondents between age of 16 to 89 followed social media at least weekly in Finland in 2018, while 51 percent followed it at least or nearly daily. The percent of followers seem to go down by the age increase. Nevertheless, the numbers are still relatively high. Weekly time frame seems to be relatively good interval for content marketing and storytelling for companies, thus, wider audience would see it.

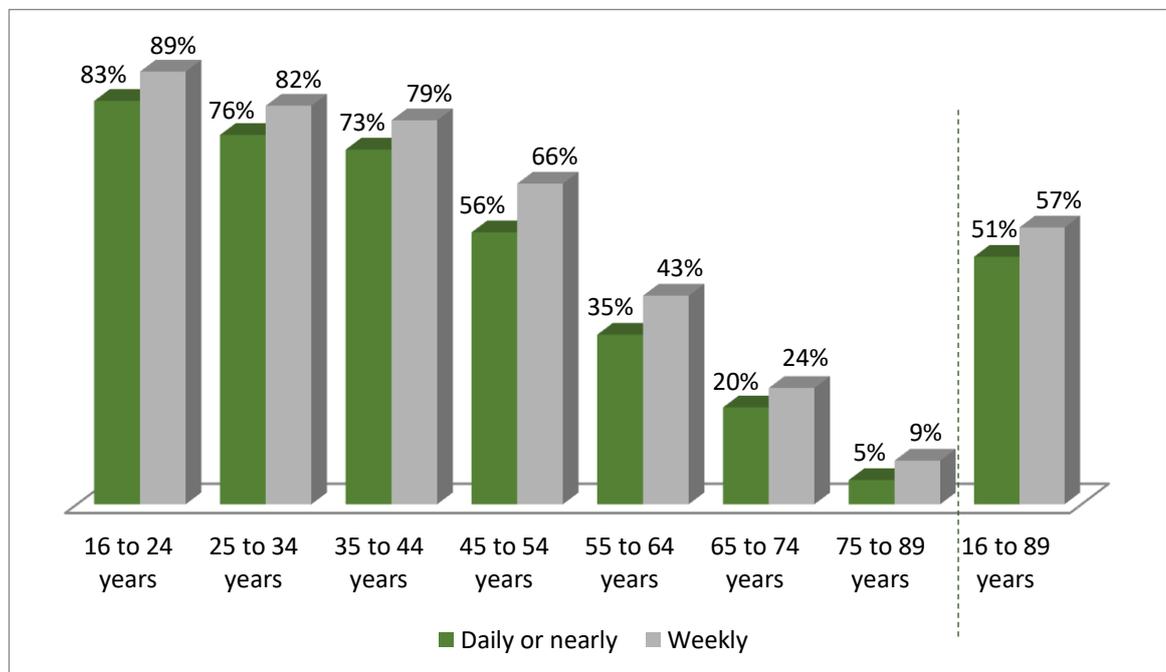


Figure 16. The comparison of shares of population following social media at least or nearly daily to weekly in Finland in 2018 (Statista 2019e; Statista 2019f)

After looking into several chosen social media platforms, various social media features and tools for marketing communications, and, most importantly, relevant statistics on social media usage for Finland, it is now possible to concentrate on the research part.

Further on in this study, it is important to analyze how these social media platforms are currently being used by personal training service providers in Finland for marketing

purposes, and how the prospective customers perceive the current social media marketing in health and sport related social media accounts and personal training service providers in particular.

Upon analyzing the research data, the study will be finalized with the construction of guidelines for personal training service providers on social media features and tools that could support their social media marketing and help to accompany prospective customers towards purchasing decision in the very beginning of their customer journey.

## 4 Conducting the research

In this chapter, I present the implementation of the research process. At first, the key principles of constructive research are reviewed. After that, I explain the data gathering methodology and present the analysis of the received data. In individual subchapters, each method used for the data gathering is presented in more details. In the final subchapter, the analysed research data in correlation to the pre-service stage of the customer journey is discussed.

### 4.1 Constructive research

The study was conducted as constructive research. Constructive research is a problem solving through the construction of models, diagrams, plans, organization charts, processes, practices, guidelines, etc. Constructions refer to entities producing solutions to apparent problems. The solution can then be implemented for demonstrating its usability. Thus, the constructive approach is a research procedure for producing constructions. (Kasanen, Lukka & Siitonen 1993, 244-245.)

Constructive research is question-driven and aims at producing novel solutions to both practical and theoretical problems. The constructive research question can be phenomenon or theory driven or the combination of two. Identifying and solving the real practical problems is the main objective of the constructive research. (Oyegoke 2011, 574; 576.) Nevertheless, not all problem solving is a constructive research. Figure 17 below illustrates the elements of the constructive research, an essential part of which is tying the problem and its solution with accumulated theoretical knowledge. The practical implementation and novelty of the solution are to be demonstrated as well. (Kasanen et al. 1993, 246.)

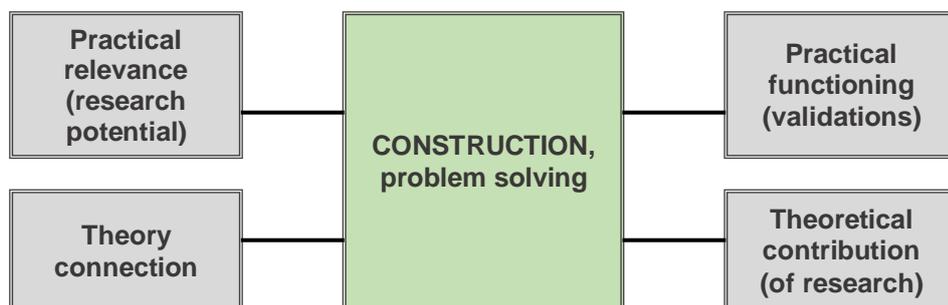


Figure 17. Elements of constructive research (adapted from Kasanen et al. 1993, 246)

Constructive research begins with identifying a practical problem supported by related literature review. The identified research problems are used to compose research questions that address the problem. The questions, then, are solved by developing or constructing a solution which is to be implemented to determine its workability and applicability. (Oyegoke 2011, 576.)

Constructive research can be used not only for identifying and solving problems, but also for improving an existing system or performance by adding to the existing knowledge body (Oyegoke 2011, 578). Constructive research might be viewed as a type of applied studies, which main characteristic is the production of new knowledge in the form of normative applications. Constructive research needs to be distinguished from the consulting that does not presuppose the use of scientific methods (Kasanen et al. 1993, 252-253.)

According to Oyegoke (2011, 576), “the constructive research assumes that the reason and experience are the fundamental criteria in the solution of problems”, and that “there are multiple interpretations of reality and the need to understand how individuals construct their own reality within their social context”.

For this study, constructive research is suited well. It addresses the practical problem that personal trainers face upon marketing own services in social media to the prospective customers during the pre-service stage. At the end, the study focuses on creating the guidelines that are assumed to support personal training service providers in their social media marketing in the very beginning of the customer journey by introducing them to the main applicable and accompanying social media features and tools.

## **4.2 Methodology**

Benchmarking and survey were chosen as main methods for gathering the research data for further analyses in order to answer the main research question of the study. The detailed research question was “which social media features and tools can help individual personal trainers in social media marketing to raise awareness, provide information and support purchase consideration for the prospective customers in the beginning of their customer journey?”.

Benchmarking was chosen as one of the research methods for analysing the existing social media profiles of individual personal trainers or other training related service providers on chosen platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram. This method was

chosen to answer one of the sub research questions: “what social media features and tools do personal trainers and training related companies use in social media marketing?”.

Another research method chosen was conducting a survey. Oyegoke (2011, 592) pointed out the importance of involving the people or the organization that will eventually use the solutions in its design and practical application strategy, embedding the principle of co-production. One of the two corresponding surveys was designed for personal trainers in order to receive the insight on their current social media marketing’s state. Another survey was conducted for the prospective customers in order to gather data on current social media preferences and expectations in relation to personal training service providers. Both surveys were designed to answer the relative research sub questions.

Figure below (Figure 18) illustrates the research process, including the used methodology and concluded by constructing the guidelines for personal training service providers on social media marketing in the very beginning of customer journey as the final result of the study.

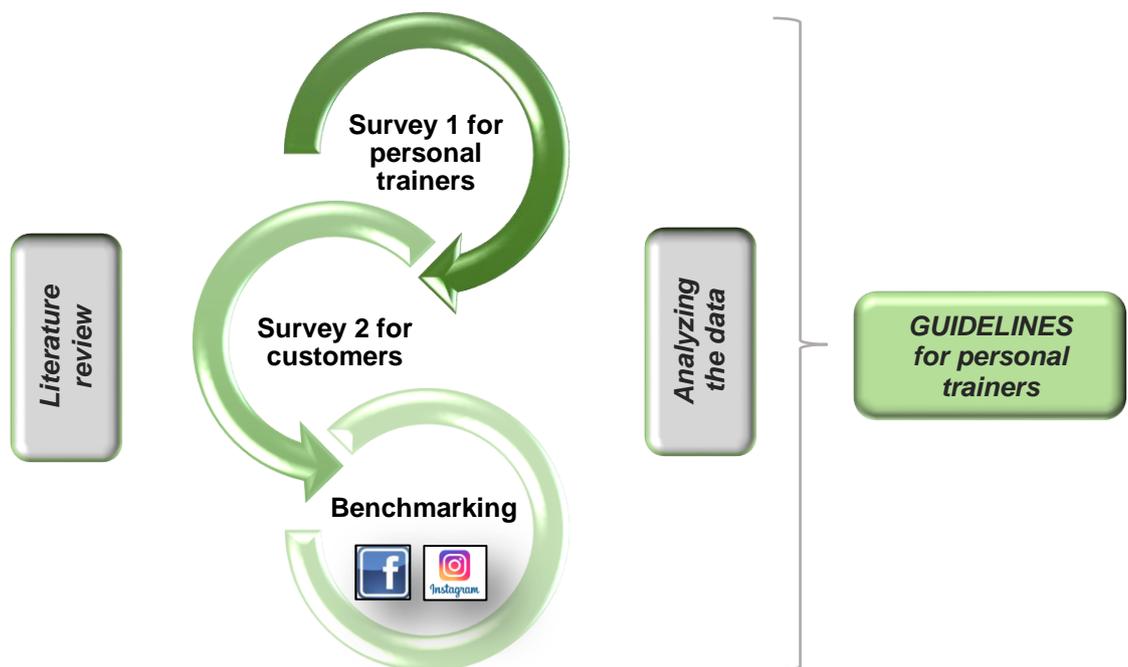


Figure 18. The research process visualization

The table below (Table 2) presents the information on chosen data gathering methods. Both methods are more in details presented further on in the corresponding subchapters.

Table 2. Data gathering methods

Method	Research sub question	Objective	Correlated pre-service stage steps	Participants
<b>Benchmarking</b>	“What social media features and tools do personal trainers use in their social media marketing?”	Analysing the social media visibility and activity (features, tools, content) of successful social media profiles (based on high amount of followers / fans)	Recognize need  Learn & Compare  Decide	Chosen Facebook and Instagram accounts of training services’ providers (mostly with over 3,000 followers / fans)
<b>Survey for personal trainers</b>	“What social media platforms and features do personal trainers in Finland use in their social media marketing?”	Gathering and analysing data on social media visibility and activity (features, tools, content) of personal trainers in Uusimaa region	Recognize need  Learn & Compare  Decide	Individual personal training service providers
<b>Survey for prospective customers</b>	“What social media platforms do potential customers use and what do they expect from or like about training service providers’ social media marketing?”	Gathering and analyzing data on social media preferences and expectations of prospective customers	Recognize need  Learn & Compare  Decide	Ordinary people (interested in sports. gym training, or personal training services)
<b>CONCLUSION</b>		<i>Creating the guidelines for personal trainers on social media features and tools</i>	<i>Recognize need (Awareness)</i> <i>Learn &amp; Compare (Consideration)</i> <i>Decide (Intent)</i>	

### **4.3 Collecting and analysing data: surveys**

There were two surveys carried out, one for personal trainers and one for prospective customers (those who have used or could potentially use the personal training services). The results of both surveys are presented and analysed in the following subchapters.

The data gathering was correlated with the study focus on separate steps of the customer journey's pre-service stage such as recognizing the need (need awareness), learning and comparing (search for information), and deciding (purchase consideration). The survey questions were designed in order to find out how well certain features and tools were currently used by personal trainers for accompanying the prospective customers in the very beginning of their customer journey, as well what social media features and tools could potentially improve the existing visibility and performance for social media marketing.

#### **4.3.1 Survey for personal trainers**

This survey was conducted to find out how personal trainers working in Finland utilize social media for the marketing objectives, such as raising awareness and interest, providing information and promoting own services to the wide audience that would correspond to the pre-service stage of a customer journey.

The points of interest in the survey were the preferably used social media platforms, applied social media features and tools, preferable content and any personal experiences on promoting own business and services through the social media.

The survey was conducted using digital Webropol Surveys service. It was possible to gather data while ensuring anonymity. The contacts of personal trainers were taken from the PTPankki web source, where different personal trainers are presented based on their location. The link to the survey was sent to 81 personal trainers, who were personally contacted through e-mail and messenger, initially chosen to be located in Uusimaa region (preferably Helsinki area). There were total of 16 respondents (personal trainers). Although, the response rate is relatively low (19.75%), the received research data can be applied to develop guidelines on features and tools for personal trainers to use for social media marketing. There were 13 different questions, only one of which was mandatory (the last open question). The full list of predesigned questionnaire can be found in the Appendix 6.

According to the survey results, 13 out of 16 respondents use different social media platforms for marketing own business and services. Among those who use social media, Facebook was used by everyone, followed by Instagram (mentioned by over three quarters of respondents), and LinkedIn and Blog (over a quarter of respondents for each platform). YouTube and Twitter were mentioned by 3 out of 13 respondents each.

Facebook was mentioned by 13 respondents as a social media platform for reaching out for the customers. It was followed by Instagram (mentioned by 10 out of 16 respondents), with the rest of social media platforms (LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter) being less popular as the ones used for this particular purpose. Less than twenty percent of the respondents pointed out that they are not using any of the social media platforms for purpose of reaching the customers.

According to the results, 10 out of 16 personal trainers considered Facebook as their primary social media platform, while Instagram was named by nearly half of the respondents as the second most valuable social media platform. Among the additional options, blog was recalled by one of the respondents as the paramount, and by another respondent – as the second most valuable social media platform in use.

Based on the survey results, random people are rarely being invited to join or subscribe to the social media accounts by personal trainers. Asking current members to invite their friends is also not a popular option for increasing the number of followers. Personal trainers pointed out that they often invite people they already know to subscribe, while the majority of followers and fans tend to join and subscribe by themselves.

Most of the interviewed personal trainers have links to their social media profiles on their web page and e-mail, while less than half of them provide this information on the printed materials.

The majority of the social media followers and fans are mentioned to be people that personal trainers have already known before (friends, and former or current customers). Over sixty percent of the personal trainers agreed that among their social media followers are people who are interested and eventually book the personal training sessions.

Based on the personal trainers' reviews, the following social media features and tools from different platforms were pointed out as the most preferable in current use, starting from the most popular: Messaging, Description / About me, content sharing, Contact me, using hash tagging (#), Stories feature (Facebook, Instagram), active linking,

Recommendations and Reviews. Less personal trainers seem to use Booking and Scheduling tabs on their social media profiles, or Event managing. No additional social media features or tools were mentioned in use by the personal trainers in this survey.

Among the most popular content pieces for social media, personal trainers mentioned photos, shared materials (articles and news), training tips and videos. Providing special offers was five times more popular comparing to contests and giveaways among the interviewed personal training service providers. About third of the personal trainers post content about themselves and their personal life or/and keep blog. Only fourth of all the respondents mentioned that they initialize discussions or ask questions on their social media profiles. Some personal trainers additionally mentioned providing nutrition tips and recipes, and writing summaries on topics that they cover on own business.

None of the interviewed personal trainers provided content or wrote posts several times a day. Posting few times a month was the most popular option, mentioned by almost half of the respondents, followed by option of posting once or twice a week (by over fourth of the respondents).

The majority of personal training service providers agreed on social media being the most valuable and significant marketing tool that every small service business needs to utilize. As pointed out by the individual survey respondents, social media is believed to be “a number one marketing place”, “a channel through which potential customers can get an idea of me, my coaching style and professionalism”, that allows “more people to get to know about me and my services” and that offers “a free customer base and free platform for marketing” in the “best and also fastest way” (adapted from survey results).

One of the personal trainers described the importance of being present in social media:

It helps potential customers to understand my skills and the benefits of healthy lifestyle and buying my services. Skills and my persona are the things that are shown. I think that most important part is the inspiration and motivation to live healthy life in general. As people try to achieve better health, the need for training services grows. At first I need to sell them the idea to have more movement and sports in their day-to-day lives. My business is local, so getting local people to know me is important. Doing social media marketing also helps me to learn how to write, take photos, make videos that are clear and helpful. The learning process is part of the price.

### **4.3.2 Survey for prospective customers**

The questionnaire for prospective customers was conducted in order to see and analyze what seems appealing and interesting for people who live in Uusimaa region in Finland (mainly in Helsinki) and who, to certain extent, involved with sports (going to gym, doing any other sports or just interested in sports) regarding the health and sport related profiles in social media.

The main focus of this survey for the thesis was on social media usage, and attitudes that potential customers as social media users have towards particular social media posts, and posts frequency on health and sport related social media profiles and pages. Thus, the survey focused on two main issues. At first, examining what social media platforms are more popular among potential service users, and, secondly, what information related to health and sport services is considered engaging, interesting, appealing and relevant for them on service providers' social media profiles and pages. Based on analyses of gathered data, the research results are correlated later on, in the final subchapter, with the separate steps of the customer journey's pre-service stage.

The survey was conducted using digital Webropol Surveys service. It was possible to gather data while ensuring anonymity. The link to the survey was sent to different people using various social media (Facebook community, Instagram and Facebook personal contacts), and e-mail (direct contacts of one personal trainer's former customers). There were total of 63 respondents.

The questionnaire included nine non-mandatory questions that were mostly answered by all of the respondents. The full predesigned questionnaire can be found in the Appendix 7 to this thesis.

Over half of the respondents have used or were currently using the services of the personal trainer, while about third of the interviewees showed interest in using the personal trainer services, although have never done that before.

According to the survey results, Facebook and Instagram were pointed out as most often used social media platforms, followed by YouTube (mentioned by over half of the respondents). Twitter was pointed out as least used or not used at all social media platform.

People seem to subscribe to different kind of health and sport related social media profiles and pages in general. Almost half of the interviewees pointed out that they followed personal trainers' accounts.

According to the survey results, people are rather interested and eager to simply read and follow the posts and news or put "likes" and other emotions under different posts and news (about 50 out of 63 respondents), rather than taking some other action. Nevertheless, almost half of the respondents mentioned that they are able to participate in open discussions, leave comments, share others' posts, or initialize discussions and ask questions by themselves.

The majority of the respondents agreed that the best posting frequency they find adequate and not irritating on the followed social media profiles and pages was in average 2-5 posts a week. About each sixth of the respondents admitted liking daily posts.

Respondents were asked in the survey what social media actions they would be willing to do for participating in the campaign, if they have a chance in winning a free personal training session or getting a discount for it. The most preferable action to perform was "leaving a comment or answer a question under the campaign post" (mentioned by almost three quarters of the respondents), followed by the requirement of sharing the post to own profile, preferred by almost a half of the interviewees. All other actions that included sharing or tagging any kind of self-made material (training related photos or videos, stories, etc.) seemed less attractive to perform by the respondents.

The respondents were asked to think about different social media content on personal trainers' individual profiles and pages. Upon the result, there were pointed out the most interesting and engaging content pieces, as well as the least attractive ones for respondents personally. The following social media content pieces were agreed to be the most interesting: training tips, available services and prices, open discussions on training related issues, special offers for the training sessions, and more videos. Nevertheless, none of the mentioned content pieces were rated as completely of no-interest by the respondents.

At the end of the survey, the respondents were asked to share own comments and ideas regarding the social media usage by personal trainers. This open-comments question was not mandatory, so there were only a few answers received. Here are some of the answers:

I like short videos with exercises. I am ready to pay for an app, but I would want to try it first without inputting credit card details.

Every time I tried to find a personal trainer I faced many difficulties. It would be good if there would be one page with all the trainers, prices, links to profiles, in which gyms do they work.

I feel more comfortable when I know Personal Trainer's background in terms of education, experience, achievements, so some posts about this would increase my interest in the particular specialist. Also, sometimes, it's good to see some personal life of the trainer - it makes him or her more "human" and increases trust.

I do participate into training program in which private Facebook group is good way to create a community, a tribe.

### **4.3.3 Matching and evaluating the surveys' results**

In terms of this thesis, there were conducted two different but supportive surveys. The results of these surveys were matched in order to see the overall picture of personal training services being presented and marketed on different social media platforms. The matching of both surveys contributes to the final guidelines on possible improvements and changes. Personal training service providers are able to apply these guidelines to evolve their social media accounts' overall presence, visibility and informational content for corresponding to each separate step of the pre-service stage of modern customer journey.

First of all, the results showed that both personal trainers and their prospective customers are having the similar preferences in social media. According to the results from both surveys, Facebook and Instagram are the most popular social media platforms.

Based on the results evaluation, it is advisable for personal training service providers to pay thorough attention to the social media posts frequency. While personal trainers pointed out the preference in posting 1-2 times a week or less, the majority of the followers are interested in seeing about 2-4 posts a week. The absolute average can be achieved here, and the advisable frequency for content posting can be about 3 posts a week.

Regarding the social media content there were certain discrepancies. Prospective customers showed more interest in a video content, while personal trainers seem to prefer posting photo content pieces over the videos. That can be explained by videos being more informative comparing to photo materials. Based on that, it is advisable for personal trainers to choose rather informative content in order to ease the information search process and be more appealing for prospective customers during their pre-service stage

of customer journey. This also applies to initiating open discussions by personal trainers, which seems less popular among them, however, being an appealing piece of content for the followers. Prospective customers show interest towards seeing more of the open discussions related to health, sport and training issues, as well as being eager to participating in such.

There was a discrepancy in usage frequency for different special offers for the training sessions. Only third of all the interviewed personal trainers mentioned special offers as their used content. At the same time, almost three quarters of the respondents among prospective customers showed interest in this particular content type. The high interest in seeing more special offers for the training sessions might mean that potential customers are interested in moving towards the buying decision. Providing more training and nutrition tips, keeping information on services and prices visible and available, supporting more open discussions and posting informative and engaging videos and photos – all that is the accompanying process for prospective customers on their pre-service stage steps towards the purchasing decision.

The customer survey provided some interesting results that could be taken into consideration, regarding the possible campaigns and giveaways that personal trainers are to potentially keep on their social media profiles for attracting more prospective customers and raising the visibility and awareness of own services. In order to attract more users for participating in the campaign, the conditions for participating should not go against people's "comfort zone". According to the survey results, customers seem to be rather engaged with simple actions such as leaving a comment or answering the question under the campaign posts. This could also be potentially taken into use by personal trainers, for being able to gather the required information (by asking relative questions) or getting a certain feedback, thoughts and ideas from the prospective customers. If the participation in campaign includes sharing or hash tagging any self-generated materials, the users seem to be more willing to share a photo or any other content (stories, etc.) rather than any related videos.

To conclude with, the research results received through the surveys are seen as informative and perform a good base for strategizing and managing own social media appearance for personal trainers. The research questions for both of the surveys could have been more detailed and thorough, with more options offered for being rated and discussed about, nevertheless, the main objective of getting the overall picture from both parties was achieved. The analysed data contributed to the final guidelines for the

personal trainers on accompanying the prospective customers in the very beginning of their customer journey.

#### **4.4 Collecting and analysing data: benchmarking**

As pointed by Stephanie Diamond (2013, 319), “the best thing one can do before starting to create own social media channel is to look at what others have done”.

There might be an opinion that whoever has the bigger amount of followers and subscribers in their social media profiles are either celebrity or well-known brand. According to their quantitative success measure, these brands are expected to have attractive well-designed and managed social media profiles and pages. For any small business from the same industry, it might be seen impossible to take anything from these rather successful profiles.

The most important takeaway from the above observation is that all the social media tools and features used by “the best in class” are also available to other companies and brands (including small businesses). The basic features that various social media platforms provide nowadays allow small businesses, such as individual personal trainers, integrating various forms of communications’ tools to reach out and built communities, as well as enabling finding more potential customers. (Levy 2010, 173.)

It is essential to keep in mind that comparing to “the big players” in the market, small business from the same industry might not have that much content to provide on its own social media profile. It takes a lot of resources such as time, and sometimes even additional financial costs for creating a qualitative content that the majority of small businesses (including individual personal trainers) would like to avoid or simply cannot afford.

In this thesis, the main focus is on the free-to-use social media features and tools that should help to accompany potential customers on the pre-service stage of their customer journey. The thorough analyzing of creating the qualitative content is avoided due to the different research focus. However, later in this thesis, there are presented some of the examples regarding creating the social media content that are given based on the benchmarking analyzes and literature review.

In order to see and analyse “the best in class”, the benchmarking method was used in this thesis. Analysing various social media profiles and pages allows seeing how a company

or a brand can improve own social media presence. Several profiles and pages from health and sport industry were chosen on two different social media platforms (Facebook and Instagram) for benchmarking purposes. All chosen accounts have a decent number of followers and likes comparing to the majority of profiles and pages in the same industry. The benchmarked data is relevant for mid-November of 2019. The main benchmarking focus is to study and analyse what social media features and tools do these attractive profiles use, as well as their content policy (how often and what content do they post).

#### **4.4.1 Facebook**

In terms of this research, several chosen Facebook accounts of individual personal trainers and some bigger training related companies were benchmarked. The choice was made based on the geographical location - the companies are preferably located in Uusimaa region - and the larger amount of followers and fans comparing to the majority of similar service providers in the area.

In total, six different Facebook accounts were analysed. The full tables with detailed observations corresponding to the benchmarking process are presented in Appendix 4.

Although there were certain similarities discovered on the benchmarked Facebook profiles, as a result it is assumed that there is no single blueprint on what features and tools must be integrated into the account for it to become successful. The results of the benchmarking give an idea of what the Facebook service provider page can include, what features, tools and content encourages people to positively react, and potentially come to the purchasing decision.

In general, all these pages are quite informative and well-structured, some more than others. There were certain similarities in the posted content, although, some of the pages preferred concentrating on daily entertaining content that seemed to be well accepted and positively reacted by followers onto.

Nevertheless, figure below (Figure 19) presents the overall data received upon Facebook benchmarking. The data includes features and tools commonly used by the analysed training services companies and individual personal trainers, the standing out features, as well as some commonly posted content.

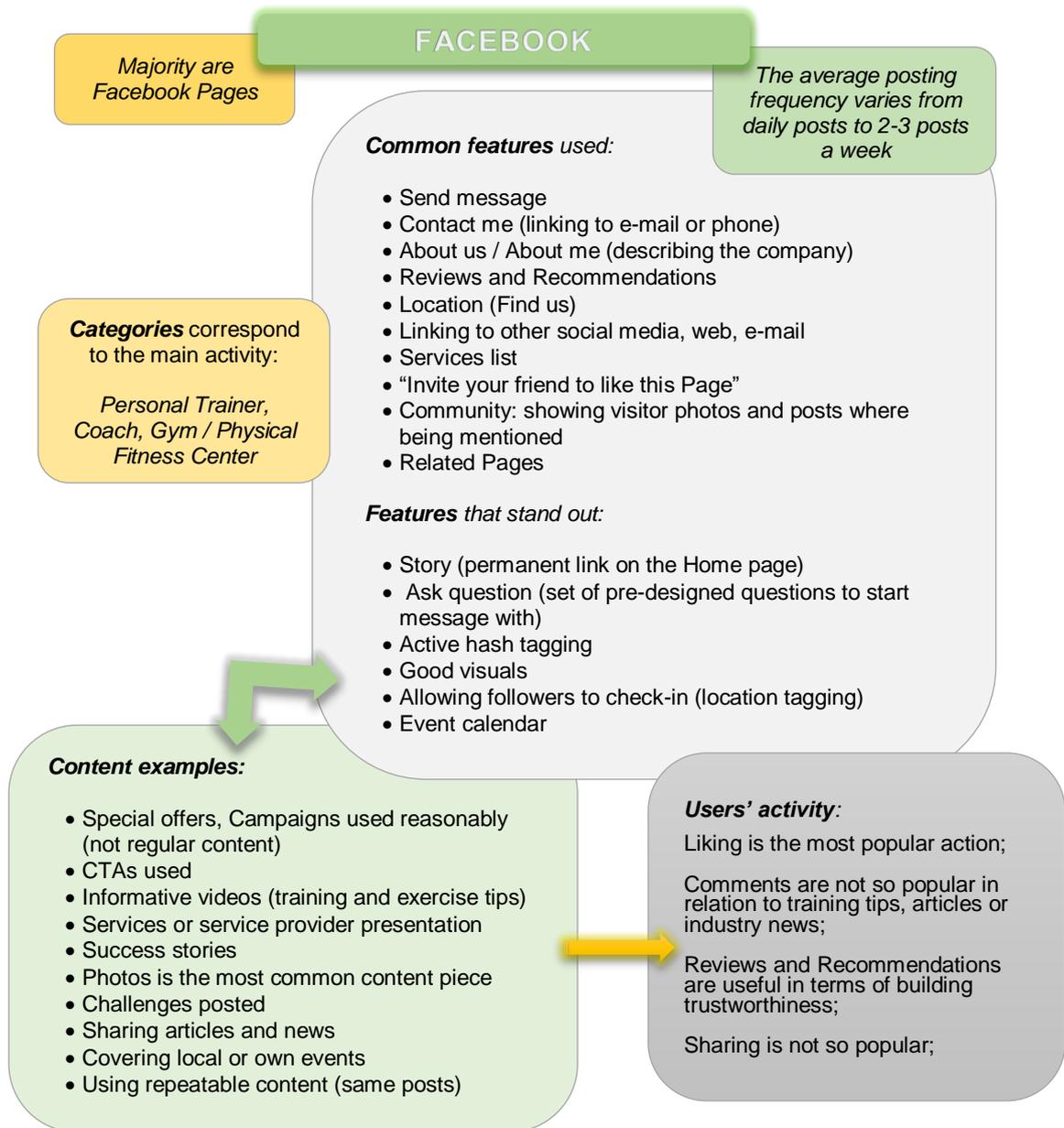


Figure 19. Common and standing out features, and content examples for the benchmarked accounts in Facebook

#### 4.4.2 Instagram

In terms of this research, several chosen Instagram accounts of personal training related companies and brands were benchmarked. The choice for two of them was made based on their geographical location - the companies are preferably located in Uusimaa region - and the larger amount of followers and fans comparing to the majority of similar service providers in the area.

Social media is used by many celebrities for self-promotion. The presence is enhanced by daily tweets, status updates, and posted photos and videos. They keep fans updated by sharing activities, plans, and any other relative information. Benchmarking the celebrity profiles in health and sport industry can give an insight on what kind of information fans do like to get, how celebrities use social media to strengthen their popularity. (Kaser & Oelkers 2016, 161.)

One of the benchmarked Instagram accounts belongs to famous American personal trainer Jillian Michaels. Her Instagram account has over 1.2 million followers. It seemed interesting and educational to analyse the structure and content of the celebrity in the personal training industry.

In total, three different Instagram accounts were analysed. The full tables with detailed observations corresponding to the benchmarking process are presented in the appendixes to this thesis (Appendix 5). Below is some overall data received upon Instagram benchmarking, as well as pointed out features and tools commonly used by the analysed fitness companies and individual celebrity personal trainer.

- The benchmarked Instagram accounts have relatively low amount of personal subscriptions;
- All accounts are categorized according to the main activity (Fitness trainer, Fitness center, Gym, etc.);
- All accounts have links for contacting via messaging, e-mail, or phone, as well as links to the personal or related web pages;
- All accounts have unique designed hash tags;
- Posts are supported by short stories;
- Reasonably using emoji icons in the stories under the visuals;
- Actively using different hash tags under the posts (keywords in different variations)
  - Celebrity account does not use that much hash tagging (almost none) – could be due to decreased need in raising the visibility and large numbers in followers (users tend to follow the celebrity accounts by themselves);
- Using appealing visual content (photos or videos);
- Using CTAs integrated into the video content;
- Promoting special offers, campaigns
- Actively using CTAs in the posts: “Read more in our blog through the link below”, “Get more information by sending us an e-mail through the link below”, etc.;

- Common content: training and exercise tips (videos are more informative), events covering, introducing the services (training packages, new courses, personal trainers, etc.);
- Average posting is 3-5 times a week.

Analysing the Instagram presence for the celebrity outside Finland might not give concrete directions for the local similar service providers, however, it can provide with some valuable ideas on improvements for creating more appealing and engaging account for own prospective customers. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that far not all of the celebrity followers are the actual customers, and the celebrities personal marketing goals of being present in social media is rather different from the objective of marketing own services and finding new potential customers.

#### **4.4.3 Summary on the benchmarking**

Benchmarking different Facebook and Instagram accounts with a relatively large numbers of followers allowed analyzing the existing practices, and further on implement the received data in to the constructed guidelines of what can support building the appealing social media account for a personal training service provider, whether it is a Facebook page or an Instagram profile. In this thesis, the preliminary goal of benchmarking was to learn and observe the best social media presence practises in two mostly used social media platforms before taking the actual steps on improvements.

The benchmarking process data is presented in the tables that can be found in the Appendix 4 (Facebook) and Appendix 5 (Instagram) to this thesis. The benchmarked profiles and pages were briefly analysed in terms of commonly used features and tools, as well as most commonly provided content, keeping the main focus on the features and tools that potentially allow personal trainers to introduce themselves and their services more effectively in the very beginning of the customer journey.

Nevertheless, numbers are not so important. The individual personal trainers should not preliminary concentrate on gathering more followers. While high growth rates are impressive, having the right followers and subscribers for the company or brand is rather valuable. Continuing to focus on the number of customers is less sufficient than giving the attention to the value of customers. The products and services, as well as pricing should be designed to attract and retain the right customers for own business model. (Wirtz & Lovelock 2018, 381.)

#### 4.5 Review on the research findings in correlation to the pre-service stage

All the gathered and analyzed data was reviewed in correlation to the pre-service stage of the customer journey. The analyzed research data in a form of various social media features and tools corresponds to each particular step of the pre-service stage, featuring the need recognition (need awareness), learning and comparing (information search, reviewing alternatives, consideration), and deciding (purchase intent).

Different available features and tools can be specifically applied by personal trainers to each separate step when managing own social media profiles and pages for supporting and accompanying the prospective customers in the very beginning of their customer journey towards the purchasing decision. Figure below (Figure 20) points out the correlation with the specific examples on available social media features and tools.

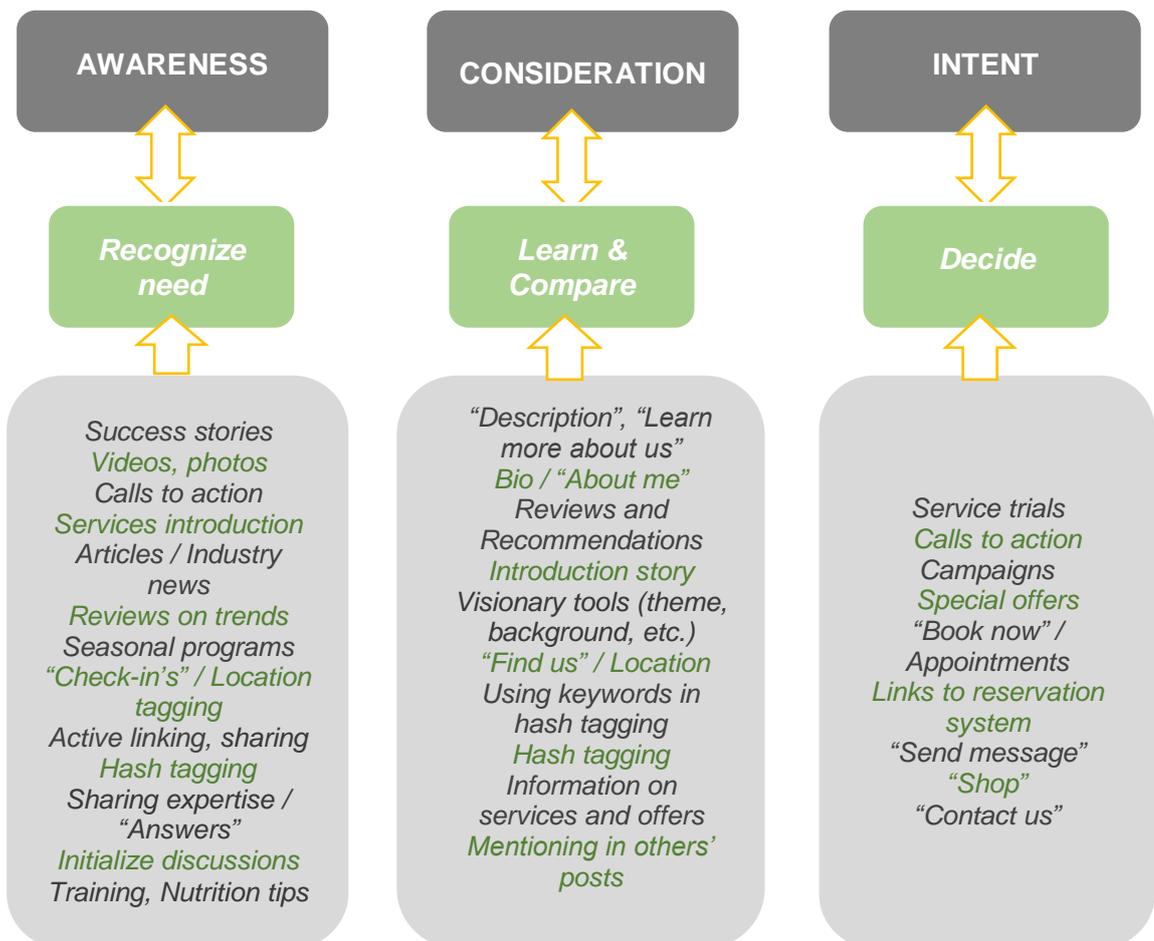


Figure 20. Correlation of the pre-service stage's steps and the analyzed research data

## **5 Constructing the social media marketing guidelines**

Besides choosing the right features and tools, the most important in successfully managing the social media profile is keeping the content going in order to correspond it to each separate step taken by the prospective customer during the pre-service stage.

In this chapter, I cover the particularly constructed examples for personal trainers' social media activity. Each separate subchapter is devoted to different content types, including on-going content, CTAs, campaigns and special offers that are part of the social media marketing. The examples are constructed in the way to correspond with the customer journey's pre-service stage. After that, all the findings supported by literature review would be finalized in constructing the guidelines on personal trainers' social media marketing in the beginning of customer journey.

### **5.1 Social media content**

The term "social" comes in two issues: social content and social connections. Usually, it refers more to people and less to content, and that is where connections appear. Liking particular piece of content, for example, a photo posted by a company in Instagram, or sharing the article post forms a certain kind of connection. Thus, content often precedes a connection. That makes content and connections strongly interconnected. Quite often people connecting happen for a reason, probably, of learning something, sharing an experience, or collaborating on a project. Good relationships require three things: a means to connect, a motive to connect, and an environment to connect. (Evans & Cothrel 2014, 33.)

In terms of this thesis, the main focus is relevant to all of the above mentioned things. Analyzing different social media platforms on features and tools they provide (means to connect) in order to create the most informative, appealing and comfortable to use platform (environment to connect) for social media marketing in the beginning of customer journey, for potential customers being accompanied during the pre-service stage towards the purchasing decision (motive to connect).

The social media marketing includes on-going activity and campaigns. The on-going activity is done on the regular basis: blogging, tweeting, contributing to forums, leaving posts in social media networks, and so on. The on-going work builds the brand and reputation. When a foundation of social media engagement is established, it is time to start launching campaigns. (Zarrella 2010, 197.) Campaign is a planned series of

advertisements (often share an idea or theme) that appear in one or more media over a specific time period (Sharp 2013, 17). Campaigns should fit the on-going activities, have specific goals and confined timeline, and should be based on seasonal and timely events. Campaigns in fact result in large but temporary boost in traffic. (Zarella 2010, 197.) It is advisable to use the on-going content to build a reputation, and then use short-term campaigns to “kick-start” specific offerings (Zarella 2010, 204).

Posting the content specific for every social media platform is essential as well as keeping a cross-promote content (through connecting all the social media profiles). Encouraging engagement is an important part of social media marketing in relation to content posting. Levelling the ranks and achieving more visibility of the social media profile or page are enabled through more engagements and interaction on it (in a form of liking, commenting or sharing). (Zarella & Zarella 2011, 59.)

It is essential to keep in mind that offering campaigns and special promotions might involve certain risks. Overloading with special offers and discounts may attract service customers who strictly buy on the basis of lowest price, and able to switch brands easily continuously seeking for the beneficial offers. However, it does not mean that such special offers should be avoided completely. The decent frequency in campaigns and posting special offers enables attracting more prospective customers, and raise visibility for the company and its services. (Wirtz & Lovelock 2018, 381.)

For personal trainer as individual, it might be difficult to manage several different social media channels and simultaneously create a lot of qualitative content on steady and continuous base. It is important to think and plan beforehand, what content, where and how often should be posted in order to keep audience interested, informed and engaged, and, what is also important, not to overload it with posts. Each content unit must be created, produced, and can be documented with all the required characteristics and elements, involving specific guidelines. Channel plan and annual content calendar are tools to help in structuring and planning the produced content across different social media channels (Tuten & Solomon 2018, 150; 162). An example for the annual content calendar, as well as the example of the channel plan, both adapted for individual personal training service providers, can be found in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 of this thesis accordingly.

## 5.2 Social media on-going activity

Social media on-going content appears in a variety of different formats, such as blog posts, feature articles, microblog posts, press releases, case studies, e-books, newsletters, videos, photos, podcasts, presentations and much more (Tuten & Solomon 2013, 123). Many of these were already mentioned and analysed before.

Content can be original or reproduced from other sources, news, announcements and commentary. Content message used to be classified as editorial or commercial. Editorial message expresses the opinion or provides information. A commercial message such as advertisement intends to persuade the reader or viewer to change an attitude or behaviour. In addition to these two types of messages, nowadays with emerged social media appeared so-called user-generated content (UGC). People create, post and widely share this content through social media platforms. User-generated content is very powerful as it attracts a lot of attention. (Tuten & Solomon 2013, 124-125.)

Based on literature review and personal observations from analysing the research data, below are presented the guidelines regarding the on-going social media content relevant to the pre-service stage of customer journey:

1. On-going content needs to be relevant and useful, and be updated frequently, so that prospective customers can find what they are looking for in the beginning of customer journey.

Examples for personal trainers: latest customer success stories, new service, new seasonal training package, own opinions on latest news or trends in the health or sport industry;

Provide on-gong content on the industry trends, write about them, share relevant articles, offer the products and services that answer the current exercise trends; According to Kaser & Oelkers (2016, 174), a recent survey by the Los Angeles Examiner classifies exercise trends as “a general development or change in the way that people are exercising; a temporary fad that is only popular for a short period of time”, thus, following the trend should be according to its popularity wave;

2. Optimizing images and multimedia content for search by creating the words for the search engines;
3. Content needs to be engaging, entertaining and educating to provide prospective customers with own expertise, and make them willing for more (may be valid to infuse some humor in the posts);
4. Encourage users to create content (UGC): customer stories add authenticity to brand messages as well as feeling of participation in the brand (stories, photos, videos, reviews);

5. Support content with visuals (image components) as they greatly impact the purchasing decisions: 93% of shoppers are affected by visual appearance.

*Facebook:* the cover photo, the profile photo, the album photo, visuals incorporated into the content;

*Twitter:* the profile photo, downloading pictures directly to Twitter, new header design (able to add header photo), the controllable background image, a display of top images and videos (images and videos matching the search results);

*Instagram:* product or service photos, customer testimonials, events, personal photos;

6. Audio and video content can extend text-based information;
7. Avoid overloading with too much on-going content (qualitative content could be more appealing than quantitative one);
8. Alternate content (using different formats of social media content: stories, photos, videos, text, links, etc.);
9. Be likable by delivering the likable content: monitor what prospective consumers seem to react on to more, what results in more likes, shares, positive comments, or followed by direct contacts; share only that content that you, as a consumer, would personally want to like / share or comment on. (Safko 2010, 363-364; Lieb 2012, 101; 148; Evans 2012, 240; Wirtz & Lovelock 2018, 209; 216; Diamond 2013, 9; 222; 233; 251; Kaser & Oelkers 2016, 174; Kerpen et al. 2015, 229.)

There were different social media platforms analysed in this thesis. When thinking of the content for different social media, it is important to remember that some social media channels might require different approach in the content creating. The most essential is to remember the importance of the message and the target audience in the particular social media platform for being able to create valuable content that would rather be noticed, acknowledged and considered. This study focuses on the pre-service stage of the customer journey, when the most important goal for marketing is to stimulate need awareness among the prospective customers, to provide them with all the important information on services and past experiences, as well as move them towards the purchasing decision with the created on-going social media content.

Further on, the practical focus of this thesis moves to calls to action, campaigns and special offers with particular examples and ideas that could be used by the personal trainers.

### **5.3 Calls to action**

A call to action (CTA) is an invitation to engage in some type of action that benefits the business goals, and potentially benefits the customers. Calls to action attract visitors to

stick around and move their attention to other offerings. CTAs usually have one of two goals: stickiness and conversion. Sticky CTAs turn passing traffic into return visitors, while conversion-based CTAs are designed to turn a visitor into the customer. (Zarella 2010, 201; 204.)

Below are some examples for the CTAs that personal trainers can use for social media marketing in the beginning of customer journey according to separate steps of the pre-service stage. Some CTAs can be used in several steps because the edge is not that strict and for this study the point of interest is the whole pre-service stage. Nevertheless, for the structure, the CTAs examples are divided into three relevant groups with the possibility of further consideration and improvements.

1. Awareness (recognize need):

If a personal trainer has an application, the CTAs can be used in order to call people to download and use it: "For more examples of your 5-minutes a day workout, check my app".

If a personal trainer has a blog, there is an easy option to feed and e-mail subscriptions. Personal trainer can consider including invitations in the content: "If you liked this post, subscribe to my blog".

Exclusive content (particular set of exercises, training or nutrition tips, professional articles) can be offered to subscribers only: "Get an exclusive set of exercises for your summer practise by subscribing to my blog".

2. Consideration (Learn & Compare, information search):

Personal trainers should encourage people to connect with them on different social media platforms: "For more do not forget to follow me on Twitter / to subscribe to my Facebook account / YouTube channel / Instagram account".

Cross-promoting CTAs (for example, the link to YouTube channel or Instagram account can be tweeted).

3. Intent (Decide):

Personal trainers can have a simple conversion CTA in the form of a Contact Us page / link / button for interested parties to use. This can be used, for example, in Facebook or Instagram (Zarella 2010, 201-203).

CTAs can be included in the YouTube (or other) videos, telling the viewers on how to proceed with the service, or how to further interact with the company or service provider (Diamond 2013, 324).

## **5.4 Campaigns and offers**

This chapter covers different social media campaigns, sales promotions and special offers that can be used as preliminary examples for personal trainers to consider for their own social media profiles and pages in order to stand out as appealing, informative, engaging and motivating service provider account for prospective customers to address to in the very beginning of their customer journey.

### **5.4.1 Examples for the campaigns by personal trainers**

Before starting the campaign, it is essential to define the audience and its pains, as well as what exactly you, as a service provider, want to achieve with it (Levinson & Gibson 2010, 233). Campaigns usually result in large but temporary spikes in traffic. In most of the cases, campaigns are used to raise the awareness, and potentially get more visibility which corresponds with the pre-service stage of customer journey.

Campaigns should rather be exclusive for a specific social media platform, for example, for Facebook fans only. That could potentially encourage people to subscribe to the same company or brand in different social media, increasing company or brand visibility and rates.

Campaigns can be designed to encourage prospective customers to take photos that include or mention the product or service and to post them, for example, to Facebook or Instagram. Personal trainer can come up with a specific hash tag (#) to use in attachment to these campaign photos or videos in order to increase visibility for the campaign and awareness of the company, brand, or services among other prospective customers.

Examples and ideas for the Campaigns in Facebook or Instagram:

- “Tell in the comments about your most favourite gym exercise, and get 10% off your next training with a personal trainer”
  - should be until specific date, and all the participants should be contacted afterwards under the comment or via the private message;
  - suitable for both Facebook and Instagram;

- “Post your own training photo and add #hashtag under it for a chance to win a free individual training program from a personal trainer”
  - hashtag should be unique and specific for particular personal training company or brand;
  - this could help to increase visibility, social media presence, raise awareness about the services and individual personal training business among other social media users;
  - suitable for Instagram;
- “Tell in the comments why would you like to train with a personal trainer, and get a chance to win a free individual training session with one”
  - campaign suitable for both Facebook and Instagram;
  - should be until specific date only;

Campaigns can be differentiated by topic, for example, they can be seasonal, event-related, trend-related, or else. To stand out, campaign text can be supported by the visual attributes such as photo or changed background (possible in Facebook, e.g.).

- Example for the seasonal campaign:

The Spring is already here!  
 Soon we can spread the lungs and start enjoying the sunny outdoor training!  
 To celebrate the awakening, we give you a chance to win a free training session with a personal trainer. To participate, leave a comment under this post about your favourite outdoor exercise to awaken the body from the winter sleep.  
 The winner will be chosen with a random number system on the xx.xx.xxxx by 00.00, and announced under the post, as well as contacted personally.  
 Share this post to your Wall, so that your friends can also get a chance at winning.

- Example for the event-related campaign:

Next Midnight Helsinki Run is already soon!  
 Have you ever run it or any another similar event?  
 Share the photo of you from any city run, marathon or just from a morning run with a #specifichashtag , and get a chance to win a free cardio training with a personal trainer.  
 The winner will be chosen with a random number system on the xx.xx.xxxx by 00.00, and announced under the post, as well as contacted personally.  
 Share this post to your Wall, so that your friends can also get a chance at winning.

- Example for the trend-related campaign:

CrossFit is gaining its popularity in Finland!  
 Do you like CrossFit trainings? Do you prefer to train alone or do the CrossFit training with a friend, complete stranger, or maybe a personal trainer?

Leave a comment, and get a chance to win a CrossFit training session for two with a professional personal trainer. Tag a friend for participating to increase the rate at winning.

The winner will be chosen with a random number system on the xx.xx.xxxx by 00.00, and announced under the post, as well as contacted personally.

Some examples for the campaigns by personal trainers are also given in the annual content calendar and in the benchmarking tables (Appendix 2, Appendix 4, and Appendix 5).

#### **5.4.2 Examples for the sales promotions and offers by personal trainers**

According to Kaser & Oelkers (2016, 245-246) and Wood (2017, 183-184), there are different types of sales promotions and offers:

- Consumer sales promotions (directed at the final consumer):
  - Temporary price reductions, price-pack deals (5, 10 or 25 trainings packages; training program and nutrition plan package), samples (free trials), different vouchers or coupons (special code redeemable for money off a service's price);
- Trade sales promotions (directed at members of the distribution channel):
  - Invite a friend for the training, and get a discount for your next training;
  - Valentines' gift offer: buy a training gift card for your friend or loved one, and get a 10% discount for your next training;
- Employee Sales Promotions (differentiating itself from competitors by offering the highest-quality service by training own employees and offering incentives):
  - Offer the award for the trainer who gets more customers in this month / achieve a certain goal (training hours made) (valid for bigger personal training companies, such as gyms and studios).

Below are some examples and ideas for the special promotions and offers in Facebook that can be made by personal trainers (can be posted in Facebook Page using Offers tab):

- "Buy 5 trainings, get 1 training for free" , valid until xx.xx.xxxx;
- "Get 10 euros off your first training with a personal trainer", valid until xx.xx.xxxx;
- "Get your first consultation with a personal training for free" , valid until xx.xx.xxxx;
- "Bring a friend to the duo training, and get a 15% discount for it", valid until xx.xx.xxxx;

- “Tag a friend with whom you would like to train together, and get a 10% off your duo training session”, valid this week (the discount can be used until xx.xx.xxxx);
- “Buy 10 times training package, and get a Tanita measurement for free”, valid this month;
- “1+1+3” (three trainings at the price of two), valid until xx.xx.xxxx;
- “Buy Nutrition advising plan, and get a Training programme for free”, valid until xx.xx.xxxx.

All these special offers mostly address the Intent (Decide) step of the pre-service stage for moving the prospective customer towards the purchasing decision.

Additional special offers examples can also be observed in the benchmarking tables for Facebook and Instagram accounts (Appendix 4, Appendix 5).

Based on theoretical impact of literature review and the research findings, the guidelines on social media marketing in the very beginning of customer journey were constructed for personal training service providers. Gained knowledge on different social media platforms with the relative features and tools that correspond to the main focus of the study of accompanying the prospective customers on their customer journey towards the purchasing decision have contributed to the final guidelines. The guidelines are presented in Appendix 10 to this thesis.

## 6 Conclusion

In the modern digitalized world, it is essential for the companies to realize the importance of social media marketing accompanying the prospective customers in the very beginning of their customer journey towards the purchasing decision. The reason why social media is more effective for this task is that it provides a two-way communication and the possibility to get instant feedback (Safko 2010, 5).

Modern customer journeys are more complex ones due to the variety of different touch points, resulting in companies having less control over the customer experience and customer journey in general (Lemon & Verhoef 2016, 69). Using digital communications allows companies getting as close as possible to the prospective customers. Interacting with each customer and treating each of them as an individual, provides companies with the insights into the customer's processes, thoughts, needs, wishes and values. (Grönroos 2015, 11.)

It is essential for companies to follow the modern trends and changes that are applied to the customer journey in order to manage the most effective presence and not to ultimately lose control over the steps that prospective customers go through towards the purchasing decision. Social media provides a lot of useful tools that come in handy for businesses to utilize in social media marketing in the beginning of customer journey. Various social media platforms allow reaching and marketing to a wide range of audience, raising the awareness about own products and services simply with a click from one's computer or mobile device.

In this thesis, my main concern was to analyse different features and tools, mainly free to use, that various social media platforms offer to utilize for small businesses, and personal training businesses in particular. The main focus of the research was on effectiveness of these features and tools if used in the very beginning of customer journey. This part covers the steps that together form the pre-service or pre-purchase stage, and include recognizing a need (awareness), information search (consideration) and intent of purchasing the service at the end. Thereby, for personal training service providers accompanying the prospective customers during the pre-service stage means targeting social media marketing efforts towards raising the customers' awareness about products and services, providing prospective customers with all the required information and expertise, and moving them through the intent step towards the purchasing decision.

In terms of this study, only particular, most popular and widely used social media platforms were examined and analysed. The choice of social media platforms for this research was mainly dictated by the analysed statistics of social media usage in Finland over the past years, as well as overall popularity of social media platforms worldwide and the variety of opportunities that they offer.

### **6.1 Study process and the results of the thesis research**

The study was conducted as constructive research. The research was question-driven, and the main research question was: “Which social media features and tools best support the beginning of the customer journey in marketing personal training services?”. For more detailed approach, the research question was opened up with additional sub-questions.

The research process was focused on answering the sub-questions through the chosen methodology (benchmarking and conducting surveys) in order to finalize all the findings from the received knowledge based on analysed data and supported by relative literature review for answering the main research question at the end of the thesis paper.

Based on the relative literature review and the research covered in this thesis, it is visible that different social media features and tools potentially serve as an important tool of accompanying prospective customers on the pre-service stage of their customer journey towards the purchasing decision. Social media helps companies not only to cover the larger audience and ease the managing a two-way communication, but also to increase own visibility and provide a platform for potential customers, where they can come to realizing the need in personal training service, search for all the required information, past experiences and expertise, support own opinions and finally be able to conclude it all in the purchasing decision.

The result of the study is presented in a form of the constructed guidelines on optimizing own social media presence and performance with the use of various features and tools that could be applied to social media marketing of personal training service provider in the beginning of customer journey for accompanying the prospective customers towards the purchasing decision. The guidelines are presented in Appendix 10 of this thesis.

The study process and the acquired results upon finalizing each step of the research are presented below in Figure 21.

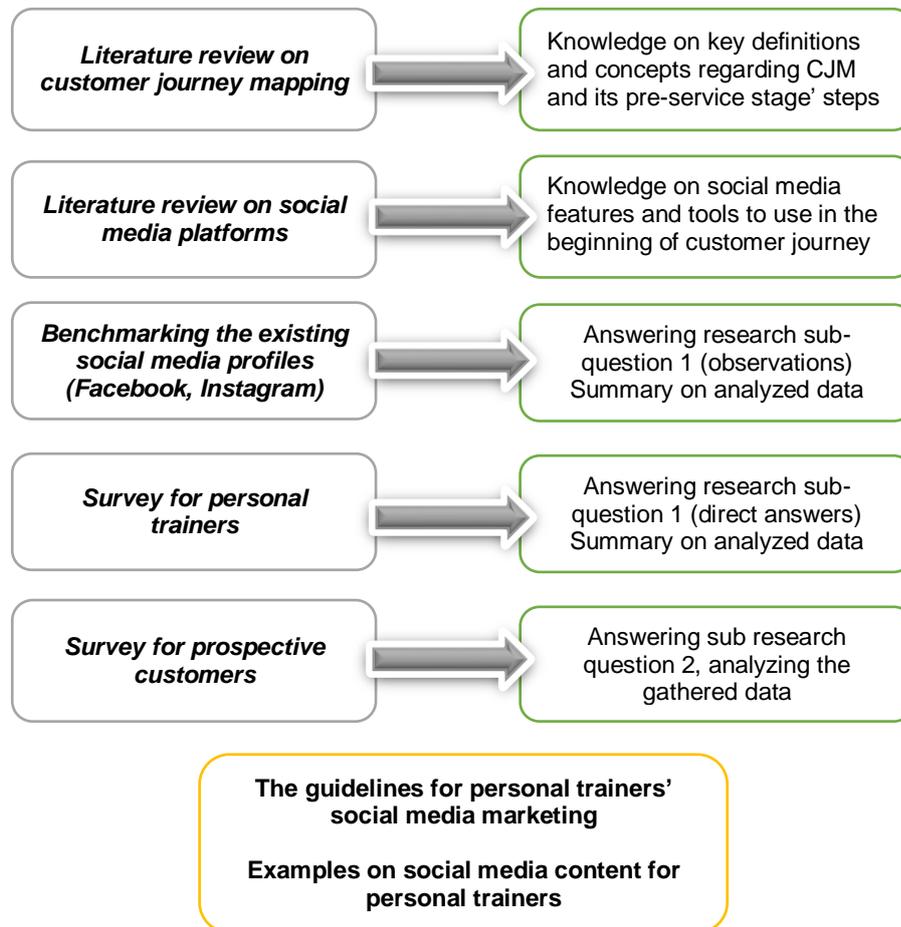


Figure 21. The main steps of the study process with the acquired results

Reviewing Statista business data source reports provided data for analyzing the social media usage in Finland by looking into the most popular social media platforms among Finnish residents that accordingly should be taken into consideration in social media marketing by any service provider company operating in Finland, including personal training service providers.

## 6.2 Validity and reliability of the research

It is important to consider the validity and reliability, especially in the qualitative research, as they are used to test the trustworthiness of the research findings and the received results. Reliability refers to the extent of reproducing the results, if the research is repeated under the same circumstances and conditions. Validity refers to the extent of the results measuring what they are supposed to measure. (Middleton 3 July 2019.)

The research was carried out as constructive research. Both qualitative (benchmarking) and quantitative (surveys) methods were used to collect data. The whole research

process was reported in details in the study. The surveys were carried out the way to ensure anonymity and support the most accurate responds possible in the given circumstances. The amount of respondents on both surveys was not very high. Nevertheless, despite of being able to collect 100% of responds, the data gathered through the surveys is seen as informative and valuable for performing a solid base along with other research findings for constructing the guidelines on social media marketing for personal training service providers in the beginning of customer journey. The results of the surveys could have been more accurate upon implementing certain improvements to the surveys' questions, which leave the ground for the continuation and further development of the research. The overall results of the study are expected to be the same if the research is carried repeatedly under the same conditions.

The research covered a variety of similar personal training service providers, including both individual trainers and fitness and sport centers to gather the broader range of relative data on social media presence and activity. The process notes on both benchmarking and conducted surveys were taken accurately to ensure the quality of the research, and are presented in the relative appendices to this thesis.

The validity of the results in the constructive research can be assessed based on their truthfulness. However, the actual usefulness of the construction cannot be proved before it is applied and practically tested. (Kasanen et al. 1993, 253.) Timeframe for the study put limitations on the possibility to actually test in practice the constructed guidelines. Nevertheless, I was able to apply them to the business plan that I wrote for the new small business company from the health and sports industry outside of this study. The guidelines were successfully implemented taking into consideration the peculiarities of the service provider presented in the business plan, as well as business and marketing goals and objectives. The chapter devoted to social media marketing covers all the most applicable social media features, tools and content examples based on the constructed guidelines of this study.

It was important to analyse the market and local social media usage to avoid concentrating on the less popular social media platforms among potential customers in the business location area. The guidelines and social media content examples are relevant and correspond to the latest available statistical data on most popular social media platforms used in Finland.

All the research steps were accurately described in details in this study, including the process of data gathering, carried out analyzes and the findings. During the whole research process, I have been aware of possible threats of wrong interpretation of data, and consciously reviewed the process and the results as objectively as possible. Thus, it is estimated that the acceptable degree of reliability and validity was reached in this study.

Nevertheless, the choice of social media platforms and tools is not unequivocal, and can be individual for each small business company. No single social media tool is the right solution for all the businesses. Each individual company and brand needs to decide for itself what in particular it will use for reaching own goals and objectives. Companies need to focus on what their prospective and current customers are doing online, and that is where they should be (Wilson 2010, 56).

All the researched and analysed data covered in this thesis should not be seen as strict guidelines for managing the business accounts on different social media platforms. Each individual personal trainer is free to decide what platforms and features to use for accompanying the prospective customers in the beginning of customer journey by corresponding to his or her own social media marketing objectives and capabilities. Some service providers might decide to use the social media platforms or features not covered in this particular study.

The constructed solution in a form of the guidelines presented in this study is seen as a supportive tool focused on social media marketing personal training services in the very beginning of customer journey,. The guidelines were meant to be simple, understandable, detailed and easy to apply for the personal training service providing companies.

### **6.3 Reflection on own learning**

Working on this study has greatly contributed to my personal learning on both theoretical and practical levels of received knowledge. During the research process I have gained deeper insights into key concepts and theories related to customer journey mapping, customer experience, and social media influence over it. Upon relative literature review, I was able to analyze the development of key principles and definitions over the time.

The study's focus was on the first stage of customer journey, called pre-service or pre-purchase. The related theory contributed to my personal learning allowing covering more in details and opening up each separate step customers go through in the very beginning of their individual customer journey preceding the purchasing decision.

The other part of the study was covering different features and tools that social media provides nowadays, allowing companies to reach the audience and market own products and services. It was engaging on practical level of being able to segregate the features and tools that could potentially strengthen the social media marketing in the beginning of customer journey for personal training service providers. Constructing the examples on various social media content, including on-going activity, campaigns, calls to action and special offers has provided me with relevant applicable practical knowledge.

In this study, I was able to conduct a constructive research and use different research methodologies, deepening my knowledge on conducting surveys and benchmarking process. The result of the study was presented in a form of constructed guidelines for personal training service providers to apply to social media marketing in the very beginning of customer journey. Constructing the guidelines was very practical and educational, and has greatly contributed to my personal learning.

Upon finishing the study, the constructed guidelines were applied in the marketing part of the business plan for the newly created service providing company by choosing the most relevant social media platforms, features, tools and content activity. Applying the guidelines for the particular company was very practical, and, although, it was outside the main study process, it demonstrated the guidelines applicability and the growth in my personal learning on practical level during the research process.

Upon finishing the thesis, I can estimate that certain parts of it could have been done differently. That mainly concerns the conducted surveys. In terms of possible improvements, the surveys could have been more precise and detailed in order to cover more data on current social media marketing by personal trainers. These could, for example, include covering more options on features, tools and content examples in the survey. Nevertheless, that has also reflected on my learning, and creates a ground for future possible continuation of the research.

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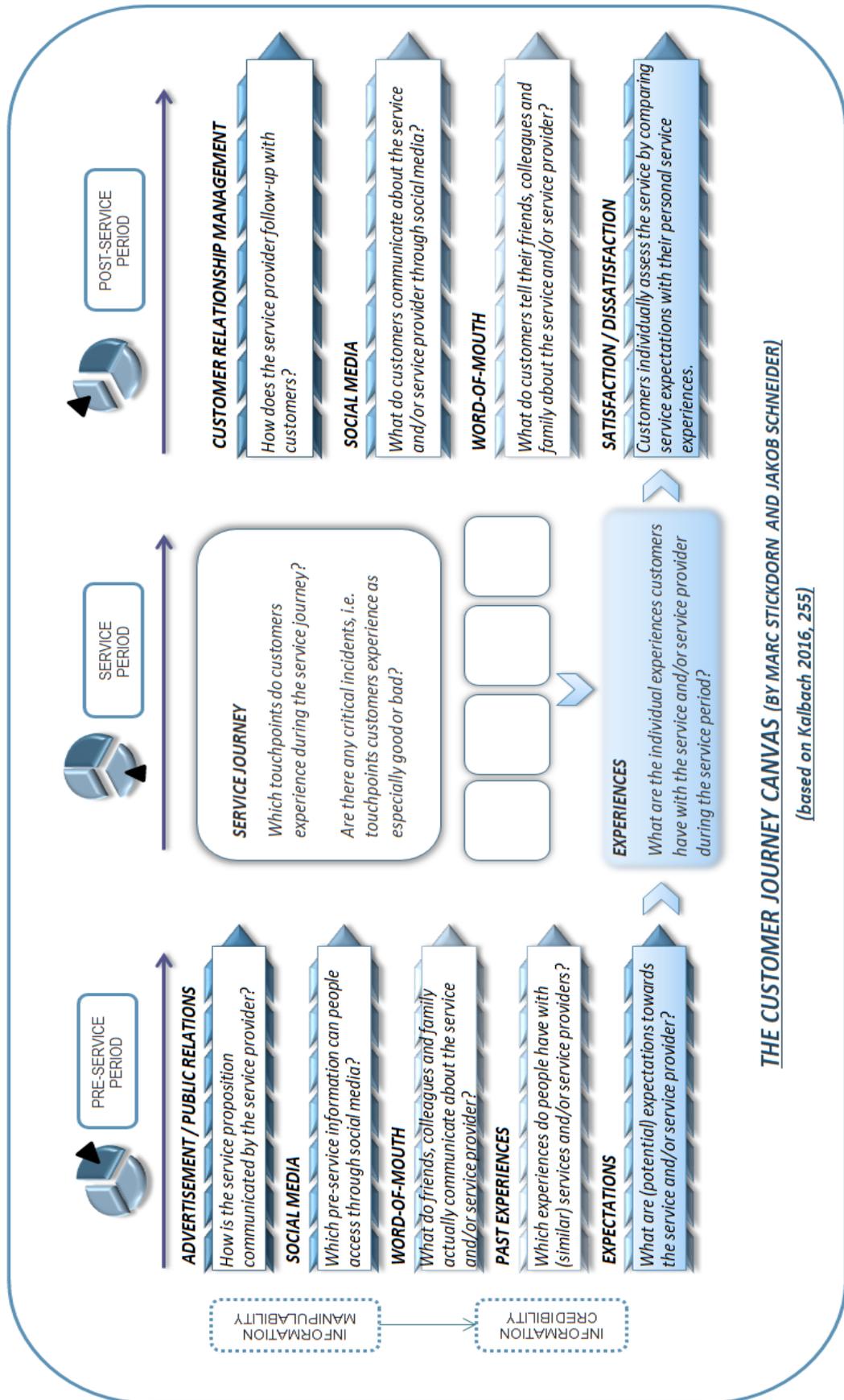
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# Appendices

## Appendix 1. The customer journey canvas



**THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY CANVAS (BY MARC STICKDORN AND JAKOB SCHNEIDER)**  
 (based on Kalbach 2016, 255)

**Appendix 2. Summary of annual content calendar (example for individual personal trainers)**

SM activity across calendar	Q1			Q2			Q3			Q4		
	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
Listen / Monitor / Respond	On-going daily (at least once a day)											
Maintain brand presence	4 posts / week	4 posts / week	3-4 posts / week	3-4 posts / week	3 posts / week	Weekly posts	Twice a week posts	3-4 posts / week	3-4 posts / week	3-4 posts / week	3-4 posts / week	3-4 posts / week
Increase brand awareness (paid)	Facebook (month)			Facebook (month)				Facebook (month)				
Encourage customer reviews	Monthly (may additionally ask kindly some of own regular customers to leave reviews and recommendations)											
Seasonal packages, offers	New Year, new You (10% off for new customers)	St. Valentine's (gift card for trainings for loved ones, 14% off)	Tanita measuring (special price all month)	Easter offer (10% off all packages)	Mother's Day (15% to all women or for named gift cards)	Summer offer (15% off nutrition plans)	Tax refund offer (24% off all 5-times packages)	Special offer (free consultation for new customers)	Summer offer (15% off training programs)	Father's Day (15% to all men or for named gift cards)		Christmas Advent Calendar (little offers / giveaways each day)
Training / Nutrition tips	Facebook, Instagram (once a week month posts; ad particular day of the week to calendar)											
Campaign 1 "Exercise / like"	Facebook, Instagram								Facebook, Instagram			
Campaign 2 "Sunny days"				Facebook, Instagram					Facebook, Instagram			
Campaign 3 "Exercise of the Month"	Every second Monday of the month: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube (can add particular dates to calendar according to year)											
Provide customer care upon alert	On-going daily (at least once a day)											
Comments, answer questions	On-going daily (at least once a day)											

**ON-GOING, SEASONAL AND CAMPAIGN DRIVEN SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITY ACROSS CALENDAR**  
 Summary of annual content calendar (example for individual personal trainers)  
 (based on Tuten & Solomon 2018, 162)

### Appendix 3. Channel Plan (example for individual personal trainers)

CHANNEL PLAN										
CHANNEL		PURPOSE		EDITORIAL PLAN		MEASUREMENT				
Owned	Tactic	Demographic	Benefit	Featured topics	When / ideal velocity	Theme	Content type	Tone / Rules of engagement	Call(s) to Actions	Engagement indicators
<b>Facebook</b>	Establish brand presence and awareness, build relationships, engage with new client base	Appeal to personas	Inform, entertain, promote and support	Health, sport and fitness (training, nutrition), life hacks (tips, advices)	Post at least 3-4 times a week; share 1-2 non promotional posts	Monday: ... Tuesday: ... Wednesday: ... Thursday: ... Friday: ... (something concrete or nothing)	Posts, photos, videos, articles, news research data	Experienced, friendly, helpful and enthusiastic	"Subscribe to our Instagram / Twitter account" "Enroll in Training today"	New followers, comments, likes, shares
<b>Instagram</b>	Increase brand awareness, develop fans	Appeal to users of like brands	Entertain, increased service knowledge, increased user base	Health, sport and fitness (training, nutrition), industry trends	Post at least once a day		Service images, staff (personal trainer), inspiring images	Experienced, friendly, helpful and enthusiastic	"Subscribe to our Facebook / Twitter account" "Enroll in Training today"	New followers, likes, comments, tagged photos
<b>Twitter</b>	Share relevant articles, establish brand presence and awareness, create community and engage with users	Appeal to users of like brands	Inform, promote and support, entertain	Health, sport and fitness, life hacks	Post at least once a day; Share at least 1-2 non promotional posts		Posts, visual content, research data	Experienced, friendly, helpful and enthusiastic	"Subscribe to our Instagram / Facebook account" "Enroll in Training today"	New followers, comments, likes, retweets
CHANNEL		PURPOSE		EDITORIAL PLAN		MEASUREMENT				
Paid	Tactic	Demographic	Benefit	Featured topics	When / ideal velocity	Theme	Content type	Tone / Rules of engagement	Call(s) to Actions	Engagement indicators
<b>Facebook</b>	Targeted Facebook ads and sponsored posts	Health and sport enthusiasts, living in Uusimaa region	Clicks leading to new training enrollment	Health and training	Run prior and during peak months (January, March and September)	Use testimonials and real past participants asked to submit UGC	Photo and video, storytelling	Experienced, friendly and enthusiastic	"Enroll in Training today"	Clicks, comments, likes, shares

CHANNEL PLAN (example for individual personal trainers)  
(based on Tuten & Solomon 2018, 150)

## Appendix 4. Benchmarking Facebook

FACEBOOK										
Profile / Page / Group	Amount of followers / fans	Side tabs used	About	Photo / video content	Features and tools used	Regularity of posts	Content posted	Examples of offers / campaigns	CTAs	User activity (liking, commenting, sharing, reviews)
<b>TERVEYSBLOGI.FI</b>										
Page	3,027 like 3,071 follow	Home, Services, Reviews, Photos, Videos, Posts, Events, Community	When started, Mission; Personal interests; Contact info (messenger, e-mail, web);  Category: Health and Wellness website  Personal information on the PT, biography; Links to blog, Snapchat, Instagram	Photos (955): cover, profile, mobile uploads, timeline photos  Videos (57): Training tips, nutrition advices, picks on events, etc.	"Contact Us" forwarding to the blog  "Invite your friend to like this Page"  Send message  Straight link to the blog  Related Pages  Pages liked by the Page  Active linking	Average : every 3-6 days	Photos, Videos, Blog posts, Podcasts, Event linking, Campaigns, Articles, Shares from other related Pages or other social media (blog, Instagram)	Campaign to win a training planning for a person and a mentioned friend (Requirement: commenting and tagging a friend);  Special offer: "Special introduction price for September trainings: all for 39EUR (normally starting at 69EUR)"	Video with call to subscribe to the new YouTube channel;  "Join the podcast"  link in the post;  "Invite your friend to like the Page"	No reviews;  Rare on liking;  Rare shares;  Low on commenting;
<b>ELIXIA Finland</b>										
Page	38,412 like 37,106 follow	Home, About, Photos, Videos, Notes (not in use for 8 years), Posts, Events, Locations, Community	Contact info (messenger, web);  Category: Gym / Physical Fitness Center  More info: About (web)  Company Overview;	Photos (500): cover, profile, Instagram uploads, timeline photos  (promotional, orientation, introducing PTs, visuals)  Videos (338): Advertisement, challenges, training tips, picks on events, orientation videos, introducing PTs, etc.	"Send message"  "Invite your friend to like this Page"  Create post (add photo/video, tag friends, check in, play with friends)  Featuring top fans  Visitor photos  Being mentioned in the post  Related Pages  Pages liked by Page	Average: daily posts	Photos, Videos, Events coverage, Special offers, Articles, Industry news, Initializing discussions (open questions), Challenges posted, Providing links for online trainings, booking	Special offer: PT-days (one week offer): Get 10% discount for all training packages;  Special offer: For 2 days only: get a free training month for each friend that you bring over who starts training in Elixia;	"Bring a friend"  "Click a link to move to online training"  "Sign for next group training hour here"	Decent liking;  Rare shares;  Low on commenting;

## FACEBOOK

Profile / Page / Group	Amount of followers / fans	Side tabs used	About	Photo / video content	Features and tools used	Regularity of posts	Content posted	Examples of offers / campaigns	CTAs	User activity (liking, commenting, sharing, reviews)
<b>Personal Trainer Arttu</b>										
Page	34,540 like 33,100 follow	Home, Services, Reviews, Photos, Videos, Posts, Events, About, Community	Hours: always open Price range Additional contact info (e-mail, web) More info (About, Affiliation, Method) <u>Category:</u> Personal Coach / Coach	<u>Photos (5,709):</u> cover, profile, mobile uploads, timeline photos (nutrition tips, humor)  <u>Videos:</u> A lot of training related and non-related humor videos;	Story (permanent link to the blog post) Find Us (location map) Ask question Send E-mail Send message "Invite your friend to like this Page" Featuring top fans Services on Home page Recommendations and Reviews Related Pages, Pages liked by Page	Average: daily posts (can be several posts a day)	Nutrition tips Using a lot of humor in the content posted Shared articles and news	---	---	Recommended by 5 people (great reviews on page outlook, content provided); Rated by 110 people; Active liking; Active commenting; Decent sharing;
<b>Elite Trainers</b>										
Page	762 like 764 follow 1,303 check-ins	Home, Reviews, Photos, Videos, Posts, Events, About, Community	Find Us Hours: always open Price range Parking (location) Additional contact info (e-mail, web) More info (About, Description) <u>Category:</u> Gym / Physical Fitness Center, Fitness Trainer	<u>Photos (206):</u> cover, profile, mobile uploads, timeline photos (motivational photos, visuals, advertisement, pricing, training photos)  <u>Videos (4):</u> training related	Find Us (location map) Call now button Send message "Invite your friend to like this Page" Visitor photos, Public posts about the company Recommendations and Reviews Related Pages, Pages liked by Page Active hash tagging	Rare posts (2-3 times a month)	Success stories Photos Promotions and information about new services Motivational photos and posts Introducing new PTs Events linking	---	"Not everyone can do it. We can. Join us today! For more information elitetrainers .fi" "Book your sessions now elitetrainers .fi" "Sign up for our online coaching"	Recommended by 4 people; Rated by 15 people; Active liking; Active commenting; Decent sharing;

FACEBOOK										
Profile / Page / Group	Amount of followers / fans	Side tabs used	About	Photo / video content	Features and tools used	Regularity of posts	Content posted	Examples of offers / campaigns	CTAs	User activity (liking, commenting, sharing, reviews)
<b>Personal Trainer Joosua Visuri</b>										
Page	5,665 like 5,910 follow	Home, About, Follow in Instagram, Posts Services, Shop, Photos, Videos, YouTube, Community, Groups, Reviews, Events	Find Us Working hours Personal interests Additional contact info (e-mail, web, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube) More info (Affiliation, Members, About, Description) Company Overview, Founding date, Biography, Awards, Products, Public Transit, Personal Information <i>Category:</i> Personal Coach, Fitness Trainer, Coach	<u>Photos (1,642):</u> cover, Instagram photos, mobile uploads, timeline photos (Personal professional photos, customer testimonials, training photos, etc.)  <u>Videos:</u> Divided into 5 playlists (Limitless program, exercises, training tips, challenges, achievements from trainings)	Introduction Story as permanent link on Home Page Find Us (location map) Shop Now button (all the products) Send message Ask a question "Invite your friend to like this Page" Visitor photos, Public posts about the trainer, Featured Top Fans and Groups Recommendations and Reviews Related Pages, Pages liked by Page Active hash tagging	Average: about 4-5 posts a week	Training tips (videos) Initializing discussions Sharing articles and news Success stories Photos Events covering (own business related, like book publishing) Own services, events covering Challenges posted Active linking (articles, other Pages)	Campaign upon Father's day: "Like the Page, and leave a comment on how you like to spend together with your dad"	"Follow in Instagram" in Side Tabs (opens the preview of Instagram profile) "Follow in YouTube" in Side Tabs (opens the preview of YouTube channel) "Order your own copy of the book by following this link"	Recommended by 16 people; Rated by 32 people (PT reacting to all comments); Active liking; Decent commenting; Decent sharing;

FACEBOOK										
Profile / Page / Group	Amount of followers / fans	Side tabs used	About	Photo / video content	Features and tools used	Regularity of posts	Content posted	Examples of offers / campaigns	CTAs	User activity (liking, commenting, sharing, reviews)
Page	11,101 like 11,011 follow	Home, Posts, Videos, Photos, About, Community, Iconosquare (link not working), Events, Locations	Contact info (phone, messenger, web)  More info (description, about, founding date)  <u>Category:</u> Community, Gym / Physical Fitness Center	<u>Photos (463):</u> cover, profile, timeline photos, Instagram photos  <u>Videos (16):</u> Exercises and training tips, industry trends, own events coverage.	UniSport (Helsinki, Espoo) Story about UniSport (permanent on the Home page)  "Learn more" button forwards to company's web page  Send message  "About" section (phone number, link to web age)  Active linking (providing links to web pages, to booking, etc.)  Using hash tags actively  Events calendar and Upcoming Events in the Home page, with the possibility for users to mark as "interested" for saving and reminder sent  Visitor photos, Public posts about the trainer, Featured Top Fans  Recommendations and Reviews  Related Pages, Pages liked by this Page  Users can write posts (add photos/videos, tag friends, check-in)	Active: close to daily posting	Promoting own events and meetings (e.g. personal trainer coming to Aalto University)  Promoting new courses starting (with a link to sign)  Introduction of services (information)  Exercises and training tips (video content)  Articles and industry news  A lot of different organized events (provided as posts and in the Events calendar)	<u>Special offer:</u> Get a free 30-minutes trial of UniHetki for your workplace by following this link"  <u>Special offer:</u> Promoting a free trial – "First training is always for free" (with a link to web page instructions on how to proceed)	"Do you follow us on Instagram already? On UniSport's Instagram you'll get to see what happens in our sport centres. There are even some giveaways every now and then! Find us @unisportfi and remember our hashtags #unisportfi #morethan exercise, too!"  Active liking;  Decent commenting;  Decent sharing;	

## Appendix 5. Benchmarking Instagram

INSTAGRAM								
Amount of followers, publications, subscriptions	About	Links	Features and tools used	Regularity of posts	Content posted	Examples of offers / campaigns	CTAs	User activity (liking, commenting)
5,902 followers 1,415 publications 70 subscriptions	<p>Category: Gym, Fitness center</p> <p>Description added</p> <p>Price added</p>	<p>Enabled contacting via messaging link</p> <p>Enabled contacting via e-mail</p> <p>Link to the web page (membership signing)</p>	<p>Hash tag #fitness24seven, #f24s</p> <p>Using short stories and active hash tagging under each post</p> <p>Using keywords in different variations in hash tagging (#funworkouts, #workout, #sundayworkout, #workout, #workoutfun, #personaltrainer, #smallgrouptraining, #groupfitness, #healthyfood, #healthysnack, #personaltraining, #gym, #helsinki, etc.)</p> <p>Using appealing professionally captured photo content</p> <p>Using company colors and fonts in connection to photo content</p> <p>Reasonably using emoji icons in the stories under the posts</p> <p>Gathering feedback (using CTAs)</p>	<p>Average : every 3-4 days</p>	<p>Training tips and advices</p> <p>Gym, training promotional photos</p> <p>Services presentations</p> <p>Own events covering (e.g., Running for a Cancer-free world)</p> <p>Inside news (e.g., new gyms opening)</p> <p>Initializing discussions</p> <p>Different special offers, promotions, and campaigns</p>	<p><b>Special offer:</b> Buy PT packages until the end of October and save up to 200EUR;</p> <p><b>Special offer:</b> "Bring a friend over, and get a free month of training for both of you"</p> <p><b>Campaign:</b> "Running for a Cancer-free world" Next 24 hours, for every km on cardio training run – company donates 1EUR for the cause;</p>	<p>"Answer the questionnaire under the link to help us develop our services"</p>	<p>Active liking;</p> <p>Decent average commenting;</p>

INSTAGRAM								
Amount of followers, publications, subscriptions	About	Links	Features and tools used	Regularity of posts	Content posted	Examples of offers / campaigns	CTAs	User activity (liking, commenting)
1,261 followers 338 publications 83 subscriptions	<u>Category:</u> Fitness trainer Short description added Web page Location	Enabled contacting via messaging link Enabled contacting via e-mail or phone Link to the web page	Hash tag #personaltrainingstudio, #kuntokompassi, #kuntokompassipersonaltrainingstudio Using short stories and active hash tagging under each post Using keywords in different variations in hash tagging (#personaltrainer, #helsinki, #voimaharjoittelu, #fysioterapeutti, #voimaterapia, etc.) – many hash tags are in Finnish language, some of the hash tags relate to specific body parts for training (#healthysshoulders, #healthyupperback, etc. Preferably using informative training related video content Reasonably using emoji icons in the stories under the posts Sharing others' Instagram content (of own individual personal trainers)	Average: posts 3-5 times a week	Training tips and advices (photos, videos with stories) Introducing the team of personal trainers Feedback from customers	<i>Special offer:</i> Free consulting for the new customers (#maksuton, #konsultaatio); <i>Special offer:</i> Book a time with your PT or physiotherapist in Kuntokompassi and get a free training bag;	Book your time for a free consultation by sending the e-mail (link); Get to know more about our services by sending the e-mail (link); Read more in our blog (link);	Decent liking; Low on commenting;

INSTAGRAM								
Amount of followers, publications, subscriptions	About	Links	Features and tools used	Regularity of posts	Content posted	Examples of offers / campaigns	CTAs	User activity (liking, commenting)
1,2 million followers 1,411 publications 93 subscriptions	Category: Fitness trainer  Web page	Enabled contacting via messaging link  Enabled contacting via e-mail  Link to the web page	JillianMichaels  Hash tag #jillianmichaels, #jullian, #stepwithjillian  Using short stories under each post  Low on hash tag using  Preferably using informative training related video content (training tips and exercises)  Reasonably using emoji icons in the stories under the posts  "Tag that special someone" – initiating tagging by people for more visibility  Using Instagram Stories	Active posting: 4-5 times a week, sometimes daily  postings for certain period	Training tips and advices (photos, videos with stories)  Posting challenges  Posting content about herself and her personal life (photos)  Initiating discussions by asking simple questions  Using humor in some of the posts  Covering a lot of #UNHCR and #refugees topics	---	Web page address showing at the bottom of the video content and at the end of the video;  "You can always get 7 minutes workouts for free with my app, link in bio"	Active liking;  Active commenting;  Huge numbers in watching;

## Appendix 6. Questionnaire for personal trainers (4 pages)

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PERSONAL TRAINERS

- Area of work (city):**
- Helsinki
  - Espoo, Vantaa
  - Rest of Uusimaa
  - Other parts of Finland

**How do you market your services?**

- Web page
- E-mail
- Direct sales (talking to people in a non-business environment)
- Stationary and printed materials (leaflets, booklets, business cards, advertisement on a car, etc.)
- Phone
- Social Media (please, specify; can choose more than one)
  - Facebook
  - LinkedIn
  - Instagram
  - YouTube
  - Twitter
  - Blog
  - Other (please, specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**FURTHER ON, PLEASE SHARE YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES MARKETING AND ACQUIRING NEW CUSTOMERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS.**

**ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY CHOOSING ONE OR MORE OPTIONS.**

**What Social Media platforms do you use to reach your customers?**

- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- Instagram
- YouTube
- Twitter
- Other (please, specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- None

**Try to estimate, through which Social Media platform your PT business gets more attention?**

- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- Instagram
- YouTube
- Twitter
- Other (please, specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**What Social Media platform do you consider the second most valuable for your PT business?**

- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- Instagram
- YouTube
- Twitter
- Other (please, specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**REGARDING THE ONE OR TWO SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS YOU HAVE JUST MENTIONED AS MOST VALUABLE, PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:**

**YES or NO:**

- |   |                              |                             |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>I invite random people to join / subscribe:</i>  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <i>I invite people I already know to subscribe:</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <i>I ask others to invite their friends:</i>        | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <i>People join by themselves:</i>                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

*I have links to my social media profiles on my web page, e-mail:*

Yes

No

*I have links to my social media profiles on my printed materials:*

Yes

No

AGREE or DISAGREE:

*Among my followers are people I already knew:*

*Friends*

Agree

Disagree

*Former or current customers*

Agree

Disagree

*A lot of my followers are random people not buying or interested in buying my PT services:*

Agree

Disagree

*There are followers that ask about PT services:*

Agree

Disagree

*There are followers that book PT sessions:*

Agree

Disagree

*What available features do you use on Social Media platforms (can choose several options):*

Description, About me

Booking, Schedule (e.g., on Facebook)

Contact me

Messaging

Recommendations (wall posts or "recommendations" on LinkedIn)

Events managing

Hash Tagging (#)

Stories (e.g., Facebook, Instagram)

Active linking

Share content

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**What content do you post on your Social Media profiles (can choose several options):**

- I keep contests, giveaways
- I post photos
- I post videos
- I keep blog
- I share articles, news (other's posts, materials / not own material)
- I provide training tips
- I promote special offers
- I initialize discussions, ask questions
- I tell about myself and my personal everyday life
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**How often do you make posts on your Social Media profiles?**

- Several times a day
- Daily
- About 3-5 times a week
- Once or twice a week
- Few times a month
- Once a month
- Rarely (less than monthly)

**How do you think, is being visible on Social Media help your Personal Training business to grow, get more attention, and find more new potential customers? (share your ideas)**

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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!**

## Appendix 7. Questionnaire for prospective customers (3 pages)

### QUESTIONNAIRE

Do you currently have a gym membership?  Yes  No

Have you ever used the services of a Personal Trainer?

- Currently have a Personal Trainer
- Used to, but not at the moment
- No, but I would like to
- No, and I do not intend to

What Social Media platforms do you personally use?

	Use often	Use less often	Have profile but rarely use	Do not use at all
Facebook	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LinkedIn	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
YouTube	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instagram	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Twitter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

PLEASE, ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BASED ON YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH SOCIAL MEDIA BY CHOOSING ONE OR MORE OPTIONS.

TRUE or FALSE:

- I am subscribed to gym profile(s) / page(s):*  True  False
- I am subscribed to Personal Trainer(s) pages:*  True  False
- I am subscribed to sport, exercises related pages / groups:*  True  False
- I am not subscribed to any of the above:*  True  False
- I do not have any Social Media profiles:*  True  False

REGARDING THE GROUPS / PAGES / PROFILES YOU SUBSCRIBED TO (NOT FRIENDS):

- I can participate in open discussions, conversations:*  True  False
- I can initialize discussions, ask questions myself:*  True  False
- I leave comments on others' posts:*  True  False
- I put "likes" or other emotions on others' posts / news:*  True  False
- I can share others' posts to my own profile:*  True  False
- I just like to read the posts in my news feed:*  True  False

Please choose one from the below that is more suitable for you when thinking about posts in sport and gym related groups / profiles / pages:

- I like daily posts
- I find posts 4-5 times a week regular not irritating
- I do not want to see more than 2-3 posts a week
- Once in a week posts are enough
- The less posts the better

***If it is possible to win a free personal training session or get the discount for it:***

- I feel interested in participating in a campaign calling to share or tag my training related pictures, videos or other content
- I do not want to share or tag my pictures, videos for any campaign
  
- I feel interested to participate in a campaign calling to simply share the campaign post
- I do not want to share any campaign posts to my profile
  
- I feel interested participating in a campaign by leaving any comments / answer a question on the campaign posts
- I would not be interested in leaving any comments under the campaign posts

***What content do you personally expect or enjoy seeing when subscribed to any Personal Trainers profiles / pages in Social Media platforms:***

	Interested	Not interested
Training tips	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information on sport events and activities in the area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Available services and prices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contests, giveaways	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Special offers for the training sessions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information on Personal Trainer's own life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Open discussions on training related issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
More photos	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
More videos	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other _____		

***Open comments (share your ideas, thoughts):***

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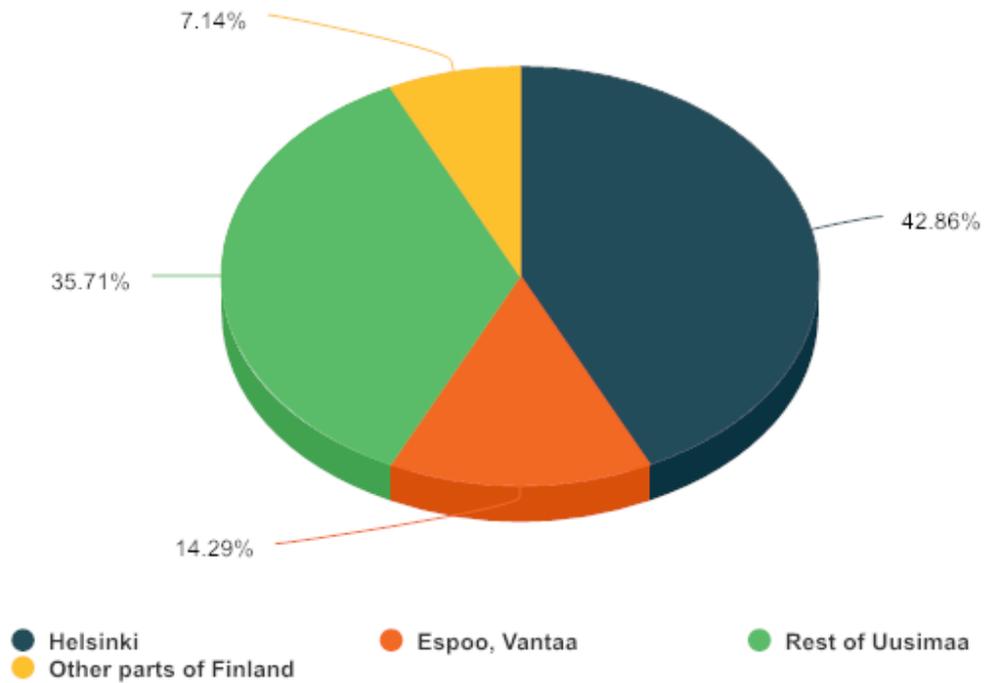
**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!**

## Appendix 8. Questionnaire results (personal trainers)

Total number of respondents: 16

### 1. Area of work (city)

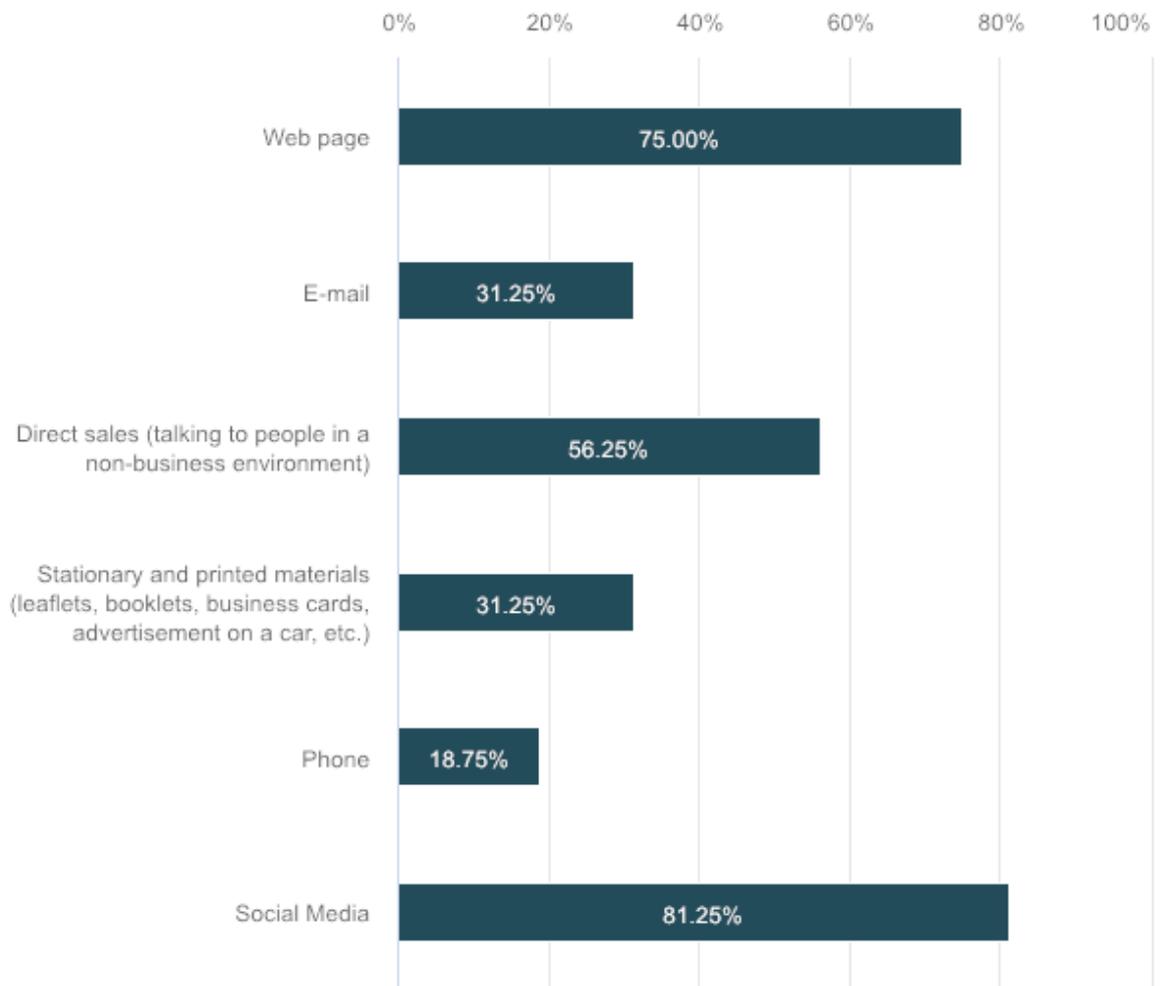
Number of respondents: 14



	Number of times the answer selected (n)	Percent
Helsinki	6	42.86%
Espoo, Vantaa	2	14.29%
Rest of Uusimaa	5	35.71%
Other parts of Finland	1	7.14%

## 2. How do you market your services (can choose more than one)?

Number of respondents: 16, selected answers: 47

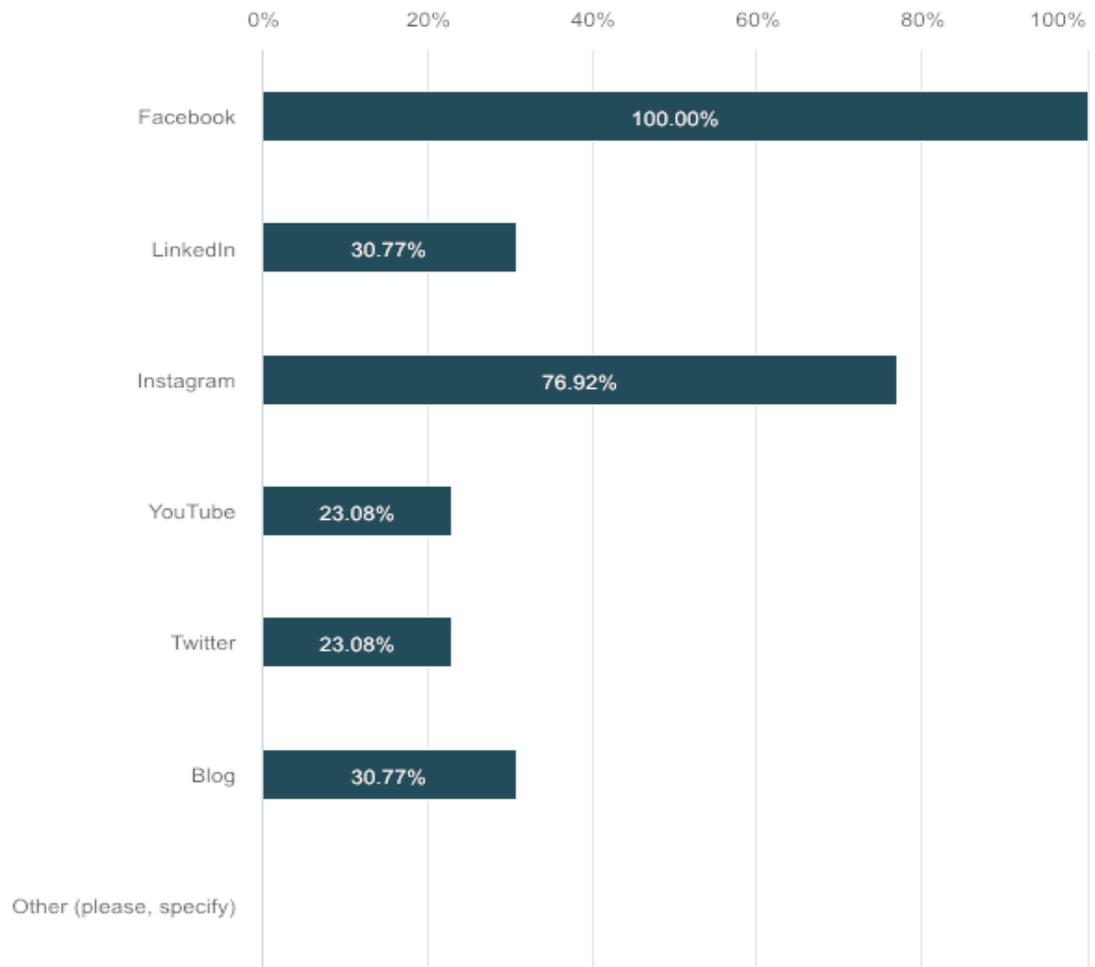


	n	Percent
Web page	12	75%
E-mail	5	31.25%
Direct sales (talking to people in a non-business environment)	9	56.25%
Stationary and printed materials (leaflets, booklets, business cards, advertisement on a car, etc.)	5	31.25%
Phone	3	18.75%
Social Media	13	81.25%

**3. Please, specify what Social Media platforms do you use:**

Number of respondents: 13, selected answers: 37

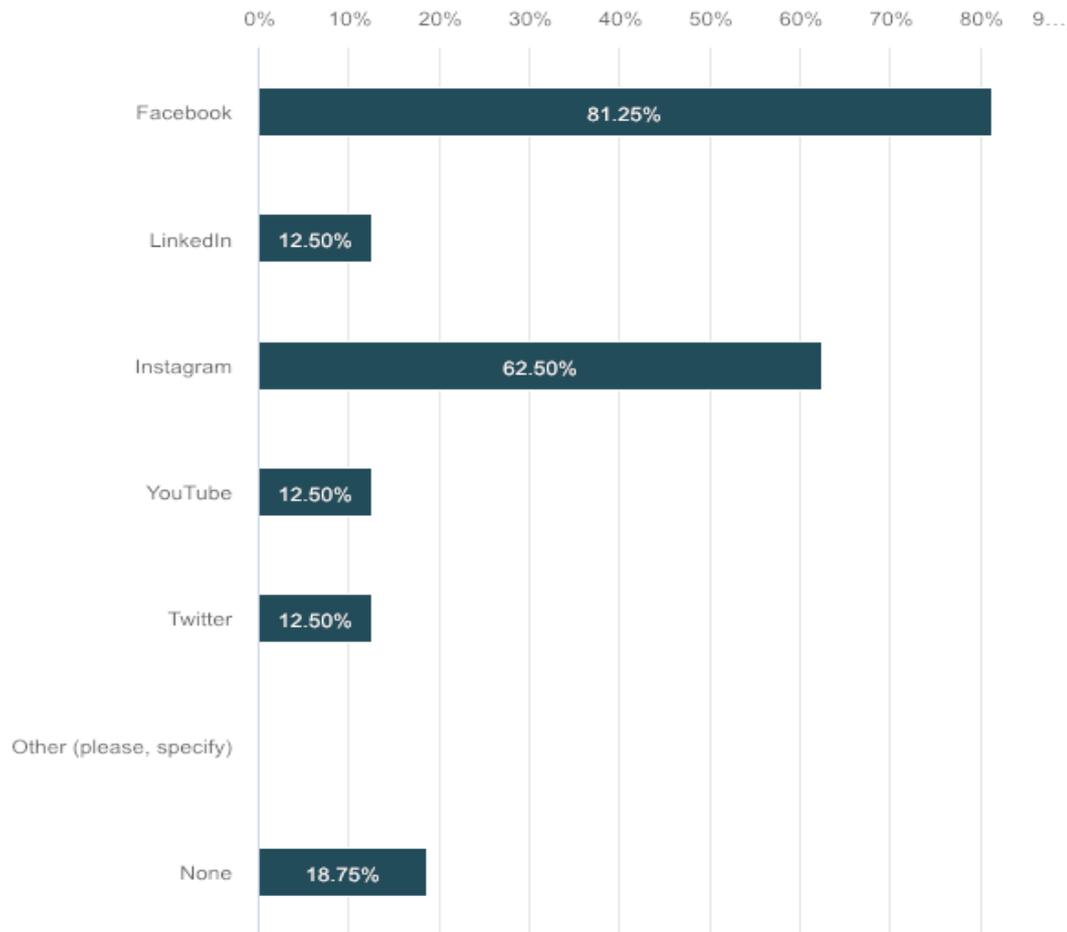
*(Note: question appeared in case a respondent chose "Social Media" in the answer above)*



	n	Percent
Facebook	13	100%
LinkedIn	4	30.77%
Instagram	10	76.92%
YouTube	3	23.08%
Twitter	3	23.08%
Blog	4	30.77%
Other (please, specify)	0	0%

#### 4. What Social Media platforms do you use to reach your customers?

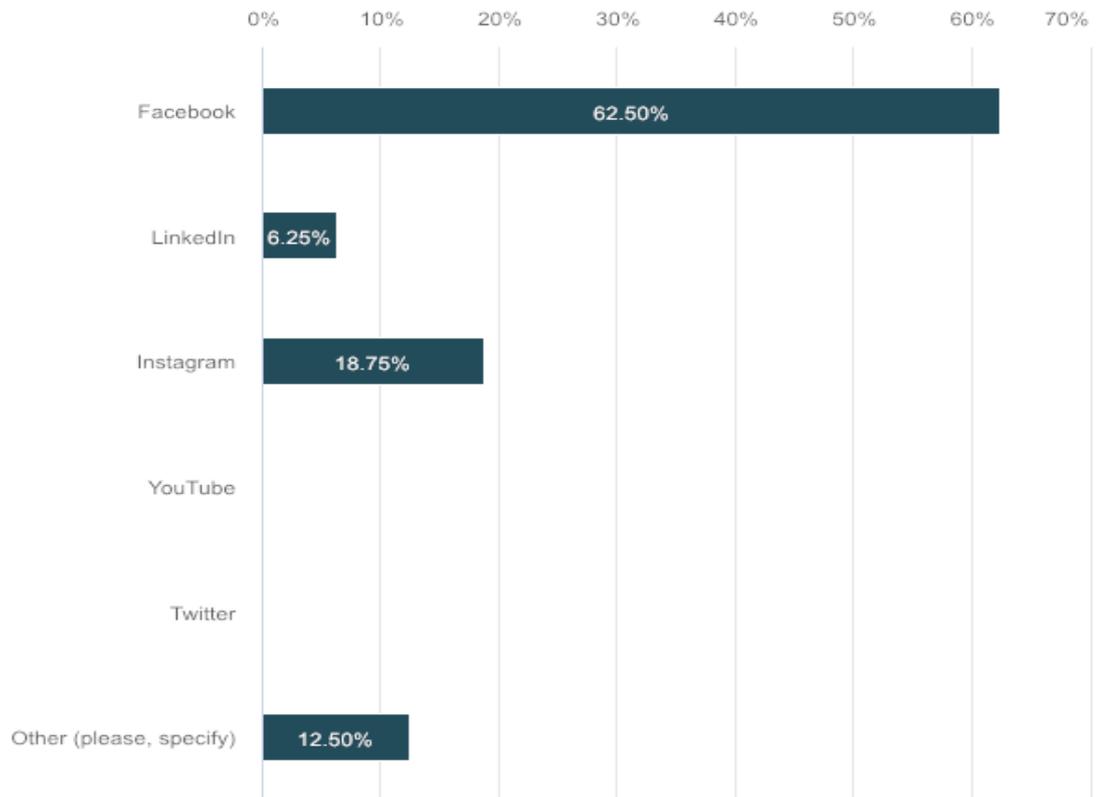
Number of respondents: 16, selected answers: 32



	n	Percent
Facebook	13	81.25%
LinkedIn	2	12.5%
Instagram	10	62.5%
YouTube	2	12.5%
Twitter	2	12.5%
Other (please, specify)	0	0%
None	3	18.75%

**5. Try to estimate, through which Social Media platform your PT business gets more attention?**

Number of respondents: 16



*Notes on "Other" specifications:*

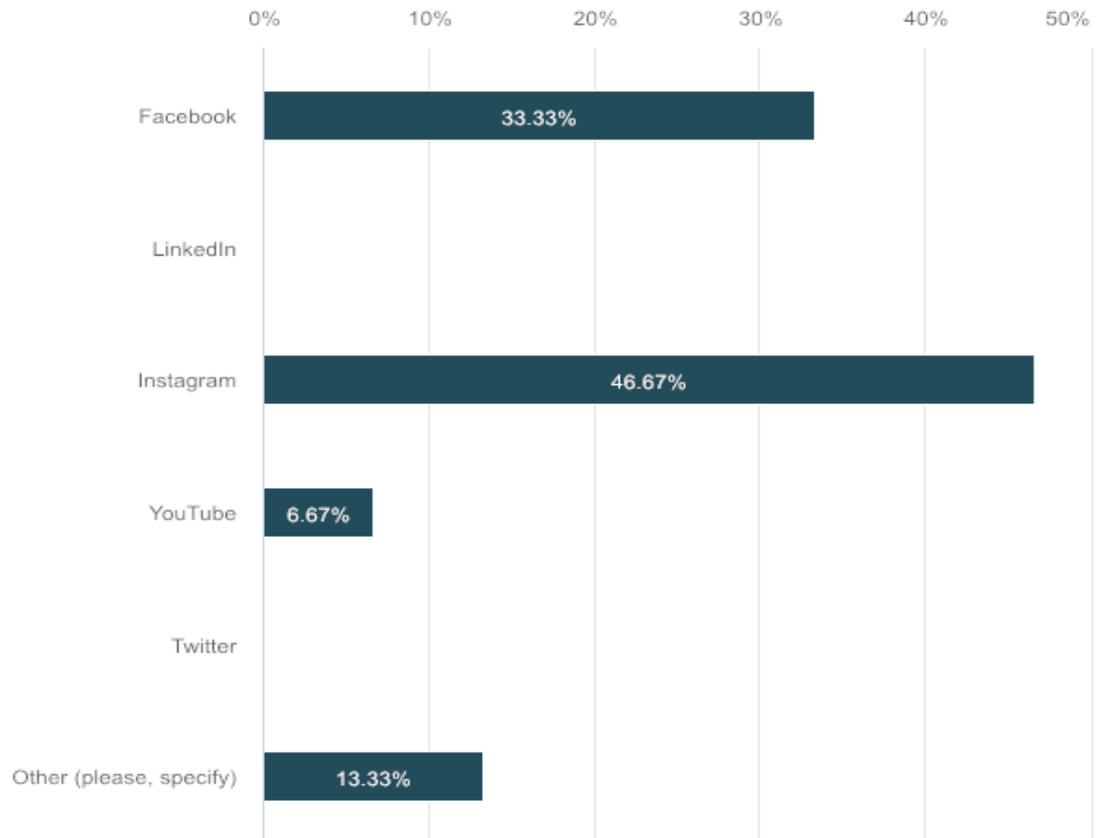
*"Blog" (1 response);*

*"Not in use" (1 response);*

	n	Percent
Facebook	10	62.5%
LinkedIn	1	6.25%
Instagram	3	18.75%
YouTube	0	0%
Twitter	0	0%
Other (please, specify)	2	12.5%

**6. What Social Media platform do you consider the second most valuable for your PT business?**

Number of respondents: 15



*Notes on "Other" specifications:*

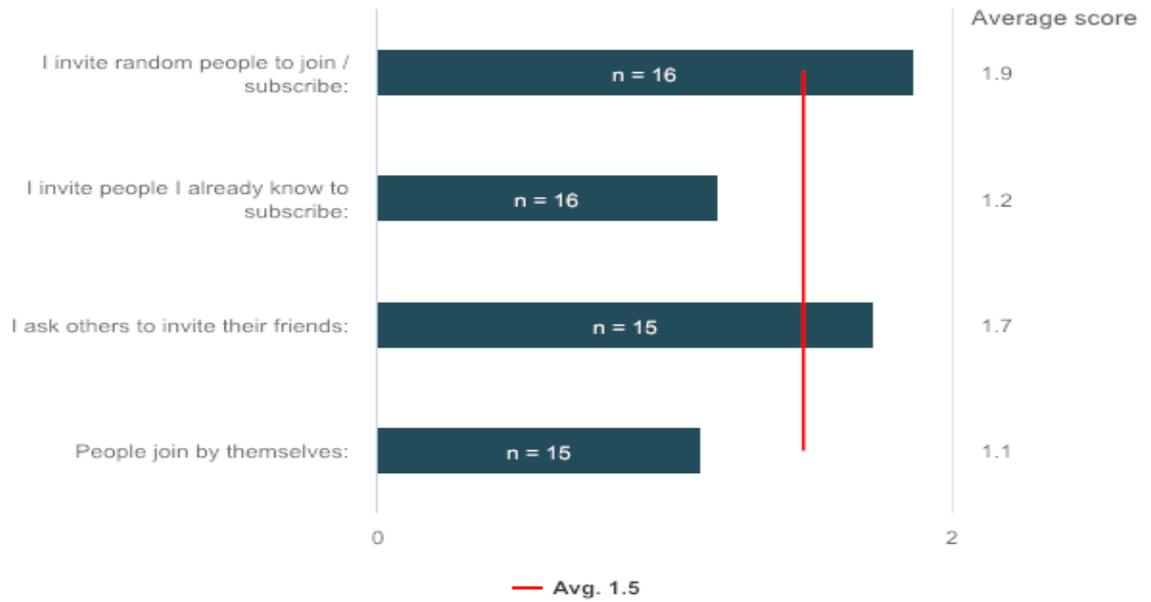
*"Blog" (1 response);*

*"Not in use" (1 response);*

	n	Percent
Facebook	5	33.33%
LinkedIn	0	0%
Instagram	7	46.67%
YouTube	1	6.67%
Twitter	0	0%
Other (please, specify)	2	13.33%

## 7. YES or NO

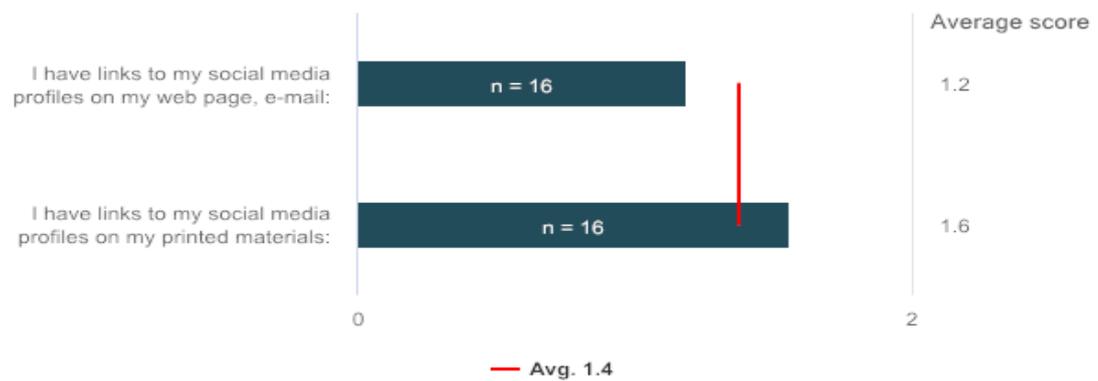
Number of respondents: 16



	YES	NO	Average	Median
I invite random people to join / subscribe:	12.5%	87.5%	1.88	2
I invite people I already know to subscribe:	81.25%	18.75%	1.19	1
I ask others to invite their friends:	26.67%	73.33%	1.73	2
People join by themselves:	86.67%	13.33%	1.13	1

## 8. YES or NO

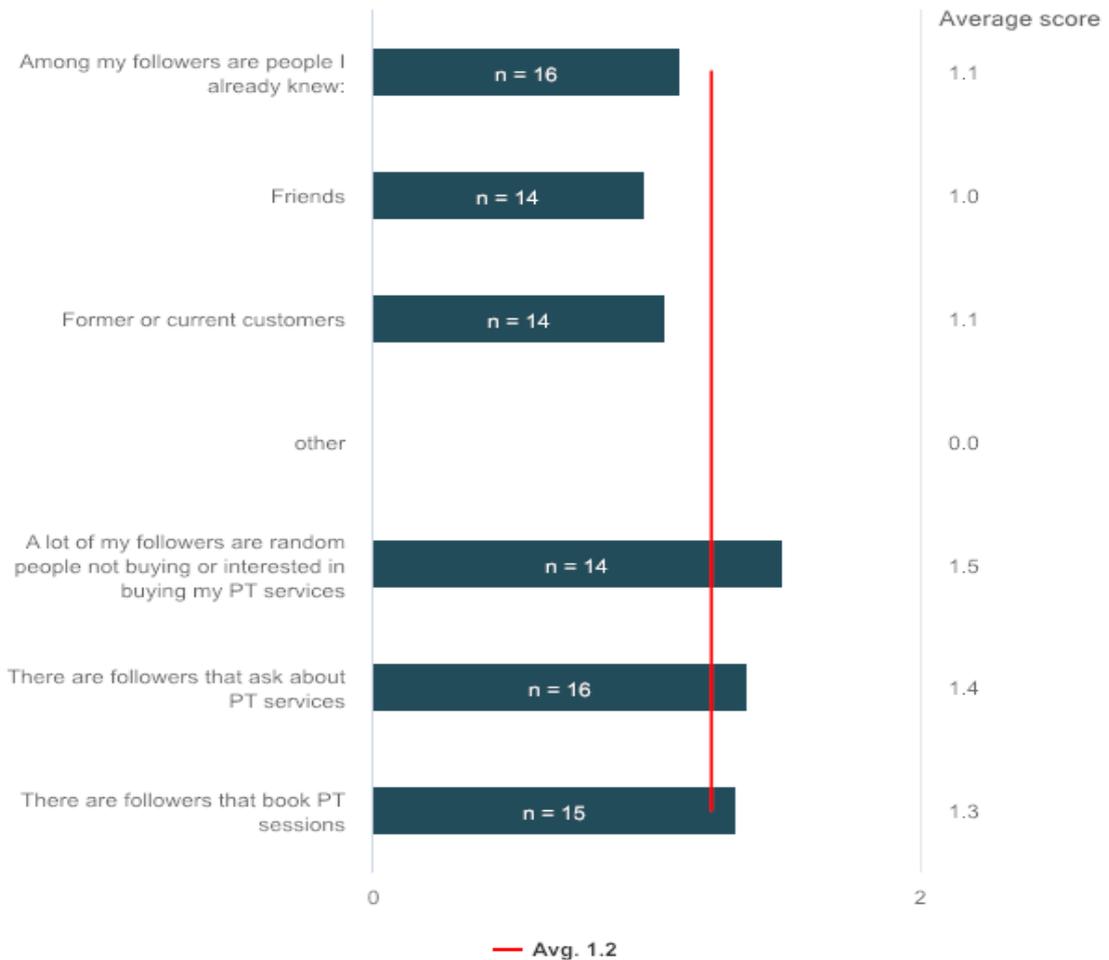
Number of respondents: 16



	YES	NO	Average	Median
I have links to my social media profiles on my web page, e-mail:	81.25%	18.75%	1.19	1
I have links to my social media profiles on my printed materials:	43.75%	56.25%	1.56	2

## 9. AGREE or DISAGREE

Number of respondents: 16

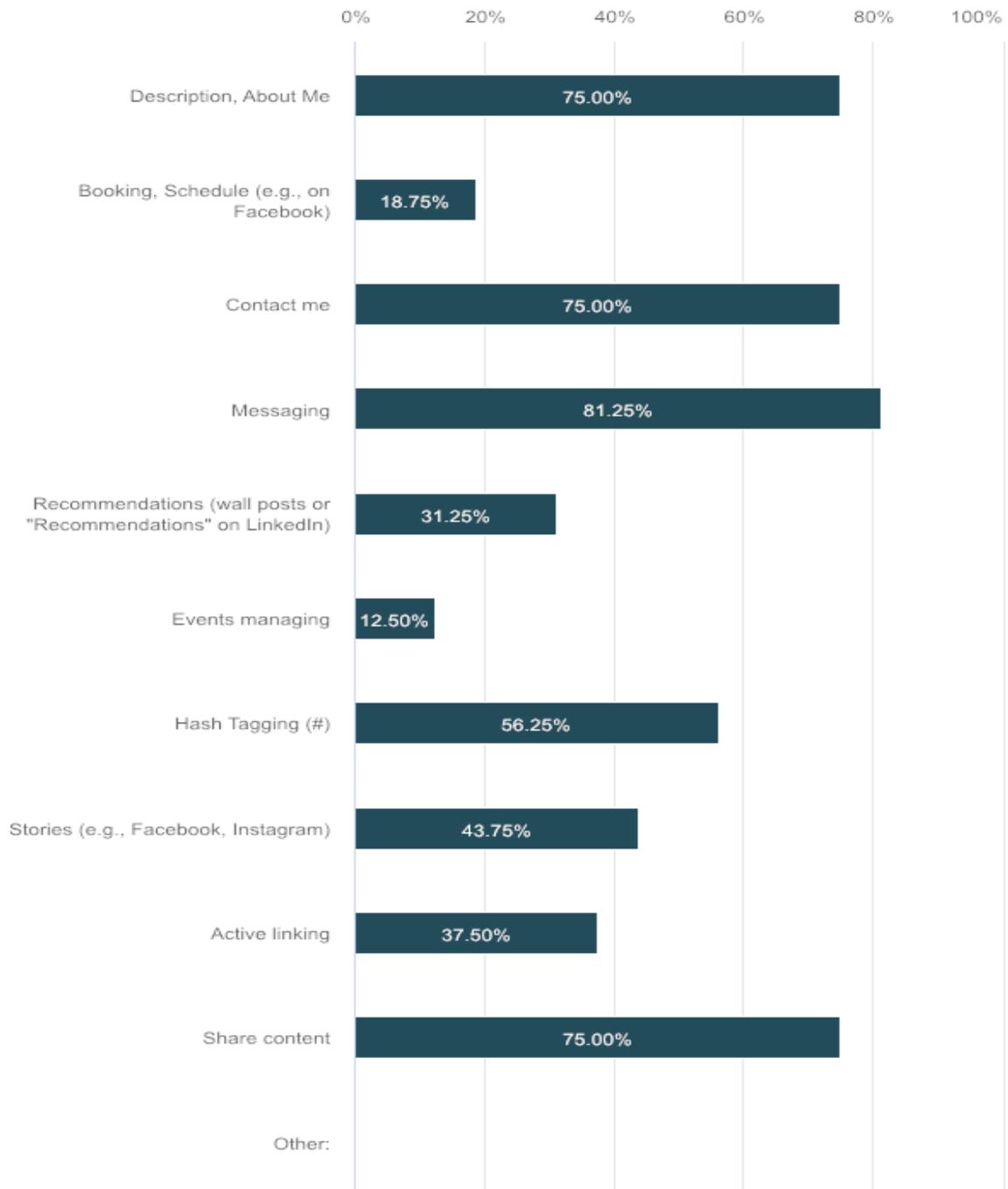


(Note: specifications on “Among my followers are people I already knew” appeared in case if the statement chosen as “Agree” with; the specifications are: “Friends”, “Former or current customer”, “Other”);

	AGREE	DISAGREE	Average	Median
Among my followers are people I already knew:	87.5%	12.5%	1.13	1
Friends	100%	0%	1	1
Former or current customers	92.86%	7.14%	1.07	1
Other	-	-	-	-
A lot of my followers are random people not buying or interested in buying my PT services	50%	50%	1.5	1.5
There are followers that ask about PT services	62.5%	37.5%	1.38	1
There are followers that book PT sessions	66.67%	33.33%	1.33	1

**10. What available features do you use on Social Media platforms (can choose several options):**

Number of respondents: 16, selected answers: 81

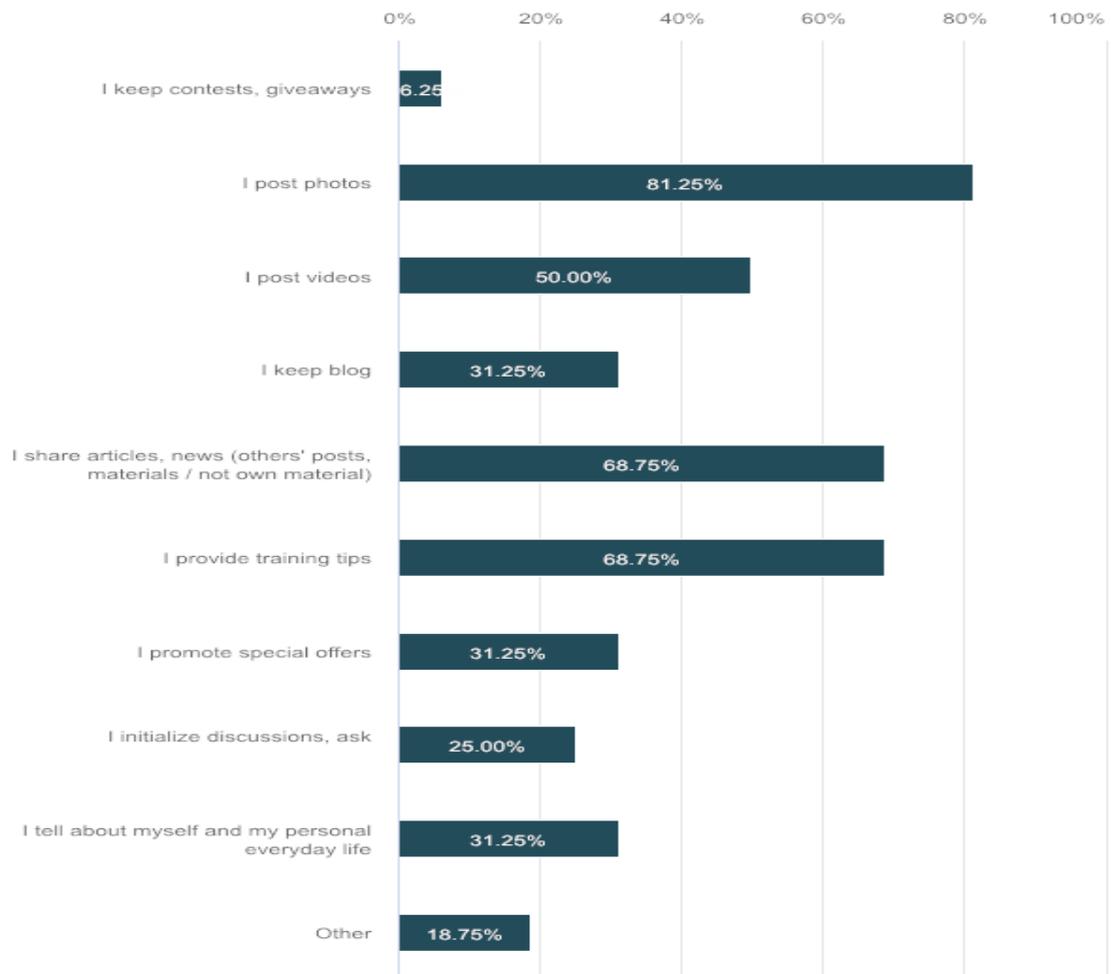


*No specifications on "Other" were given as none additional social media features or tools were used or memorized by the respondents;*

	N	Percent
Description, About Me	12	75%
Booking, Schedule (e.g., on Facebook)	3	18.75%
Contact me	12	75%
Messaging	13	81.25%
Recommendations (wall posts or "Recommendations" on LinkedIn)	5	31.25%
Events managing	2	12.5%
Hash Tagging (#)	9	56.25%
Stories (e.g., Facebook, Instagram)	7	43.75%
Active linking	6	37.5%
Share content	12	75%
Other:	0	0%

**11. What content do you post on your Social Media profiles (can choose several options):**

Number of respondents: 16, selected answers: 66



Notes on “Other” specifications:

“None” (1 response);

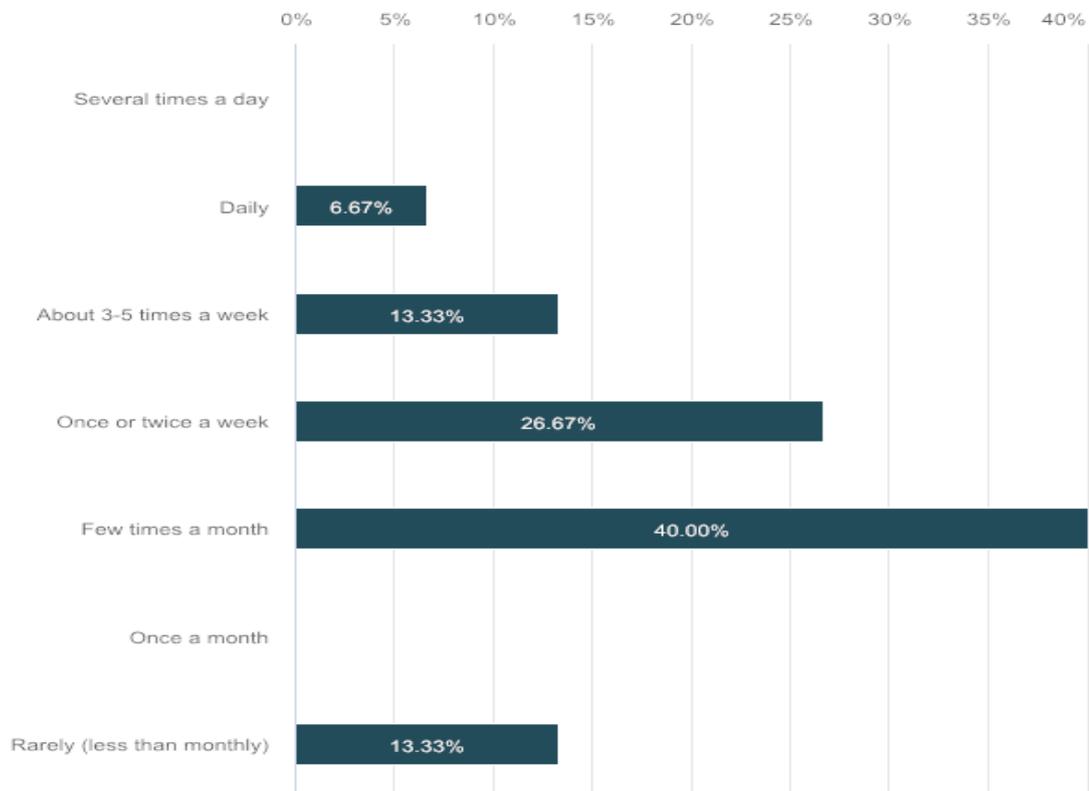
“I provide nutrition tips and recipes” (1 response);

“I give information, write summaries about topics that I cover in my business” (1 response);

	n	Percent
I keep contests, giveaways	1	6.25%
I post photos	13	81.25%
I post videos	8	50%
I keep blog	5	31.25%
I share articles, news (others' posts, materials / not own material)	11	68.75%
I provide training tips	11	68.75%
I promote special offers	5	31.25%
I initialize discussions, ask questions	4	25%
I tell about myself and my personal everyday life	5	31.25%
Other	3	18.75%

## 12. How often do you make posts on your Social Media profiles?

Number of respondents: 15



	n	Percent
Several times a day	0	0%
Daily	1	6.67%
About 3-5 times a week	2	13.33%
Once or twice a week	4	26.67%
Few times a month	6	40%
Once a month	0	0%
Rarely (less than monthly)	2	13.33%

**13. How do you think, is being visible on Social Media help your Personal Training business to grow, get more attention, and find more new potential customers? (share your ideas)**

Number of respondents: 16

Responses
Social media is number one marketing place for me.
Being on social media is a must for small service businesses.
Background about me...PT is my second job and I need to keep it small, therefore, I have two gyms where i keep my PT information in a notewall...It's been enough to get 2-3 customers for trained. This is kind of hobby for me being PT.
It helps potential customers to understand my skills and the benefits of healthy lifestyle and buying my services. Skills and my persona are the things that are shown. I think that most important part is the inspiration and motivation to live healthy life in general. As people try to achieve better health, the need for training services grows. At first I need to sell them the idea to have more movement and sports in their day-to-day lives.
My business is local, so getting local people to know me is important. Doing social media marketing also helps me to learn how to write, take photos, make videos that are clear and helpful. The learning process is part of the price.
Free customer base and easy and free platform for marketing.
Attending sport and fitness events may help finding potential customers.
Absolutely! It's the best way and also the fastest way!
(No comments)
I consider Social media the best way to promote services and get attention.
I've been lucky with my customers (they contact me after somebody is recommending or they see the results my customers have achieved), so no need to do any kind of marketing so I'm keeping

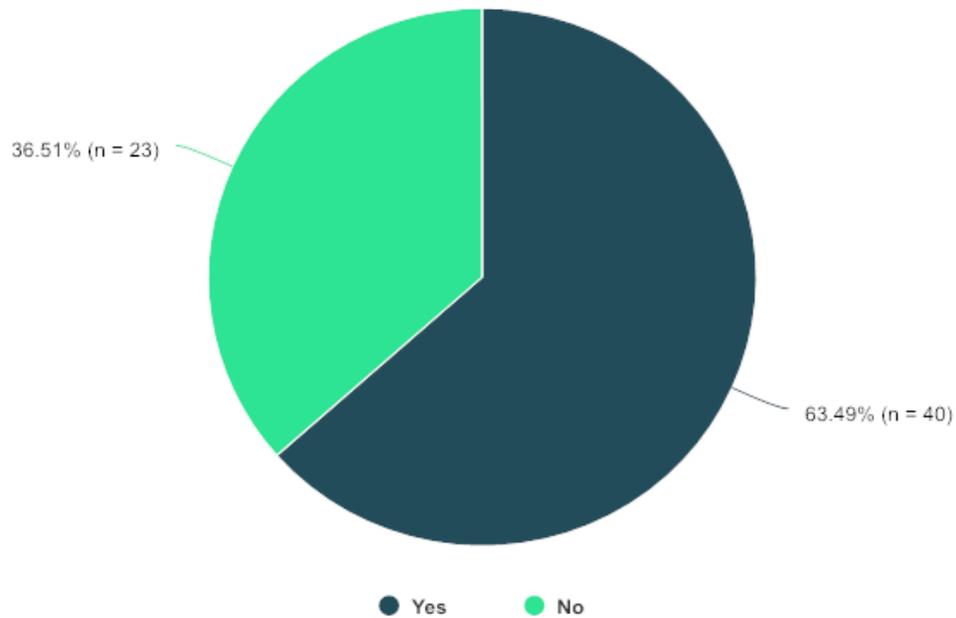
very low profile on Social Media!
More people know about me and my services
It's a channel through which potential customers can get an idea of me, my coaching style and professionalism
I assume that it helps. I have just started my business and also just building my own social media strategy so to speak. I think that I will be more active also on this in the near future.
These days it seems to be the number one method of getting exposure unless you get into the newspapers and on TV.
Perhaps just a little bit.
I used to be very active on Instagram, posting three times a day most days, but lately I have been stepping down and focusing on family and health etc., so my company and Instagram are on a standstill. It's really not easy to find customers, and I'm certainly no pro when it comes to social media marketing.
(No comments)

## Appendix 9. Questionnaire results (prospective customers)

Total number of respondents: 63

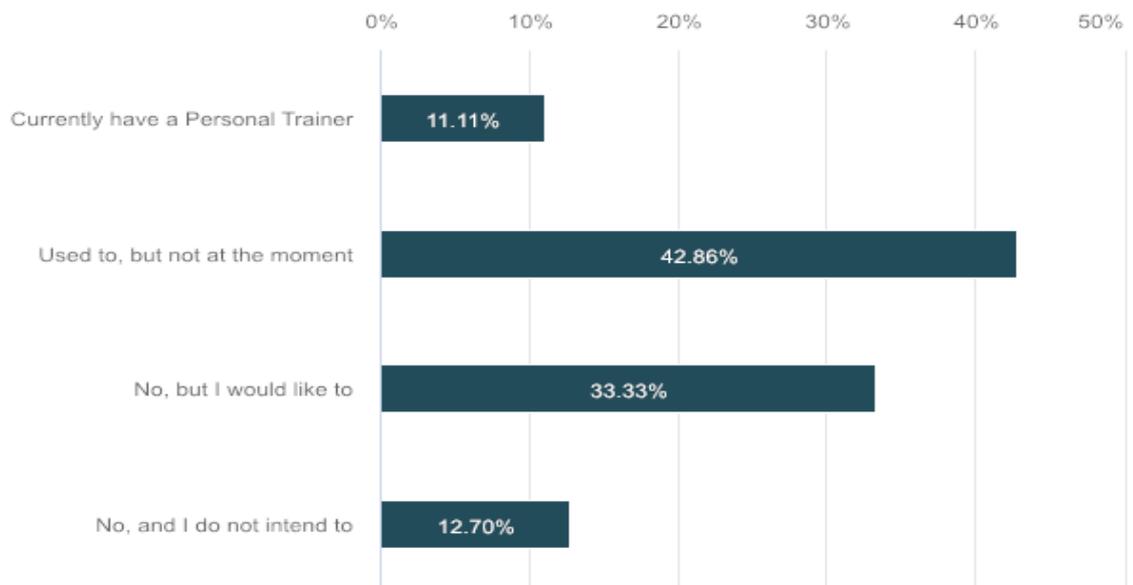
### 1. Do you currently have a gym membership?

Number of respondents: 63



### 2. Have you ever used the services of a Personal Trainer?

Number of respondents: 63



### 3. What Social Media platforms do you personally use?

Number of respondents: 63

Variations of answer:

Use often (4)

Use less often (3)

Have profile but rarely use (2)

Do not use at all (1)

	Use often	Use less often	Have profile but rarely use	Do not use at all	Average	Median
Facebook	67.74%	19.36%	11.29%	1.61%	3.53	4
LinkedIn	21.43%	23.21%	26.79%	28.57%	2.38	2
YouTube	58.62%	18.97%	17.24%	5.17%	3.31	4
Instagram	65%	16.66%	6.67%	11.67%	3.35	4
Twitter	11.32%	1.89%	15.09%	71.7%	1.53	1

### 4. TRUE or FALSE:

PLEASE, ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BASED ON YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH SOCIAL MEDIA BY CHOOSING ONE OF THE OPTIONS

Number of respondents: 63

	TRUE	FALSE	Average	Median
I am subscribed to gym profile(s) / page(s):	53.97%	46.03%	1.46	1
I am subscribed to Personal Trainer(s) pages:	46.77%	53.23%	1.53	2
I am subscribed to sport, exercises related pages / groups:	68.25%	31.75%	1.32	1
I am not subscribed to any of the above:	32.79%	67.21%	1.67	2
I do not have any Social Media profiles:	3.28%	96.72%	1.97	2

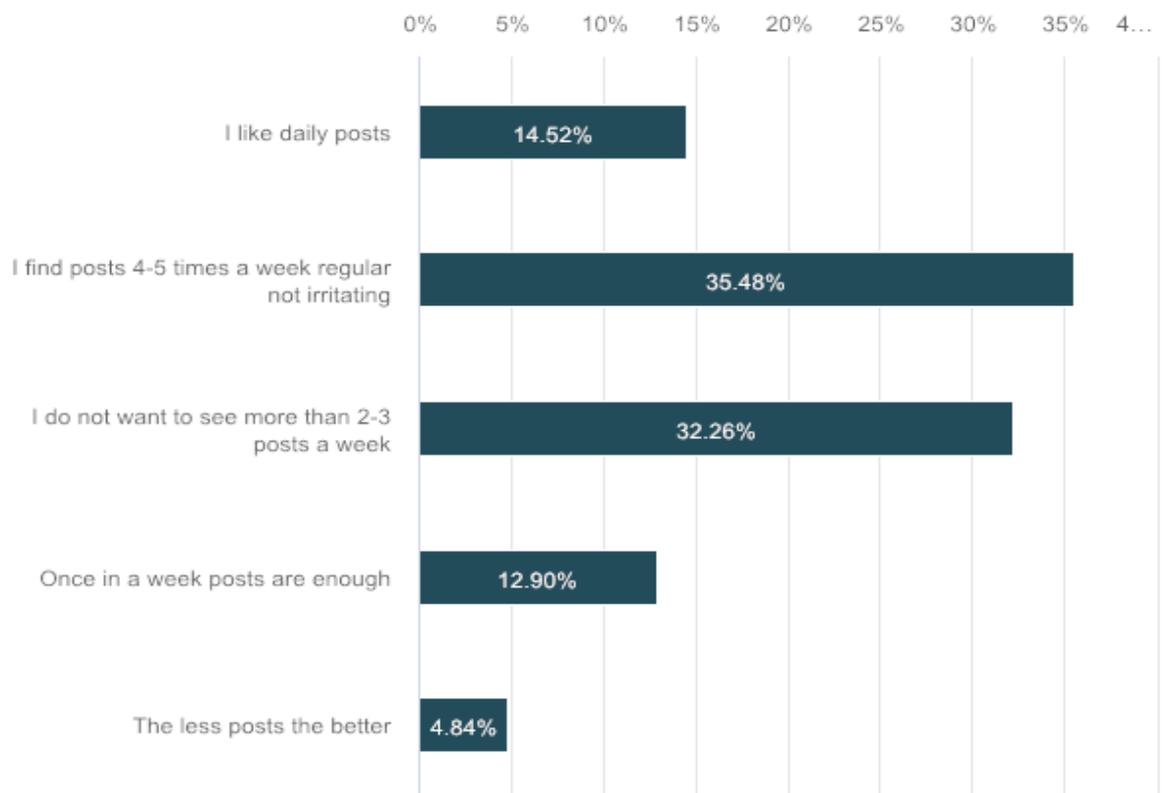
**5. Regarding groups, pages or profiles you subscribed to in Social Media (not friends accounts):**

Number of respondents: 63

	TRUE	FALSE	Average	Median
I can participate in open discussions, conversations:	50%	50%	1.5	1.5
I can initialize discussions, ask questions myself:	43.55%	56.45%	1.56	2
I leave comments on others' posts:	46.77%	53.23%	1.53	2
I put "likes" or other emotions on others' posts / news:	83.87%	16.13%	1.16	1
I can share others' posts to my own profile:	45.16%	54.84%	1.55	2
I just like to read the posts in my news feed:	85.48%	14.52%	1.15	1

**6. Please choose one from the below that is more suitable for you when thinking about posts in sport and fitness related groups, profiles or pages:**

Number of respondents: 62



**7. If it is possible to get a discount or win a free personal training session in a campaign, would you be interested to do the following in order to participate:**

Number of respondents: 63

	YES	NO	Average	Median
Sharing or tagging own training related pictures	31.15%	68.85%	1.69	2
Sharing or tagging own training related videos	18.03%	81.97%	1.82	2
Sharing or tagging any other self-made related content (story, e.g.)	31.15%	68.85%	1.69	2
Sharing a campaign post to own profile	43.55%	56.45%	1.56	2
Leaving comments or answering a question under the campaign post	71.67%	28.33%	1.28	1

**8. What content do you personally expect or enjoy seeing when subscribed to any Personal Trainers profiles or pages in Social Media:**

Number of respondents: 63

	Interested	Not interested	Average	Median
Training tips	93.65%	6.35%	1.06	1
Information on sport events and activities in the area	56.45%	43.55%	1.44	1
Available services and prices	75.81%	24.19%	1.24	1
Contests, giveaways	50%	50%	1.5	1.5
Special offers for the training sessions	67.21%	32.79%	1.33	1
Information on Personal Trainer's own life	42.62%	57.38%	1.57	2
Open discussions on training related issues	74.19%	25.81%	1.26	1
More photos	55.17%	44.83%	1.45	1
More videos	66.1%	33.9%	1.34	1
Other	4.76%	95.24%	1.95	2

*Notes: there were no specifications on the "Other" section given;*

### 9. Open comments (share your ideas, thoughts):

Number of respondents: 4

Responses
I do participate into training program in which private Facebook group is good way to create a community, a tribe.
Nice when personal trainer or gym uses humor in posts sometimes.
I like short videos with exercises. I am ready to pay for an app, but I would want to try it first without inputting credit card details.
Every time I tried to find personal trainer I faced many difficulties. It would be good if there would be one page with all the trainers, prices, links to profiles, in which gyms do they work.
I feel more comfortable when I know Personal Trainer's background in terms of education, experience, achievements, so some posts about this would increase my interest in the particular specialist. Also, sometimes, it's good to see some personal life of the trainer - it makes him or her more "human" and increases trust.

## Appendix 10. Guidelines for personal training service providers on social media marketing

### Guidelines for personal training service providers

*on using various social media features and tools  
for optimizing own social media presence and performance  
in order to accompany potential customers  
through the first stage of their customer journey.*

- ✓ Advisable **social media platforms** to use (in Finland):
  - Facebook, Instagram, YouTube;
  - Facebook is the most popular according to Statista2019, and the results of both questionnaires conducted in terms of this study;
  - Variety of additional social media platforms for considering; blog, Twitter, LinkedIn;
- ✓ Concentrate on building the well-structured, easy-to-navigate, visually appealing company's social media profile for raising awareness and providing all the essential information;
- ✓ **Facebook advices:**
  - Facebook Profile for the personal trainer (providing all personal information on education, expertise, qualifications; links to services Facebook Page, other social media platforms, contact information; make personal contacts);
  - Facebook Page is preferable for the services / company profile;
  - Use clear business category (Gym, Physical Fitness Center, Coach, Personal coach, Fitness Trainer, Health and Wellness, etc.)
- ✓ Include good **introduction**: "About me", "Description", "Bio" (link to, if used, Facebook Profile, information on education, expertise, qualifications, experiences);
  - Use clear simple name and username (PersonalTrainer@PersonalTrainer), avoid using underscores and numbers;
  - "Learn more about us" button;
  - Add areas of expertise (personal training, nutrition, group training, particular fitness trend, particular group of customers, etc.);
  - Can create a permanent link to Introduction page (blog post, article, etc.);
- ✓ Use social media features and tools of **visualization**:
  - Profile and cover photos, fonts, background, themes);
  - Use company's / personal trainer's own logo, colors;
  - Add photos to posts;
- ✓ Give clear **directions** (Location with map, "Find Us", physical address);
- ✓ Provide different options on how to **contact** the company, give all contact information: "Contact me", "Additional contacts" (phone number, e-mail, links to other social media platforms, web, blog);
- ✓ Include clear **products and services description**: "Services", "Offers" (can make additional introduction posts about separate services, add visuals, etc.);

- ✓ **Reviews and Recommendations:** "Reviews and Recommendations", "Recommendations", "Success Stories";
- ✓ Allow prospective customers to ask for advices, expertise, opinions, etc. - "Ask question", initializing open discussions, allowing posting;
- ✓ Show **expertise:** "Ask questions", "Answers" (answer questions);
- ✓ Location tagging, add "Check-in" possibility for customers (better visibility);
- ✓ Allow easy **contacting:** "Send message", "Contact me" buttons, links to e-mail, messaging, "Ask questions";
- ✓ Enable customers to place orders, **book the services:** "Book now", "Shop", links to reservation systems, link to the reservation application, link to the web page reservation, etc. ;
- ✓ Use **hash tagging:**
  - Create specific unique hash tag for the company/personal trainer;
  - Use keywords in different variations in hash tagging for better visibility and appearing in search results (#personaltraining, #personaltrainer, #training, #nutritiontips, #Helsinki, #trainingtips, #grouptraining, #fitnesscoach, etc.);
  - Can start with general words and then move to more specific
- ✓ Monitor company's **mentioning** in others' posts:
  - Search by hash tags;
  - "Being mentioned in the post";
  - "Visitor's photos";
  - Monitor linking (Facebook) in the discussions;
- ✓ Link to other experts in the industry (have connections): "Pages liked by Page", "Related Pages", "Pages you might like";
- ✓ Use **calls to action** supported by links: "For more training / nutrition tips subscribe to my Instagram account", "Book your first free consultation by following the link below", etc.
- ✓ Encourage service **trials:** "Book your first free consultation here";
- ✓ Subscribe to **RSS feeds** (LinkedIn), provide RSS feed (Blog) for customers to subscribe;
- ✓ Average optimal **posting frequency:** 2-4 posts / week;
- ✓ Video content is more informative than photos;
- ✓ Choose appealing video captures, add logo/name on the video or photo content pieces (corner, beneath; at the end of the video);
- ✓ Customers "**comfort zone**": leaving "like" or other emotion icons, leaving a comment under the post, answering a question;
  - Less likable actions to perform: share own photos, videos, share the posts;
  - Campaign-wise, customers can tag own friends under the posts;
- ✓ Additionally, posts about personal trainer's own life ("**humanizing**" the service provider);

- ✓ Use **Stories** to tell about most important company or industry related issues (new service, special offer, industry news, events, new qualifications, etc.);
- ✓ "**Events**" to cover own generated events or events that personal trainer participates in (can be sport related events such as marathons, competitions, industry fairs, etc.);
- ✓ Share **professional content**: articles, industry news, industry trends, etc.;
- ✓ Content with **listing** captures attention (e.g., "5 simple exercises for your everyday training", "7 easy-to-cook dishes that would support you through your training", etc.);
- ✓ Provide **special offers and campaigns** (use actively along with tagging friends, hash tagging for better visibility);
- ✓ Create **specific** special offers for specific social media platforms (e.g., Facebook specific, Instagram specific) and mention about them in other social media platforms;
- ✓ **Integrate** social media platforms (use linking, share content);