Creating a social media marketing plan for a small luxury hotel

Jenna Kilpelä
Abstract

Social media marketing has grown dramatically in the hotel industry in the past few years and it is one of the most powerful marketing platforms existing.

This thesis is made for a small luxury hotel situated in Helsinki. It presents ways to plan and execute an efficient social media marketing plan and studies the main social media channels as well as explains different types of social media marketing. The channels discussed are the what the commissioning company and most of the hotels in Finland are already using. The theoretical content is acquired from recently published books and online publications.

The aim of this thesis is to present a clear and informative social media marketing plan that the commissioning company can benefit from. A social media marketing plan is created based on the information gathered in the theoretical part and from an open-ended questionnaire that was sent out for the general manager and the marketing director of the commissioning hotel. The brand image and the current social media trends were taken into consideration when creating the final product that is the social media marketing plan. This plan is made into a Power Point format so that it is easy to present and modify as we know that social media is in a constant change.

Action was taken with the commissioning company’s social media pages in the whilst of making this thesis. The results were clearly visible due to improved quality of the posts as well as more frequent posting times.

Keywords
Social media marketing, hotel industry, social media channels, brand image
# Table of contents

1 Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1
  1.1 Delimitations ........................................................................................................... 2
  1.2 Aim and objectives ................................................................................................. 2
  1.3 Key concepts .......................................................................................................... 3
2 Social media platforms ................................................................................................. 4
  2.1 Instagram ............................................................................................................... 4
  2.2 Facebook .............................................................................................................. 4
3 Basics of social media marketing ................................................................................ 5
4 Types of social media marketing ................................................................................... 6
  4.1 Viral marketing ....................................................................................................... 6
  4.2 Experiential marketing ............................................................................................ 6
  4.3 Transmedia storytelling .......................................................................................... 6
  4.4 Contest marketing .................................................................................................. 6
5 Planning social media marketing .................................................................................. 8
  5.1 Situation analysis ................................................................................................. 8
  5.2 Objectives ............................................................................................................ 9
  5.3 Strategy and tactics ............................................................................................... 9
  5.4 Action and control ............................................................................................... 9
6 Social media marketing in hotel industry ................................................................. 10
  6.1 Social media brand image ..................................................................................... 11
  6.2 Tourism and social media ....................................................................................... 12
  6.3 Motivating employees to take part in social media ............................................... 12
7 Current social media trends ....................................................................................... 13
8 Product's starting point ............................................................................................... 14
9 Product ....................................................................................................................... 15
  9.1 Social media brand image ..................................................................................... 15
  9.2 Objectives ............................................................................................................ 15
  9.3 Channels and instructions ...................................................................................... 16
  9.4 Responsibilities ..................................................................................................... 17
  9.5 Trends .................................................................................................................. 17
  9.6 Development ideas .............................................................................................. 18
10 Changes and improvements ...................................................................................... 19
  10.1 Challenges ........................................................................................................... 22
11 Discussion ................................................................................................................ 24
12 Own learning and professional development .......................................................... 25
References ..................................................................................................................... 26
1 Introduction

The topic of this thesis is to develop a social media marketing plan for a hotel that I’m currently working in as a receptionist. Hotel Haven is a luxury boutique hotel that is part of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World organization. They have hotels in more than 80 countries and all the hotels are individual, unique and high standard (Small Luxury Hotels of the World 2018).

Besides front desk duties, I am also responsible of doing the Instagram Stories for the hotel’s Instagram account. Therefore, I’m already involved in the social media marketing of the hotel. I have always been into photography and been personally using many different social media platforms from a very young age. Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat and Twitter being the most used platforms that I’m very familiar with.

Social media marketing is a very relevant topic that concerns the whole hotel industry. With this social media marketing plan the commissioning company will get fresh new ideas on how to develop their social media and get a better understanding on what things need to be taken into a consideration. It’s a powerful marketing tool that doesn’t necessarily require huge amounts of money. I’m intrigued on how social media can be used in marketing and in what ways it should be exploited to get the best possible results.

I’m into luxury hotels and the competition is getting tougher since new hotels are constantly built and the niche in Finland is quite small for the luxury hotel segment. Even though Finland doesn’t have an official 5-star rating system, according to TripAdvisor there are only three five-star hotels in Finland that are all located in Helsinki including Hotel Haven. They are owned by Kämp Collection Hotels chain which means that they are partner hotels and not exactly real competitors.

The emphasis of social media marketing comes into the picture when the guests are comparing the hotels and choosing in which hotel, they want to stay in. It’s getting more and more difficult to maintain the guests’ interest and keep them choosing the same hotel when they have more options to choose from. The customers are most likely to choose a hotel that has a nice up-to-date social media rather than a hotel whose social media is not well put together or nearly non-existent. Therefore, it’s important that the hotel’s social media is presenting the hotel in a beautiful and interesting way. However, the picture that the social media provides to the customers, needs to be realistic. Otherwise, it will result in the customers feeling disappointed and even fooled. This will lead to bad reviews and accusations of false advertisement.
With strong social media marketing it’s possible to both attract new customers and keep the old customers coming back. It’s an important tool for maintaining the customer relationships and building new ones. Nowadays social media is used so much that it’s replacing old fashioned marketing ways that quite often cost a lot of money and time for the companies to plan and establish. Social media has a wide reach which is why in today’s world it’s the most powerful marketing tool.

1.1 Delimitations

This social media marketing plan is narrowed down to the channels that have been decided with the company to be the most effective and sensible for them. Using many different channels takes a lot of resources which must be taken into consideration when making a realistic social media marketing plan.

The budget for social media marketing is left out. Having a budget may limit some ideas that can possibly be executed in the future. Hotel Haven is part of Kämp Collection Hotels which means that some of the paid marketing is done with co-operation with the whole chain. Due to this, the focus is on non-paid social media content and earned media. Detailed paid campaigns are not included in this work.

1.2 Aim and objectives

The aim is to make a realistic social media marketing plan that takes into consideration the specific needs and wishes of the commissioning company. The plan needs to be clear and easy to present for both the current employees as well as the new ones. The goal is that all the people involved in the social media marketing of the hotel have a clear understanding of what type of material, how often and in which style it needs to be posted. The hotel’s social media needs to be cohesive and it should present the same style as the hotel. This is only possible when all the people involved in the social media of the hotel have the same vision and understanding of the brand image.

Since social media is constantly evolving, it’s important that the commissioning company is aware of the recent trends and changes. Following the continuous information on what type of social media marketing is the most effective within hotel industry will bring an extra advantage. With current information the hotel can determine which types of social media marketing is suitable for their objectives.
1.3 Key concepts

**Social media** is a place where people can not only create content but also share, comment and add to it. It can be in different formats such as text, video, audio and pictures. It provides a way for people to express their thoughts, relationships and ideas online. (Scott 2017, 62.)

**Social media marketing** means marketing through different online platforms. In the past twenty years online marketing and the use of social media has grown significantly. Companies cannot ignore the importance of social media marketing anymore. If social media isn’t incorporated into companies’ strategical business and marketing plans, the results will fall short. (Kananen 2018, 11, 14-15.)

**Content marketing** is creating value for the reader without having a product or service in the spotlight. However, with this marketing technique the brand is on the readers minds and easily reachable at the time of need. (Coles 2018, 20.)

**Social selling** combines already existing traditional marketing methods to social media sites where the purpose is to create and strengthen relationships. (Pääkkönen 2017, 27.)
2 Social media platforms

In this thesis we concentrate on two different social media platforms that are the main channels the commissioning company wants to focus on. These channels have been chosen because of their high percentage of active users worldwide and because they’re the two main social media platforms that hotels in Finland use for their social media marketing.

2.1 Instagram

Instagram is a picture sharing mobile app that is owned by Facebook. It is used for taking, editing and sharing pictures and videos (Cambridge Dictionary 2018).

In June 2018 it reached 1 billion monthly active users and the figure is expected to rise. It is seen as a useful social media marketing tool. Most of its users are teens and young Millennials. 41 percent of the global Instagram users are under 25 years of age. (Statista 2019.)

2.2 Facebook

Facebook is the biggest and most well-known social media platform that has users from all over the world. It is a great tool for business advertising due to its wide reach and enormous amount of active daily users. (Maina 2018.)

It is described as social utility because it’s a community that is highly multifunctional. It competes with picture and video sharing platforms, blogs, e-commerce websites, news sources and advertising media channels. (Tuten & Solomon 2018, 5.)

Many brands are setting up their own Facebook pages once the marketing possibilities of this social media platform are acknowledged. It provides real-time feedback from the customers which leads to a higher possibility of interaction and customer engagement. (Coles 2018, 32-33.)

The cost of having a business page is relatively small. Facebook is free to join and use and companies’ business pages are visible for everyone, not only for the members of Facebook. Business pages are also commonly easier seen by Google than profile and group pages. (Coles 2018, 32-33.)
3 Basics of social media marketing

In social selling all the channels that are found useful and enabling for a successful business should be exploited. Listening, reading and sharing interesting content and altogether being active is the key. Instagram gives a great opportunity to self-promote and build a follower base. High quality, well edited pictures and well thought hashtags work the best if the goal is to get many reactions such as likes or comments. Instagram Stories is very similar to Snapchat. The pictures or videos are only visible for 24 hours and then they disappear from the public eye. To learn how much to post, how to discuss with the followers and what type of language should be used, it’s easy to find examples from other users. If international followers are pursued, the language used should be English. (Pääkkönen 2017, 79-83 & 115.)

Pictures that are posted should focus on engagement. They should encourage people to share and comment on them. This will help to make the brand more known. Marketers must monitor what type of pictures and at which posting frequency get the most attention. This monitoring will help to find out the best times to post and will prevent oversharin. The most popular shared pictures are oftentimes taken spontaneously without too much planning. Indirect advertising of the product is also advised in the picture descriptions. This means talking about the product but avoiding undisguised sales talk. Important factor of making the content seen by as many people as possible is to integrate different social media platforms and market the content that has been posted. For example, Facebook with its’ sharing capability can be an important part of a picture and a video sharing strategy. Marketers should also remember that displaying the products is not as effective as showing them how they’re used. Instead of taking a picture of a cup of coffee, take a picture that shows people enjoying it. (Barker, Barker, Bormann, Roberts & Zahay 2017, 168-169.)

Pretty pictures aren’t enough because the pictures should also support the company’s business strategy and they should invoke emotions. Companies must take into consideration their business goals and the consistency of the posts. As Facebook is based on sharing information and knowledge, Instagram is based on feelings. It is also considered as one of the most powerful self-expression tools out there. (Kananen 2018a, 85)
4 Current social media marketing types

These social media marketing types have been chosen because they’re relevant for this time and useful for the commissioning company. Most hotels use these in their own social media marketing because they are considered effective.

4.1 Viral marketing

Viral marketing can be compared to word-of-mouth marketing. The only difference is that it happens online. Marketers create content such as videos and ads that are so gazing that it makes people to want to seek them out or share it with their friends. When the information is passed along from a friend, it’s more likely viewed or read by the recipient. A perk of this method of marketing is also that it can be very inexpensive. (Armstrong, Kotler & Opresnik 2017, 465.)

4.2 Experiential marketing

Combining real life brand experiences into social media generates better results than each on their own. Understanding this combination gives the brand great marketing opportunities. Live brand experiences can also reach substantial amount of people since the participants are very likely to share their experiences with many others. An experience that is designed in a way that appeals to the target audience’s aspirations, will give them a subconscious sense that by using the service or the product they’ll get the lifestyle they’re longing for. (Smilansky 2018, 21 & 24.)

4.3 Transmedia storytelling

Transmedia storytelling means that a story is told via multiple different media platforms. It’s commonly used in marketing and audience engagement. This theory was first introduced by media theorist Henry Jenkins in 2003. (Hancox 2017.)

4.4 Contest marketing

Social media contests don’t require spending a fortune. They are a great way to engage customers and increase brand awareness. It’s important to keep in mind the target audiences’ interests and needs when planning a social media contest. Consumers prefer to interact with brands that bring value to them. There are many different types of contests such as video, picture, vote and comment based contests. In order to have a successful contest, it should be promoted through different platforms. (Ak 2018.) As also Barker, Barker, Bormann, Robers and Zahay mentioned earlier, the integration of social media
platforms and marketing of the content is necessary to make the content seen by as many people as possible.

4.5 Influencer marketing

Influencer marketing is a collaboration between the brand and the influencer where the influencer markets the brand’s products or services through various social media channels. The influencer is someone who has gathered a loyal customer base and who is a trusted figure in the field that the influencer represents. They are typically knowledgeable or experienced about the products or services that they promote. Influencer marketing is an efficient way to market the products directly to the brand’s target audience. Companies and brands should pay attention when choosing an influencer that the influencer’s content is aligned with the brand image and that the followers are acquired organically. There are many so-called influencers that have paid to get more followers which is not ideal for marketing purposes. (Mathew 2018.)
5 Planning social media marketing

Sostac is a popular tool that is used in the process of making a marketing or a business plan. It stands for situation, objectives, strategy, tactics, action and control. (Chaffey 2019.)

5.1 Situation analysis

First stage of social media marketing planning is to do a situation analysis. It’s finding out where is the company now, who are the current digital customers and who are the target customers. Important part of a situation analysis is also to determine who are the competitors and how do they compete. SWOT analysis can be used to get an overview of the organization by determining the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. (Swan 2019.)

Choosing the right channels for marketing is in a high importance for hotels. To help to make the decision one must determine who are the potential customers and where are they. (Kananen 2018b, 36). Profiling can be used to help to put consumers in segments based on their interests, enquiries, purchases or requirements. This will lead to better results since no marketing efforts will be wasted when the marketing is accurately targeted towards selected customer segments or profiles. Profiling also enables marketers to know their customers better. (Chaffey & Smith 2017, 475.)

If a company is having a hard time figuring out which social media channels to use, a certain way of determining the channels is to find out where the competitors are. If the competitors are using particular social media channels, there are the customers. This is a solid way of choosing the channels but most often it doesn’t provide a business vantage. (Kananen 2018a, 82.)
5.2 Objectives

When setting up goals it’s good to present them in a SMART format which stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timebound (Smilansky 2018, 132). The focus should be on specific challenges or issues within the organization and the performance should be measurable. It could be monitored in different ways such as quantitative or qualitative methods. If achieved it should reinforce the performance. The issue that’s taken upon should be in domain of the digital marketing team. There should be a specific timeframe for achieving the goal. (Swan 2019.)

5.3 Strategy and tactics

A strategy is made in order to reach the set objectives. In this part it’s determined which segments the marketing is targeted towards. It’s recommended to make a list to summarize all the objectives so that they can be aligned with the strategy. (Swan 2019.)

Tactics are the specific tools used in the social media marketing strategy. Once the strategy is completed the tactics are listed. They go more into details and determine the ways to establish the strategy. (Swan 2019.)

5.4 Action and control

Action part is focused on how to bring the plan to life and what needs to be done to accomplish each of the tactics (Swan 2019). To simplify what Swan said actions are details of the tactics. This section determines who does what, when and how. The responsibilities are distributed, and the guidelines are set. (Smith 2019.)

The final stage is control. The performance that is based on the determined objectives needs to be monitored. (Swan 2019.) In this part it’s decided who monitors what and when. There are many tools that can help with the monitoring such as key performance indicators and customer satisfaction surveys like NPS. (Smith 2019.)
6 Social media marketing in hotel industry

The influence of social media is increasing each day as more people are attending to online networks. It is even changing our point of views. In social media a friend is no longer necessarily a person you know very well. (Tuten & Solomon 2018, 7.) A friend in social media can be more of a follower who’s interested in the content of that certain site. Followers should however be treated as friends. This is important for hotels to keep in mind when using their social media sites.

Elvis Lieban says that it is necessary to take a step to respond on social media because the users are expecting a response if they have mentioned the brand. This can also help with keeping things on a positive note with the mentioner. Hoteliers should post more about experiences and guest stories because people are looking for inspiration. This may influence their decisions of where to stay, go and eat. (Hoisington 2018.)

Social media is all about engagement, participation and sharing. Hotels must determine their target audiences and create a social media strategy based on experiences as also Lieban mentioned earlier. Social media strategy includes three parts: a situation analysis, target audience definition and the objectives. Determining these factors will help choosing the best channels for marketing and for reaching the target audience. (Tuten & Solomon 2018, 144.)

Successful social media presence typically consists of PARC principles. The letters stand for participatory, authentic, resourceful and credible. It’s important to be interactive within the online community. Answering questions and thanking for responds is required. Since the information online spreads around very quickly, companies who lack authenticity can lose their respect and credibility in the eyes of the viewers within seconds. Authenticity also means not trying too hard to be a certain way that the company loses its personability. Social media interactions should be done in a professional manner yet maintaining a personal authentic touch. Posting content that provides useful and relevant information for the audience is a great way of earning trust and getting attention. One of the main things in building a personal brand is to learn how to make the brand a resource. Credibility consists of having a reputation of being knowledgeable and expert in the field and building a brand’s reliability. Companies must be willing to share information and explain their decision publicly in a rational way. Sometimes admitting mistakes can helpful in the process of gaining credibility. Open communication is the key for building relationships and a brand’s credibility. (Barker, Barker, Bormann, Robers & Zahay 2017, 65-67.)
People nowadays ask very specific questions online. They are only interested in information that provides an answer to that certain question and other information is ignored. (Kolb 2017, 188.) This supports the above-mentioned PARC principles that a brand should be made a resource and consumers questions should not be left unnoted. 

When choosing a hotel, consumers don’t necessarily search for them anymore. It’s way too time consuming to search for such a broad product category as hotels and then compare them to find out which one ticks all the boxes. Instead, they come across interesting hotels while scrolling around. If they do need to search for a hotel, they simply just use a site that lets them select the things that they’re looking for in a hotel such as a swimming pool or a free parking. The site will delimit the options based on the consumers’ selections and produce a list of hotels that meets the consumers’ needs. Therefore, hotels should focus more on content marketing. (Kolb 2017, 188.)

6.1 Social media brand image

Brand image is what consumers think of the brand. This image has been developed over time and it is essential for the company. Having a strong brand image has a direct impact on the consumer buying behavior. (Bhasin 2018.)

Social media has partly taken away the power from the marketing department to create and control a brand image. Today, it’s nearly impossible to maintain a certain brand image since the customers in social media are building their own brand image that may not be in line with the image that the marketers would like to showcase. Marketing plan needs to encourage the customers to post content that goes along with the brand image created by marketers. Reinforcing co-operation will attract new visitors. Without stories and posted images of past customers, the brand image won’t be believable. (Kolb 2017, 11-12.)

Marketers cannot control what people post on social media, but they can encourage them to share content and activate social media conversations. A content that isn’t controlled by marketers have a higher credibility in the eyes of the consumers than the marketer-controlled content. (Wood 2017, 203.) Wood’s words go in line with Kolb’s theory that the marketers don’t have as much control now as they had before social media. They also agree on the fact that marketing should be done in co-operation with the consumers. If the consumer content is left out from the marketing, the brand won’t have much credibility.
Personal branding is important because people or employees who are showing their faces on social media sites are more interesting to follow than strictly company profiles. Showing employees also creates a positive picture of the employer. In the era of social media openness and transparency will bring more opportunities than risks to companies’ business strategies. (Pääkkönen 2017, 87.)

6.2 Tourism and social media

Tourism and social media are strongly linked. In hotel industry a big portion of sales come from foreign visitors. Finland had 8,3 million visitors from all over the world in 2017 and the number of foreign visitors has been growing each year. Finland’s marketing is especially targeted towards Asian markets since it has the biggest growth potential. (MaRa 2018.)

Social media has replaced tourism organizations’ ways of showcasing the destinations in always favorable and attracting way. People are nowadays able to find more accurate and unbiased information online than from travel agencies. Potential visitors can search information of destinations from multiple different sites. This can either give them a positive or a negative view of the destination and it will affect their want to visit that certain place. (Kolb 2017, 9.)

6.3 Motivating employees to take part in social media

Involving employees in social media marketing can be beneficial for the whole company. Social media has been proven to improve employee engagement. One way to motivate employees are rewards. It depends on the company which reward and recognition platforms to use. Recognizing employees is crucial for the company’s success. (Baer 2018.)

Allowing employees to use social media during work hours and encouraging them to share content boosts company’s brand awareness. This will ultimately lead to a higher revenue and faster revenue generation. It’s important to lead the employees by example. When the executive team is seen being active on social media, employees are more likely to join in. (Levinson 2017.)
7 Current social media trends

Social media is in a constant change and new trends keep emerging. These trends affect businesses’ marketing tactics which is why it’s in a high importance for companies to keep themselves up to date.

Consumers find real and personalized things and phenomena interesting. They react to those things with more passion than to neat brand images. Storytelling is now more important than ever before. The consumers also expect the marketing to be more personal. Automatization and consumer listening help to improve the interaction with the consumers. (Komulainen 2018, 365-366.)

The most consumer-to-brand engagement among all the social media platforms happens on Facebook and its family of applications. Instagram users compared to Facebook users are way more engaged even though the number of users isn’t as grand as on Facebook. Businesses are taking advantage of this and are now advertising on Instagram more than ever before. (Wilson 2018.)

People use their mobile phones for digital media around 3 hours per day which is four times the amount than five years ago. This means increasing opportunities for marketers. Mobile ads can be a valuable way of marketing, but companies must first introduce mobile-friendly content formats. Yuval Ben-Itzhak, CEO of Socialbakers, says that brands should use social media platforms to identify different personas and figure out which type of content engages those personas. (Wilson 2018.) This supports what Barker, Barker, Bormann, Robers & Zahay said earlier about monitoring the content and focusing on pictures that encourage interaction and engagement.
8 Product’s starting point

When I started writing this thesis, I was already working in Hotel Haven. At the time being, the person who was responsible for posting content to our social media channels left the hotel. This led to a situation that our social media was nearly non-existent. Instagram Stories was the only channel that we posted content, but the content wasn’t showcasing the company’s idea of the social media brand image. This was because no one had a clear understanding of what Hotel Haven’s social media brand image was.

Soon we had a social media marketing meeting where we had a presentation of what type of content we should post, and tasks were divided. I decided to take care of the Instagram Stories and two other people would take care of Instagram Feed and Facebook. It was quite clear that the amount of time that we had got to work on the social media was unrealistic considering how much we were expected to come up with different social media content. Now that three different people were responsible of the content of Hotel Haven’s social media channels, the importance of cohesive social media brand image was brought to the surface.

I decided to make a social media marketing plan so that all the employees would be on the same page on what type of content to post. I wanted everyone to be somewhat responsible of creating content, since we didn’t have enough time to create quality content in just 2 hours to last for the three following weeks. The planning, execution, editing and finally posting is more time consuming than was expected. If everyone in the hotel would take upon content creating as a part of their jobs, we would have enough content, but this would not necessarily mean that it would be the quality that we would want to use.

We created a WhatsApp group so that everyone could share their pictures and videos for the people responsible of the social media channels. The people responsible could then easily use the material in their posts. Some people did and still sometimes post pictures there, but it should be more encouraged. Also, the problem is that no one has a qualification to do photography or work on social media. People cannot be forced to learn how to take proper pictures or even take part in the social media because that is not part of our job description in the hotel.

In my opinion, the best way to have a good social media marketing game is to hire one qualified person to take care of the social media as a full-time job. This of course is expensive for the hotel but considering how important social media marketing is, it may be worth it.
9  Product

An open-ended questionnaire was sent out to Hotel Haven’s general manager and the marketing director. The purpose of this questionnaire was to find out if the management of the hotel has uniform opinions regarding Hotel Haven’s social media. It also helped to receive important information on which things should be included in the final product. The product is based on the theoretical part of this thesis and the questionnaire answers. It uses some parts of SOSTAC that are considered the most important for the company and for the purpose of creating a simple but efficient social media marketing plan. A previous social media presentation done by our marketing director was also used as a source of information.

9.1  Social media brand image

Based on the questionnaire answers, Hotel Haven’s social media brand image is tempting and consistent. “The brand stands for high quality services, exclusive comfort and elegant yet cozy atmosphere”. Those are guiding features to Haven’s social media. It was also mentioned that the social media brand image is quite aligned with the brand itself and the brand plan.

To improve the social media brand image, I think, what Wood mentioned as well, it would be important to encourage people to post content and be active. Having others contributing on Hotel Haven’s social media will not only give more credibility but also activates people to share and post more content which increases the visibility. The encouraging can be done by liking or commenting guests’ pictures and replying to the comments that are received from the social media followers. Also throwing a social media competition is a great way to get people more involved. This will ultimately create a stronger and more believable social media brand image. As Kolb said, without stories and posted images of past customers, the brand image won’t be believable. When I saw people tagging Hotel Haven on their pictures, I usually gave them a like. By doing this I noticed that it did activate the people to give us a follow or to like our posts.

9.2  Objectives

These objectives are gathered from the questionnaire answers and from discussions with Hotel Haven’s employees as well as the research done in the theoretical part of this thesis.
**Specific:** The goal is to have a cohesive social media presence that supports the company’s brand image. It should attract new people to follow the company’s social media pages and keep the old ones engaged and responsive. To increase communication with the followers the company needs to be responsive as well. The social media pages should be updated regularly. Ideally at least 3 posting per week in each channel meaning Facebook and Instagram. Instagram Stories should be constant according to Hotel Haven’s marketing director.

**Measurable:** The number of followers, likes and comments. The success of social media advertised campaigns and ultimately the increase in sales.

**Achievable:** Having more high quality professionally taken pictures and videos without losing the tangible authenticity that makes people want to connect with the brand. Also, in order to achieve the objective, there needs to be motivated employees with wide knowledge of social media marketing doing the postings and constantly coming up with new interesting content. They should be following the current trends within the industry and keep themselves up to date what’s happening in the social media marketing world.

**Realistic:** How much money and time the company is willing to invest in photoshoots and knowledgeable social media employees is the key issue. Hiring professionals is expensive and giving enough time for the employees to work on the social media content is necessary for keeping up with the consistency and quality of the posts.

**Timebound:** At least every 6 months there should be a meeting to discuss whether the social media is following the set objective and what is there to improve. Ideally more often since social media is in a constant change and there are new events and trends emerging in Helsinki that can be beneficial to mention on Haven’s social media.

### 9.3 Channels and instructions

Facebook and Instagram are the main channels used in the social media marketing for Hotel Haven. It’s important that these channels are linked together with transmedia storytelling and other marketing tactics such as contest marketing. As Ak mentioned, competitions should be promoted through different platforms to get the most gain out of them. Promoting through different channels increases the brand awareness and content visibility. In this case also paid social media advertisements are worth to consider. Having paid Instagram or Facebook ads will increase the reach of the competition and will lead to better results.
Instagram Stories’ text needs to be positioned the way that with majority of the phones the text is visible. Different phone models crop the images of Instagram Stories so if the text is positioned too close to the corners it won’t show in the newer phone models completely. Ideal placing of the text is closer to the center of the image. Pictures should be taken vertically and if phone’s own camera application is used it should be taken further away than when taken with Instagram itself. This is because Instagram crops the image quite a lot which affects the result.

Content should be posted frequently but as Barker, Barker, Bormann, Robers and Zahay said, the best way to determine the frequency and what type of content to post is monitoring. Certain types of content get more likes and reactions than others and the posting time of the day should be noted when planning the posts. In Facebook it’s possible to schedule the posts in advance but in Instagram it’s not unless using an app designed for that. These apps however aren’t for free so the company could consider investing on making posting more efficient on Instagram. According to Pääkkönen, in order to learn how much to post, how to discuss with the followers and what type of language to use, other users and competitors should be monitored as well.

Pääkkönen said that people or employees who are showing their faces on social media sites are more interesting to follow than strictly company profiles. He also said that the employer is viewed in a more positive light if employees are shown. This theory has support from Hotel Haven’s social media. I have noticed that pictures of people are getting more viewing and likes. There’s also a new People of Haven concept in addition to Helsinki, Pleasures and Details. These are the four themes that Hotel Haven’s social media is focused on.

### 9.4 Responsibilities

Employees should contribute in the social media in different ways that are suitable for each employees’ set of skills. Allowing employees to use social media and their phones during work hours encourages employees to share and create content that leads to better brand awareness. All the employees dealing with social media marketing should also follow the analytics and take part in regular social media meetings to stay on the right track.

### 9.5 Trends

Trends within the industry and in social media should be actively followed because they are in a constant change. Komulainen says that real and personalized posts are found more interesting than neat brand images which is in contrast of what was answered in one
of the questions in the questionnaire. The question was about what type of posts the respondent would like to see on Hotel Haven’s social media. One of the answers said that “high quality images and videos are the key” whereas the other one suggests “20% of tactical campaigns and other commercial posts. 80% of other content that gives Hotel Haven tangible authenticity and creates desire to belong & connect with us”. To my mind it seems that the key is a balance between high quality professionally taken pictures and authentic material that guests’ can easily relate to. Afterall, Hotel Haven is a luxury hotel and the social media should showcase that. The challenge is to make high quality material that still feels authentic.

There’s an increased importance of storytelling. As Barker, Barker, Bormann, Robers and Zahay said, in order to make the content seen by as many people as possible, it should be shared via different channels. When companies or brands have social media contests, they suggest people to follow their other channels in order to find out more about the contest or to increase their chances to win. This is a great way to gain more followers and get more visibility.

Instagram users are more engaged with the brands than Facebook users. This trend also supports Wilson’s view and the fact that Instagram advertising has become more common in the hotel industry worldwide.

Mobile phone usage for digital media has increased significantly which is why hotels should pay attention to mobile friendly content formats. As Wilson mentioned, nowadays people use digital media 3 hours per day just on their mobile phones. This is a significant change that has happened in just 5 years. There is extensive amount of different phone models on the markets. It’s important to keep in mind that different types of phones and devices show pictures differently.

9.6 Development ideas

- Business cards that have a QR-code to our website as well as Instagram and Facebook logos
- A tablet or other device at the reception with slide show of current events and social media pages
- More content that stimulates customer engagement such as social media contests
- Hiring one qualified person to take care of the social media as a full-time job
10 Changes and improvements

Social media content is posted more frequently than at the beginning. Follower amount on Instagram as well as on Facebook has increased. A year ago, in September the follower amount on Instagram was 1476 and the current number of followers is 2044. The improvement is noticeable in the quality and the increased frequency of the posts. The common themes; Helsinki, Pleasures, Details and People, are very well represented and visible on Hotel Haven’s social media.

Image 1. Instagram Stories theme examples (Jenna Kilpelä 2019)
Image 2. Comparison of the old and the new Instagram Feed

Image 3. Comparison of the old and the new Instagram Stories
When a picture was posted on Instagram stories, a guest messaged us to our email address and wanted to purchase the flowers. He said that he saw the story and got the idea from there to surprise his companion. Advertisement of products and services is advised. Coles theory of content marketing supports this marketing technique; however, this should be done in a subtle way. This way the brand will stick to viewers minds and they can reach for the information at the time of need. Aggressive marketing won’t support the brand image, but subtle content marketing will bring benefit for the company as well as the viewer. Hotel Haven’s new beer was launched so I decided to include it into Instagram Stories. Just a simple picture gives the prospective customers just enough information without revealing too much.

![Image 4. Instagram Stories advertising examples (Jenna Kilpelä 2019)](image)

A walk-in-customer came to have our recently launched Afternoon Tea because she saw a picture of it from our Facebook page. The Afternoon Tea was advertised on Facebook as well as on Instagram and paid media was used to get the maximum reach. The Afternoon Tea became so popular that it is now extended with one extra day. The success is partly due to a great social media marketing that combined paid and non-paid advertising. Influencer marketing has also been used in the marketing of our Afternoon Tea since
Pako Arjesta blogger made a blog post and a review about it in co-operation with Hotel Haven.

Both Kolb and Wood agree on the fact that marketing should be done in co-operation with the consumers and without consumer posted content, the brand won’t have much credibility. Based on the questionnaire answers we do communicate with the guests reasonably well on social media considering the limited amount of resources meaning workforce. Our Afternoon Tea is a great example of a product that activates the customers to share their experiences on their own social media channels. This has a great effect on how the brand is viewed and whether our Afternoon Tea is worth to try out. Due to this it’s important for the hotel to keep track of what people are posting and make sure that action is taken in case of a negative feedback from a customer. It’s also beneficial to react on the positive consumer posted content to create long lasting and strong customer relationships.

Image 5. Afternoon Tea at Hotel Haven (www.hotelhaven.fi)

10.1 Challenges

The challenges of having a successful social media marketing game are lack of time and willingness to find a person that is a professional social media marketer. The biggest reason for this must be the cost of having an extra employee that is only focused on social media marketing. Now, this duty has been delegated to people that use social media as a hobby and with a small extra salary and very limited number of hours they should do everything that a professional marketer would do alongside their regular work. However, considering these facts a significant improvement is clearly visible in Haven’s social media.
The real challenge is to improve the social media even further and maintain the posting frequency without losing the quality of the posts.
11 Discussion

To my mind I did the theoretical part well using many different types of resources and especially books. At first the amount of information seemed never ending but I was able to delimit the information by using only relevant up to date sources. I think I was able to focus on the subject and did keep it very compact and straightforward. My goal was to write just the things that I find worth mentioning. I cut all the unnecessary things away that didn’t really bring any extra value for the company. Hotel Haven and other hotels can certainly find useful information from this thesis that they can incorporate with their own social media strategies.

I decided to make a Power Point presentation, because it’s easy to modify, add to and present. I wanted to keep it very simple but informative. The main parts of the presentation are based on the theoretical part and the questionnaire answers. In the future this presentation can be used as guidelines to Haven’s social media. It can be shown when teaching new employees about Haven’s brand image and social media marketing.

One of the goals was simply to just improve Hotel Haven’s social media pages and I think the improvement is noticeable. The quality of the posts as well as the posting frequency has increased. This has led to more followers and better customer interaction. Many of the guests have found the posts useful and informative and we have got new customers due to our social media posts. A great example of this was the afternoon tea guest. One thing that would need some improvement in my opinion is the amount of time we use to reply to the guest through our social media channels. I think it should be faster than it is now, and our general manager agrees that there’s some space for improvement.

All in all, this thesis did combine the theory well with the product. A lot of important information was given that will benefit anyone who’s working in social media marketing field.
12 Own learning and professional development

I was very excited to start this project. At first, I was doing the Instagram Stories. I took pictures and edited them. At the beginning the most difficult part was to write a text to the pictures because they needed to be succinct. At some point I started to feel like I’m running out of ideas and it became harder and harder to come up with quality content. I also started to feel a bit overwhelmed of the amount of work when I tried to combine the reception duties with the social media. The biggest challenge for me, when I was doing Hotel Haven’s social media was that it became forced and the initial excitement faded away because I simply didn’t have the time and resources to do that type of work I would be satisfied with. Also, I quickly realized that social media marketing is something I wouldn’t want to do as a regular job. For me it’s a way to express myself and when there’s so many expectations from the company’s side it took away the fun for me. In the future I wouldn’t be against doing social media related projects, but I certainly don’t want to be a full-time social media marketer.

After finishing up writing the theoretical part I had a loss of motivation and it became very hard to continue writing. I got a full-time contract and it became quite difficult combining my work and thesis writing because I had never worked alongside my studies before. However, I had decided that I want to graduate at latest at the end of 2019 and I was able to keep that promise to myself. I learned many new things about social media marketing that I’m sure will benefit me with my career. Most importantly I could mention the fact that it’s impossible for the companies to completely control their brand images. Customers’ pay quite a lot of information on other people’s experiences and shared posts related with the brand which is why customer created content has extensive effect on how the brand is perceived.
References


Appendices

Appendix 1. Questionnaire

1. What do you think is Hotel Haven’s social media brand image?

2. What type of customers Hotel Haven’s social media is targeted towards?

3. From 1-5 (1 being not important at all and 5 being very important) how important you find social media marketing and why?

4. What type of posts you’d like to see on Hotel Haven’s social media?

5. Which factors you’d like to improve in Hotel Haven’s social media?

6. How well do we communicate with the guests through social media in your opinion?

7. How long does it approximately take to reply to the guest through a social media channel?