

MARKETING PLAN FOR A LOCAL HONEY FARM

Case: Valosen Hunajatila

Abstract

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Abstract <p>The objective of this study was to create a digital marketing plan, that focuses on social media channels Facebook and Instagram. This study attempts to answer the question: "What do honey customers consider when buying honey" The author researched the factors honey customers considered when purchasing honey through a survey. The study was made in cooperation with the commissioning company Valosen Hunajatila. The company is situated in the region of Päijät-Häme. The marketing plan created is only the first step towards digital marketing.</p> <p>The thesis was conducted deductively using quantitative and qualitative approaches for the research. Primary data was collected through an online survey, that was shared to the authors friends and family. The secondary data was gathered through various sources, including online sources and books.</p> <p>Theories used in the thesis included several analyses to establish the starting situation of the company. The 4C's of marketing were used to gain deeper knowledge of current marketing views that are customer oriented. The thesis was limited to the micro level, when considering marketing, since the company works mainly in Päijät-Häme.</p> <p>The results of the research show that many customers considered domesticity, the form of the honey, price, taste and locality in high value however domesticity got the most answers. According to the study interaction between customer and producers is important, thus the company will start posting regularly on the social media channels Facebook and Instagram to interact with the followers.</p>		
Keywords Marketing plan, digital marketing, social media marketing		

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

The competition in the field of honey production can go through fluctuations because between seasons there can be a large difference in production amounts, caused by the weather or other problems related to the bees. The competition situation can change quickly, especially when talking about Finnish honey producers, who can only produce Finnish honey during the summer. During longer periods of lowered production, if you have honey in storage, when others are running out, the producer is in a good situation with less competition. Vice versa after many good seasons the level of competition rises, when there is a lot of produced honey. The domestic honey markets are a highly fluctuating one and entrepreneurs must prepare for quick changes in the state of the market.

1.2 Research Methodologies and Data Collection

There are two main approaches when conducting research: deductive and inductive approach. The difference between the two lies in the ways the data is collected. The deductive approach concentrates on existing theories and concepts that are tested by the means of data collection. Unlike the deductive approach the inductive approach is started by data collection and theory is then built around the data. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 124-128.)

After choosing the research approach, it is time to choose which research methodology is to be used. The general approaches are quantitative and qualitative research. They indicate how the research data is collected. In some cases, it is required to use both to gain enough valid data. Using both methods is not rare, especially in business research. (Saunders et al. 2009, 151.)

The qualitative approach focuses on non-numeric data, unlike the quantitative method. The data is usually collected through interviews and observation. In the quantitative approach the focus is specifically on numeric data and ways to measuring it. The quantitative data is collected through different question forms like surveys. The collected data is analyzed with statistical techniques, like graphs. The more answers a survey would get the more credibility is behind the results of the analyzed numeric data, when the take is bigger the data becomes more reliable. (Saunders et al. 2009, 119, 125, 150-154.)

Creating the marketing plan requires collecting information of the factor's consumer consider when buying honey. The data collection method used was an online survey. The chosen method was the quantitative method, to gain data on consumer behavior. The survey includes open-ended questions, qualitative methods are implemented.

The research is approached deductively, research was made using primarily qualitative methods, but qualitative methods were also used. Data was collected through the survey that gave us primary data and literature sources that worked as the secondary data.

1.3 Thesis Objectives, Research Questions and Limitations

The purpose of this study is to create a marketing plan for the case company, Valosen Hunajatila to acquire more customers to buy the product and then remain as a customer, because of the quality of the locally produced domestic products.

The main research question is:

- How to create an effective marketing plan for a locally based honey farm?

Usually the main research question is too broad to be answered sufficiently, so it is important to compose sub-questions to help that process (History Skills 2019).

To define factors to take into account in the marketing plan, this sub-question was decided:

- What are important production values to honey customers?

Limitations are important to set, when doing a study. Without limitations the research could contain parts that are not in the researcher's control. The marketing plan is being made for a company that only operates in Päijät-Häme, thus this specific marketing plan may not be suitable for similar companies outside the region of Päijät-Häme. Less attention is also given for foreign honey because the main competitors in the company's market share are producers of domestic honey. This means that the study is geographically limited to the company's market area. Demographically there are no limitations related to age or gender. Many people with different lifestyles and ages consume honey and there is no specific demographic group to focus on. This study being relatively on a smaller scale, macro marketing is excluded from the study and focus is purely on micro marketing factors. This study is focuses purely on digital medias, because the company already has a solid customer base, considering the future it is important to improve the digital aspects of

the company, for a better interaction channel to gain younger customers and keep current customers satisfied.

1.4 Thesis Structure

The thesis is divided into two sections. The thesis starts with the theoretical part and ends with the empirical section. The theoretical section is about marketing theories, focused on social media marketing. The theory part supports the empirical part and with the information collected from the survey, a marketing plan is created for the case company.

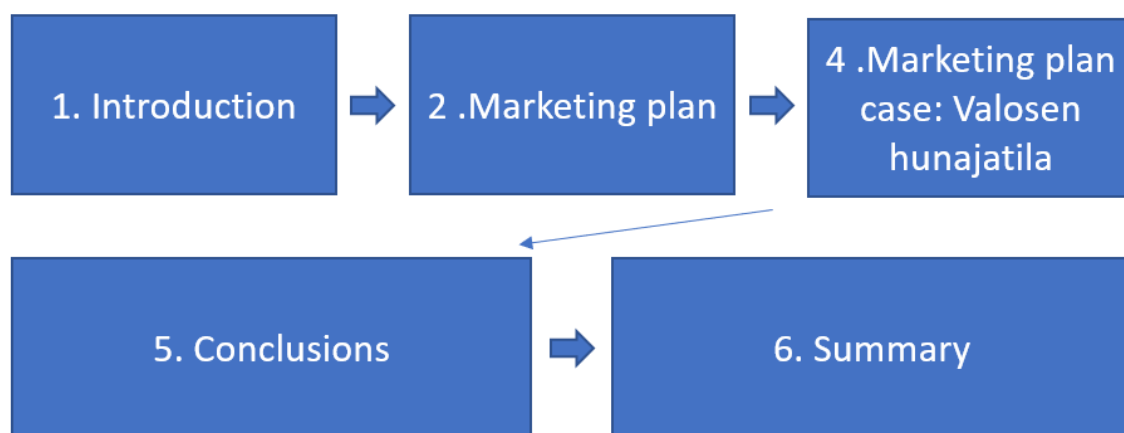


Figure 1 Thesis Structure

Structure of the thesis can be seen in Figure 1. The thesis begins with the introduction that explains the topic of the thesis and familiarizes the background of the topic to the reader. The reader can familiarize with the research question and the sub questions. Main goal of the introduction is to describe the thesis structure and explain the research problem.

After the introduction you proceed to the theoretical part in the thesis. The first Chapter focuses on theories needed to create a marketing plan, and the main goal is to evaluate marketing theories and consider the marketing direction for the case company Valosen Hunajatila to follow.

Chapter three is the marketing plan case: Valosen Hunajatila. Starting out with different analyses to determine the company's standings. Analyzing the company's situation, gives direction for making the marketing plan as efficient as possible. It ensures that the thesis focuses on the important parts of the marketing plan. The author has been involved with the company for many years and has firsthand information on the company's situation and

internal actions. This section will also include the results of the survey concerning customer purchasing preferences. In the section we will talk about the target audience, restrict the marketing area and decide on the best channels for marketing.

The last two sections are the conclusion and the summary. In the conclusion the results of the research are analyzed and answer the research questions presented in the earlier chapter. Then end the thesis with the summary, where the whole thesis is summarized.

2 MARKETING PLAN

2.1 Construct of the Marketing Plan

The marketing plan should be set with clear objectives that are realistic to make it realizable. When you begin creating the marketing plan, it is important to know the company's situation now. Several things are to be analyzed at the start. Who are the customers and why do they buy the product?

There are several analyses to make. Following is a list of the order the analyses will be in the Chapter 3 of the thesis.

1. Company analysis
2. Situation analysis
3. Market analysis
4. Competition analysis
5. Swot analysis

After the analysis section the research methods used in this analysis will be explained. After that the data received in the survey is analyzed.

Competition, who are they and how do they sell their product? What are your company's strengths and weaknesses, is there an existing strategy or tools to use? What is the situation of the company's marketing now and what results has it created? On top of that it is important to consider the trends of the market. Answering these questions, will make it easier to decide on marketing tactics. This basically shows the surroundings and starting point for developing future marketing. (Digimarkkinointi 2018.)

After the company analysis, it is time to decide what kind of results the company wants to reach, because the idea of marketing is to help sales or create direct sales, the planned goals can be portrayed in actual figures. (Digimarkkinointi 2018).

After the starting situation is figured out and the goals are set it is time to consider marketing strategies. The marketing strategies should offer a broad idea, of what sort of steps should be taken to reach the goal wanted. This part of the marketing plan answers the question how we reach our goals. There are two important parts in creating your marketing strategy. It is important to decide what demographic segment is the product marketing directed at. It is important to think what type the dream customer would be and thinking

how the person becomes a customer, after that the question is how to keep them as customers in the future. (Digimarkkinointi 2018.)

2.1.1 Marketing Tools

Marketing research combines the consumer, customer and the public in terms of gathering information, with the information gathered marketers can define opportunities and problems. The acquired information can be specified for handling certain issues and help collecting data and analyzing the results and implicating the findings correctly. (AMA 2017.)

To reach set marketing goals it is important to consider marketing strategy. Marketing strategies are the broad methods used to reach the marketing goals in the chosen time-scale. When planning strategies it important to understand that they are not as specific as marketing tactics would be. (Westwood 2016, 55.)

John Westwood in his How to write a marketing plan-book listed general policies connected to marketing strategies related to possible actions with products as follows.

Products:

- Changing product portfolio/mix
- Dropping, adding or modifying products
- Changing design, quality performance
- Consolidating, standardizing

Distribution and promotion are other important aspects to consider, while constructing a marketing plan. Changing distributional aspects through improving services or switching the marketing channels can make a difference to sales. Considering promotion, there are several things you can change in this aspect, to change your marketing strategies more suitable to your company's situation. Changing the way of advertising or creating new ways of sales promotion, to persuade potential customers to buy the product. (Westwood 2016, 56.)

Different types of marketing strategies exist, for example there are such strategies as defensive-, developing- and attacking strategies. In the defensive strategy the object is to keep current customers and prevent them from changing to products from different producers. Whereas in the attacking strategy the goal is to generate profits from gaining new

customers. And in the developing strategy the aim is to broaden the range of products and services for remaining customers. (Westwood 2016, 56.)

		LOW RISK	HIGH RISK
		Present product	New product
LOW RISK	Present market	Expand existing market with existing product	Develop new products for existing markets
HIGH RISK	New market	Sell present product in new markets	Develop or acquire new products to sell into new markets

Image 1 Ansoff matrix– the risks of various strategies (Westwood 2016, 56)

It can be seen from this matrix in Image 1 that the least risky way to try to expand your business is in the areas you know best -ie with your existing products in your existing markets (Westwood 2016, mah57).

2.1.2 4 P's and 4 C's

A company's competition means are often linked to marketing and the traditional means of competition. These traditional means are the 4 P's, also known as the marketing mix, listed below. The 4 P's are considered outdated, because instead of focusing on creating a lasting relationship with the customer, it focuses on singular sales. When the transition from traditional marketing for the masses to a more targeted approach Schulz, Tandenbaum and Lauterborn presented the 4 C's of marketing to replace the 4 P's or at least implicate both approaches in the marketing mix. (Puusa, Reijonen, Juuti & Laukkanen 2015, 127-128.)

The 4 P's consist of:

- Product
- Price
- Place
- Promotion

The 4 P's is generally considered as outdated when compared to the 4 C's, because it does not give as much thought to the customers' perspective as the 4 C's. With the more customer-oriented approach currently in use it requires the 4P-model to be replaced by the 4C-model below.

The 4 C's model is a consumer-based approach. Marketing based on the 4 C's focuses on marketing to precise segments, instead of trying to reach broad segments (Puusa & et al. 2015, 145).

The 4 C's consist of:

- Customer value
- Cost to customer
- Convenience
- Communication

Customer value

Customer value is measured in the satisfaction the customer receives from the product or service. To create a product that customers are happy with it is important to consider the customers' needs and desires. (Puusa & et al. 2015, 145.)

Cost to customer

When considering cost to the customer the main idea is to realize that the purchase price of the product or service is not the full cost to the customer. For example, if the customer drives to the store by car to buy the product, the cost of the drive will add to the total cost of the product, from the customer's point of view. (Puusa & et al. 2015, 145.)

Convenience

The third C stands for convenience, with the possibilities created by electronic services and web stores, consuming and getting products is not necessarily tied to the location of the store, restaurant or other service provided anymore. (Puusa & et al. 2015, 145).

Communication

The final C stands for communication. With the present marketing channels the distance between customer and producer has become small and there is more interaction between the two. (Puusa & et al. 2015, 146.)

2.1.3 Marketing Segmentation

Marketing segmentation allows you to consider the markets you are actually in and the markets your company should be in (Westwood 2016, 21).

With a wide range of customers, it is important to understand that the range fits many different needs and multiple different reasons for different customers to buy the product. Being able to split the customer base into different market segments that include customers with the same preferences. For consumer goods and services, it is usual to classify the end-users by the methods of classification which separate consumers by socio-economic group, age, sex, occupation or region. (Westwood 2016, 21.)

Creating segments for business markets means considering many different factors, many of the factors are based on consumer behavior, because the decision to purchase something is affected by emotional and rational aspects. For example, the decision can be impacted by demographics, benefits, motivations/needs, purchasing habits and many more.

2.2 Marketing with Digital Aspects

Marketing is important to any company. It is the way to make customers aware of your product or service and make sales higher and draw attention of potential new customers. Marketing is a link connecting the company with the customers.

“Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (American Marketing Association 2017).

Marketing has several goals that require different actions. It is important to uphold and create an advantage against competitors, while keeping up sales and creating more profit. Profit can be created by building up the products attractiveness in order to achieve a higher sales margin to create more profits per product. For companies that require customers to be satisfied with the product, it is important to consider customer relations and aim to create new relations with new customers, while keeping present customers happy.

Developing the relationship with the customers is important. (Markkinointisuunnitelma 2019.)

Marketing is divided into inbound- and outbound marketing. Outbound marketing is the traditional form of marketing, that uses tools like radio, tv, magazines, email marketing, going to fairs and types of showings. In inbound marketing the big picture is around advise, helping and providing helpful tips to support using the product. It is based on the acceptance of the customers to receive information about the company, service or product and taking initiative. Channel for inbound marketing are web pages, blogs, forums and social media channels. (Kananen 2018, 17.)

Traditional marketing is based on big volumes, that aim to reach big groups, with advertisements that appeal to many people. The idea is based on reaching enough people on the right channel and get them to buy the products. It is perceived so that a big marketing investment, helps getting results. With inbound marketing the audience is smaller but has the agreement of the customers and creates more engaged customers than traditionally reached customers. If the consumers have ordered the company's newsletter or read a blog operated by the company, then they are already interested in the company and their products. (Kananen 2018, 18.)

Through inbound marketing the company's brand will grow and become the most important tool of marketing. It offers content that is smart and essential enough for building up the customer base, without disturbing commercials. It is a digital marketing strategy, with the idea of bringing the customer closer to the company, instead of the company searching for customers. Inbound marketing uses a 4-part strategy: Attract, convert, transform and retain. (Chouaib, Redouane & Hajar 2018, 2.)

In the traditional form of marketing, the results are hard to measure, because the reaction from the customer is nearly impossible to know. Although the results of the marketing campaign can be seen in the form of sales or through expensive marketing research studies. Inbound marketing allows you to see the actions happening in the web environment, you can track the results of every action. With different analytics programs you can keep track of things like conversion, exit rates and how much time people spend on the websites. Inbound marketing is more efficient than outbound marketing because it is more cost efficient, requires less investments and allows you to aim the marketing. (Kananen 2018, 20.)

2.3 Social Media

When considering branding, it is important to understand that social media platforms give you access to customers in real time, with a possibility for interaction with customers. This means you can get information on what customers want and what they think basically whenever. Here are some benefits of using social media. It is free to use, you can reach a massive audience, it gives access to communications with the customers and you can be found online. (Coles 2014, 4-5.)

Having a social media presence significantly affects the consumers purchasing behavior. The company's credibility is enforced by creating new content and posting regularly. Especially content that gives practical advice in ways to use the product, will lead customers to follow the channels and become supporters of the brand and then become customers. Customers are naturally attracted to influential content that will lead to the follower count to grow. With many followers the company's credibility becomes better, when potential new customers see that people are interested in the company and enjoy the services provided. (Komulainen 2018, 228-229.)

The efficiency of marketing in social media can be measured. Different figures give different relevant information to the marketers. The behavior of consumers can be monitored, through the average views the page gets, the lengths of the visiting times, exiting from the pages and measuring the number of single visitors. Customer commitment can be measured through measuring the follower count and the amount of comments. The popularity of the content can be measured through received likes and shares on the posts. Analyzing the results allows the company to evaluate the use of the resources and to avoid doing things that are not useful. Analyzing received results gives important information that help the company to improve their marketing in the future. (Komulainen 2018, 356-357.)

3 MARKETING PLAN CASE: VALOSEN HUNAJATILA

3.1 Introduction of the Case Company

Valosen hunajatila is a honey farm situated in Hollola. The company was started in 1952 and was started by Erkki and Aino Valonen. In 1984 Kari Valonen started running the company with Kathryn Keister and in the early 1990's they made their own brand of Valosen Hunaja and started packing the honey into jars with the company's print. (Valosenhunajatila 2020.)

3.2 Company analysis

The idea of the company analysis is to evaluate the company's actionability considering resources, know-how and the organization itself. The situation will be considered through the company's economy, marketing, product development, productions, logistics and personnel. (Ammattijohtaja 2018.)

In the beginning Kari and Kathryn decided to focus marketing on the local area of Päijät-Häme and started rising brand awareness by going to many grocery stores to give honey tastings and to talk with potential customers. Marketing was also done by getting a stand at themed/seasonal fairs. At the multiple fairs honey was sold, and more tasting were given. These actions laid the basis on the brands customer base. The brand is well known within our marketing area, and the company has a solid customer base. The aim is to build up from the existing customer base. (Keister & Valonen 2020.)

Valosen hunajatila is run by the owners Kathryn and Kari, which works well during off season, but during the summers help is required and a summer worker is hired, because of the physical aspect of bee keeping. With the owners nearing retirement age, there is no need to add the number of beehives. The fact that the personnel is getting old, is becoming more of a problem year by year, but with reliable summer workers, the situation is under control. (Keister & Valonen 2020)

Valosen Hunajatila delivers two different honey products mainly in the Päijät-Häme region. There are a few exceptions, where honey is delivered to the municipalities of Hämeenlinna and Riihimäki. Honey is delivered to stores owned by Kesko and S-group. Kesko is a big Finnish retailing conglomerate, under them there are many different grocery stores, which a majority of in Päijät-Häme sells the company's honey. This includes K-markets, K-

supermarkets and K-citymarkets. The situation is the same with S-Group, that is also Finnish, but a retailing cooperative organization. Valonen honey is sold in stores owned by the S-group including the Sale's, S-markets and Prisma's all around the delivery area. The channels for moving the product to the shelves of stores around the region are in good form. (Keister & Valonen 2020)

Logistically speaking the situation is not ideal. Deliveries are done once a week, the amounts depending on the orders set by the stores. Most stores buy the product in relatively small quantities. Many stores order 24 jars per order, but some order in bigger quantities with orders of 120 jars or more. With the current amount of deliveries, the delivery system works, but takes more time than it ideally would. Honey is also sold straight from the honey farm although considerably less than to the stores. Honey can be purchased with customers own containers as well, for a price of 10€/kg. (Keister & Valonen 2020)

The amount of produced honey can vary in big proportions, depending on the weather during the summer. Rainy summers mean less yield, and too dry summers also mean less yield, because the flowers acquire a certain amount of resources to create nectarine, that bees proceed to make honey of. Many things that are out of the entrepreneur's hand, can make a huge difference in the yearly honey yield. Valosen Hunajatila is prepared for bad yields with different production lines, including farming corps and forestry.

The amount of honey that is sold per year is between 10,000-15,000 kg. Now there is roughly 200 beehives and the produced amount per year, when the yield is about average is very close to the amount that is sold. Valosen Hunajatila uses all the produced honey in their own brand Valosen Hunaja. (Keister & Valonen 2020)

Valosen Hunajatila deals with two main products that are crystalized honey in a jar and liquid forest flower honey in squeezable tubes. For now, the focus of marketing will be on defensive and attacking strategies, with the main goal of keeping current customers while building up the customer base for increased sales. (Valosenhunajatila 2020.) Below in Image 2, you can see the main products of the company.



Image 2 Valosen Hunajataila Products

Valosen hunajataila has had their own brand for 30 years, about 20 years ago the honey jars were given an upgraded look, while staying true to the original design. The honey jar is a familiar occupant of the honey shelves in stores and there are customers loyal to the brand. The company has received attention through advertisements, from stores where our honey is mentioned in their flyers, also many stores have a place for locally produced foods that have included Valosen Hunaja. Other than that, it has been quiet on the marketing side. Occasionally during the summer, different types of groups have visited the farm to learn what bee keeping is and how honey is produced.

3.3 Marketing Situation Analysis

The company's situation right now marketing wise is not good. There is no form of digital marketing happening. The company does have a webpage and there is a Facebook page for the company. The company has not actively kept track of marketing and digital marketing was not active. The entrepreneurs are keen to include digital aspects in the marketing scene, but did not really have the time, resources or skill to do so. Being a company with only two fulltime employees. Now the company leans mainly on the marketing groundwork put in years ago, but that work has resulted in loyal customers, and many people come

buy honey straight from the farm annually. After the marketing plan is created it will be put into use and honed over the summer, depending on the results.

The goal of the marketing plan is to start up marketing in social media with Facebook being the main channel, supported by the company website. The thesis author will personally be working with the social media content over the summer.

In Image 3 you can see one of the first advertisements for Valosen Hunajatila. This form of marketing was seen in a summer theaters brochure some years ago.



Image 3 Old Advertisement for Valosen Hunajatila

3.3.1 Market Analysis

Doing a market analysis gives answers related to the markets your product is in. Answers questions about marketing, purchase behavior, possible market changes and in what direction the market might develop. It is important to think about many aspects of the market's situation, size, customers, buyer behavior and buyer potential. (Ammattijohtaja 2018.)

Valosen Hunajatila works mainly in the region of Päijät-Häme, where Heinola is the furthest one in the north, but below Heinola the whole region of Päijät-Häme belongs to the delivery area, honey is also delivered to certain stores in the municipalities Hämeenlinna

and Riihimäki. The company's marketing area is relatively small, when compared to big Finnish companies, like Mesimestari and Hunajayhtymä

Honey markets consist of many different types of customers and there is no clear demographic segment to aim marketing towards, because honey is a widely used product. This means that with a demographic take this large, it is nearly impossible to describe the customers buyer behavior or potential to an extent that it would be valuable when creating a marketing plan.

On average one Finnish person consumes about 700 grams (2019) of honey per year. SML states out that the amount has been going up considerably and just a few years ago the amount was 600 grams. Below is a bar chart, that shows how honey consumption has evolved from 1980 to 2018. (Suomen mehiläishoitajainliitto 2019.)

In Figure 2 below you can see the difference between 1980 and 2016. The red bars on the right are forecasts.



Figure 2 Honey Consumption in Finland 1980-2017, g/Person (Suomen mehiläishoitajain liitto 2018)

3.3.2 Competition Analysis

Bee keeping is practiced all around Finland, but there are only 100 professional bee farms. Most honey and bee-based products are produced in middle and south regions of Finland. (Suomen mehiläishoitajainliitto 2019.)

Mesimestari Oy and Hunajayhtymä Oy are big Finnish limited companies with high net revenues. Both companies buy and pack honey produced in Finland and then proceed to sell honey out of jars with their own print. Both companies have webstores, through the channel they sell a variety of products from honey to beekeeping tools and supplies. These two companies and the S-group owned Kotimaista are some of Valosen Hunajatila company's biggest competitors in the market segment. The S-group owned brand Kotimaista is rather new on the markets and their product is being packed by Mesimestari Oy. With a price considerably cheaper than Valosen Hunaja products.

Mesimestari is situated in the municipality of Vesilahti in the region of Pirkanmaa. Their products are known for their fine crystalized honey. The company's honey is produced in Finland by contracted Finnish beekeepers. Their honey producers collect the nectarine mainly from the area of southern Finland. Mesimestari honey comes in several different packaging sizes and styles. In the picture below you can see their different jars for the soft honey. The possible product sizes are 350 and 500g jars and the squeezable bottle. They also sell honey that has naturally crystalized to a harder form and this product comes only in 500g jars. Mesimestari wants to offer domestic honey in smaller portions, to make it easy to use at restaurants and coffee shops. The honey is placed in small packed portion bags, with 10g of honey inside. (Mesimestari 2019.)



Image 4 Mesimestari Honey Products (Mesimestari 2019)

In 2018 the Mesimestari company's net revenue was 2.3 million euros and grew by 39.1% compared to 2017, with a business profit percentage of 2.6%. (Asiakastieto 2018.)

The shelves of stores are filled with different honey brands. Many of them are Finnish, many foreign and some locally produced. The biggest competition to Valosen Hunajatila is created from other domestic honey products, with people that appreciate food produced in Finland, are dream customers for the company, especially people who prefer locally produced domestic products. The region Valosen Hunajatila works in, does not have any big time, local honey producers to compete with. With Kotimaista being the newest addition to the honey shelves, with their cheaper priced domestic honey it remains to be seen how it will affect the honey market in the future.

3.3.3 SWOT Analysis

The SWOT-analysis is an easy way to illustrate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and possible threats for the company. The aspects of the Swot-analysis handle both internal and external factors, that need to be considered before making business related decisions. It shows the company's present position and helps identify its current and future problems. (Holloway 2004, 30.)

Using the SWOT analysis is an easy way to see the whole picture of the situation the company generally is in. Thinking about the current situation through the Swot analysis, the business can be aware of potential future challenges and prepare for them. Possibly even avoid some threats or at least maneuver past problems if they are seen coming in advance and preparations are made. In Image 4 the owners of the company present their insight on the current situation of the company through the means of the swot analysis.

Table 1 Valosen Hunajatila SWOT (Keister & Valonen 2020)

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly educated, professional owners • Great yield area, that competes with the best in Finland and Europe • Good position in the regions honey market, own brand for 30 years • Bee keeping is good environmentally • 3 production lines as a safety net for bad honey years • Good location in the middle of southern Finland 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owners close to retirement • Uncertainty of continuance • Bee keeping and growing corps equals a busy summer • Owners are used to doing things a certain way • Weak social media presence • Many other domestic honey producers
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new entrepreneur could bring new passion and create new ideas • Increasing and widening production/products • Start consistent marketing and venture into social media • Pollination services 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in imported honey- losing market shares • Increasing competition, domestic and local honey • Global warming that potentially brings new new/more diseases and pests that risk the bees • Entrepreneurs health and working condition

Now to analyzing the answers. Many S-markets in the region have a "lähiruoka" section, that roughly translates to local food. That is a separate section that sells food produced nearby, Valosen Hunaja can be found on several of these shelves in different stores. Many people care about food being locally produced and that is a trend, possibly very beneficial for the company. The fact that the company has had a brand for 30 years and with the good location in the heart of Päijät-Häme, the brand is relatively well known in the area. Intensifying marketing might mean that the company can preemptive foreign honey products from taking over market shares from Valosen Hunajatila and instead boost sales.

Kari Valonen had attended bee keeping courses when he started the business. He has also worked as the chairman of the Finnish beekeeper's association, for several years in the past. He has decades of experience in taking care of bees. Kathryn Keister also has decades of experience in handling honey, from extracting which means collecting the honey from the honey cakes to packing the product. She has also been on several fairs promoting and selling the products. Honey production from start to finish is handled by them.

Years of experience combined with a great yield area have led to good average honey yield per beehive, that is the basis of the company. The company's location is ideal for a company of this size, that handles deliveries themselves, because many selling locations are relatively near the production facilities. After years of refining the production process and delivery channels, now the company can focus on new ways of marketing, to keep customers loyal to the brand and make new customers.

The biggest weakness of the company today, is the fact that the workers is nearing retirement age and there is no certainty of continuance. The lack of social media presence can prove to be a weakness for the company in the future, with many companies taking advantage of social media for marketing and sharing information of their companies. Many of the biggest honey producers in Finland have web stores and sell honey via that channel.

With a new entrepreneur with enthusiasm and passion it is possible to seize many opportunities. The company has potential to grow bigger, with building up the production and widening the range of products. The company has had over 300 beehives producing honey, when the company was at its production peak. It is possible to get the numbers even higher with a new entrepreneur, with the will to make the company grow more. Intensifying marketing and developing more products, is something the company has not yet tried. With no competition of the same scale in our region, leaves room to grow. It would to be wise to consider pollination as a way of creating revenue. According to the Finnish

Beekeeper association (Suomen mehiläishoitajainliitto 2019) pollination is the most valuable service for beekeepers. According to estimates bee pollination can be worth even 11,5 times higher than the value of honey. The amount that beekeepers offer pollination services for berry- and fruit farmers is going up. Other bee-based products are pollen, propolis and bee wax than for example can be made into candles.

Every company has potential threats to deal with in the future. For Valosen Hunajatila the biggest threat is the rise of competition, if imported honey would get a bigger share of the market, for example after a bad honey production year, space for imported honey might open on the market.

If new professional beekeepers, would start producing local honey in the region, it could lead to more competition for customers and affect sales in a negative way. For now the situation with diseases and pests is better than in countries with an average temperature higher than in Finland, but with global warming it is possible that disease that now do not affect Finnish bees can become a problem in the future, that can lead to more problems and precautions to be taken to protect the bees. This also means more work for the beekeeper.

3.4 Presenting Research Methods

The survey was created to gain quantitative information and data, that then is analyzed and shaped into graphs to clarify the data. The reliability of the data is shaped by the amount of answers. With a lot of answers the statistical generalizations have more weight behind them. The decision to make the survey was based on wanting information straight from the people living in the region, to figure out what customers find important when buying honey.

Data concerning the usage of honey, focusing on factors that affect the buying decision and brands customers prefer to use. The data was collected through a 4-question survey made with Webropol 3.0 that is a survey and reporting tool.

The questions were made to get information on how often people use honey, what factors they consider when making the purchase decision and what brands the respondents consume. The survey was made short and quick to answer. Quantitative methods for used in the survey to figure out the age and honey usage habits of the respondents. A qualitative approach was considered when making the questions on the factors that affect the

purchase decision and the honey brand favored by respondents. They were made with the possibility to choose multiple answers or writing down your own answer.

The survey was shared on the author's Facebook and Instagram pages. It was also shared by a friend on his Instagram, to get more answers. It was up for 24 hours from the 6th to the 7th of May and during that time gathered 142 respondents. Everyone who started the survey finished it. Some did not answer the question relating to brand decision. Presumably, respondents who chose the option "I don't use honey".

3.5 Data Analysis

In this sub-chapter the data acquired from the empirical research is analyzed and presented. All the questions were optional in the survey, this was compensated by making the survey short and quick to answer. The result of each question is separately analyzed below.

Question 1. Age

The first question was for background information. The question was to determine the age of the respondents, to figure out the age average of the answerers. All 142 participants answered the question. This survey was not required to be limited to any certain age group, but I decided to make the range starting at 15. Figure 3 shows that the main age group was 15-25 with 92 respondents in this age range. The age range 26-36 was answered by 25 respondents, ages 37-47 with 6, ages 48-58 with 10, ages 59-69 with 8 and ages 70+ with 1 respondent. The mixture of ages is heavily in the range of 15-25. The age mixture could have been more diverse. Now the result mainly covers the age group of 15- to 25-year olds.

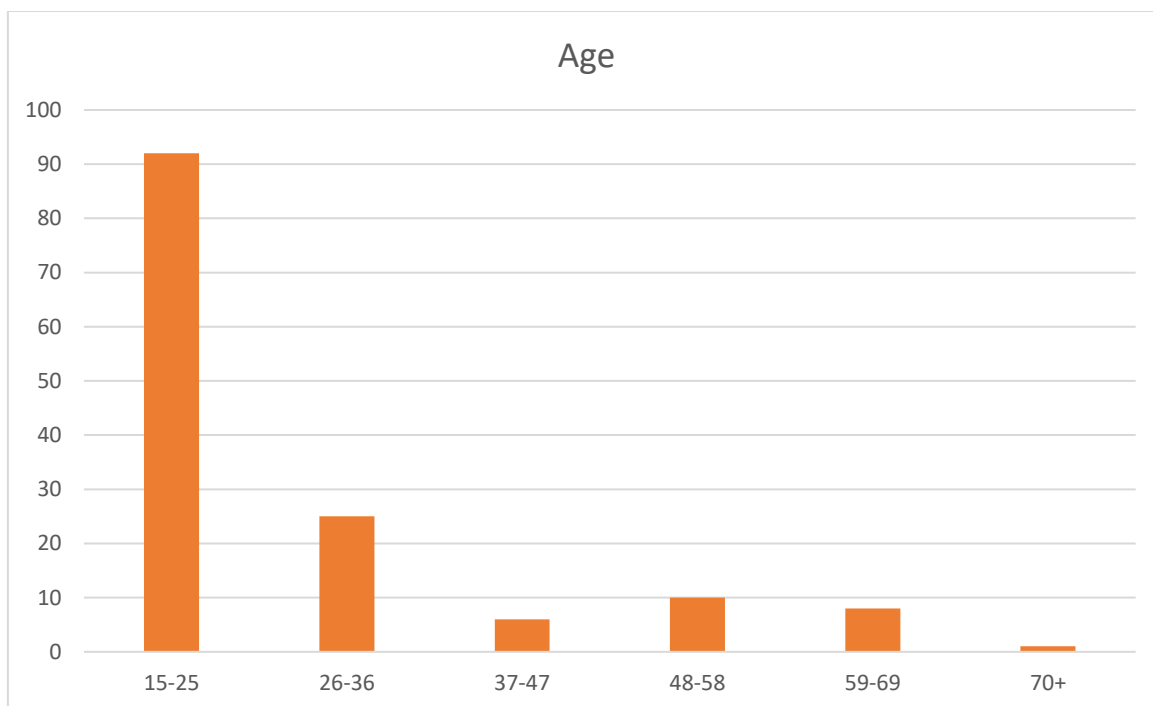


Figure 3 Age

Question 2. Honey usage habits

Question two was to determine how often the respondents use honey with a range from daily usage to not using honey. All respondents answered the question. As can be seen in Figure 4, the answers are focused on a few times a week, a few times a month and more seldomly. All three values around the range of 40-45 respondents. The mixture of answers was decent, for marketing purposes reaching more daily or weekly users would have been useful to creating a marketing plan. Only 8 out of the 142 respondents use honey daily. 10 of the respondents do not use honey at all.

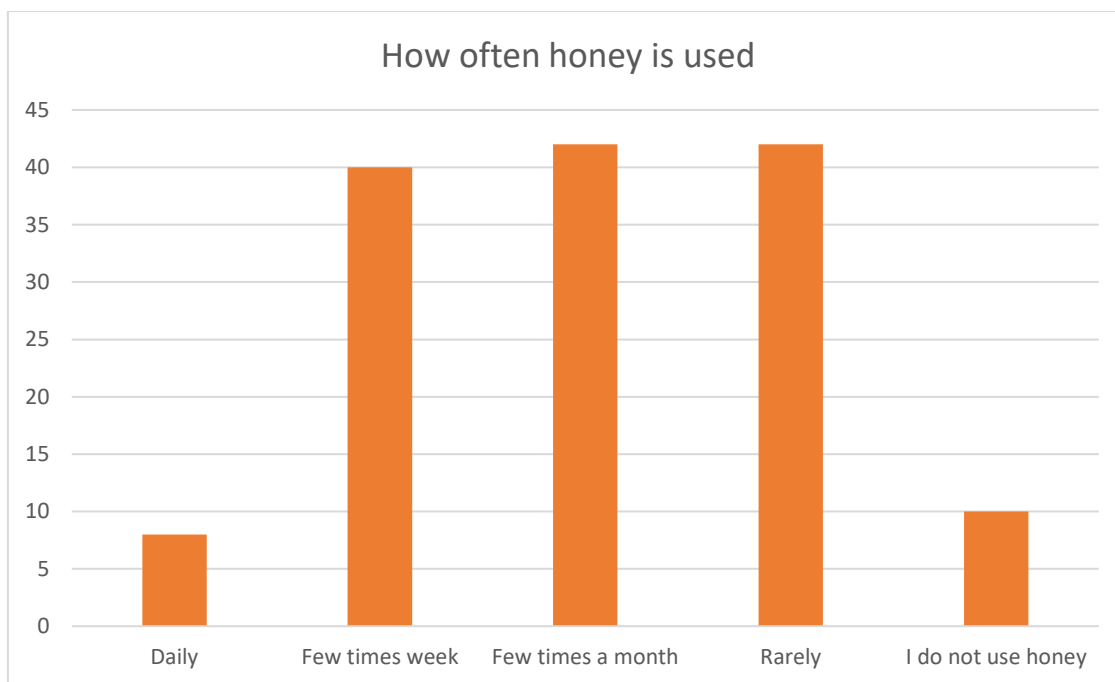


Figure 4 Honey usage habits

Question 3. Factors affecting the buying decision

The third question was formed to establish factors that consumers consider when choosing which honey brand to purchase. This question allowed multiple answers with several options and a possibility to write factors not mentioned in the options the respondent found important. Everyone answered this part of the survey. The options can be seen in Figure 5 below. One hundred and three of the respondents find it important that the honey is produced in Finland, but when considering to localness of the product the number comes down to 58. As expected, the price and form of the honey was an important factor for many respondents, with 81 of the respondents answering price and 87 chose the form of the honey.

The something else option got 9 answers from the respondents. Answers mentioned fair trade honey products, knowing the producers, the size of the container. One respondent mentioned that once he received a jar that was not full, and that is something he will not forget.

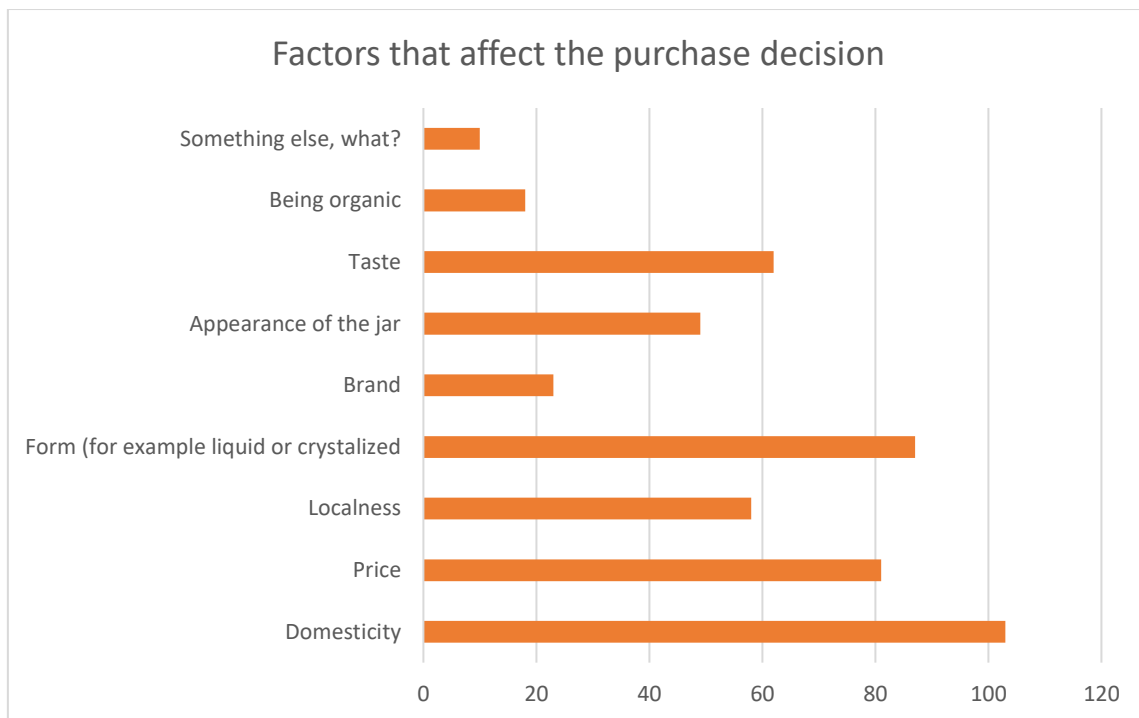


Figure 5 Factors that affect the purchase decision

Question 4. Preferred honey brand

The last question was about the honey brand the respondents use. It was answered by 135 respondents. This question also allowed multiple answers. When looking at the figure it is important to remember that the survey was shared on my Instagram and Facebook page, which influenced this part of the survey. The figure includes some of the most usual honey brands you can find on the shelves of stores.

Representing domestic honeys are Hunajayhtymä, Mesimestari, Valosen Hunaja and Kotimaista. Kotimaista is a rather new occupant on the honey shelves and is cheaper than most domestic honey products. The something else what section got 29 answers, some examples of the answers are Korpiahon Hunaja, Kuningatar Hunaja, Maribel and several local honey producers. Many respondents said they buy their honey from small local honey producers in their area.

Representing foreign honey products are Jakobsens, Sam, Pirkka and Rainbow, that are sold around Finland. Nearly 80 of the respondents use Valosen Hunaja. Little more than 50 use Kotimaista honey.

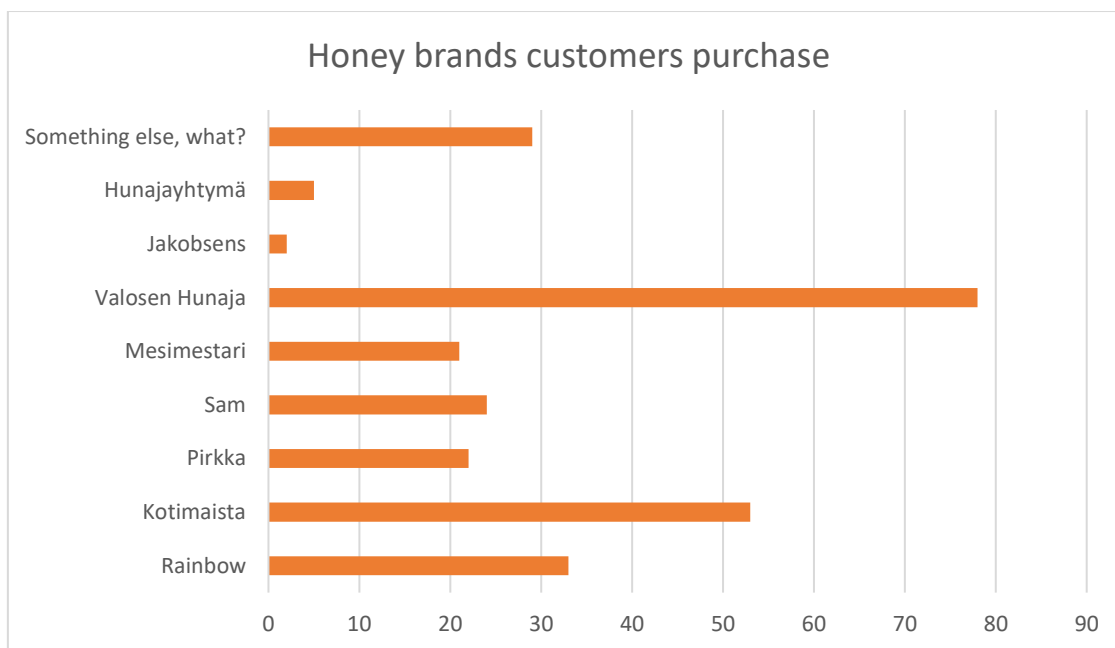


Figure 6 Honey Brands Customers Purchase

3.6 Marketing Goals

The company is not in a situation that it could handle a big rise in demand right now. The main goal is to keep current customers loyal to the products and gain some new customers, while establishing social media presence and getting new channels to directly interact with customers. Creating customers not only loyal to the product but also loyal to the brand and the producers.

Showing the work and producers behind the brand on social media and creating interesting content for current and future customers. When considering possible future continuance for the company, creating a good social media basis for the company, can make the transition to a new entrepreneur easier with ready communication channels.

3.7 Marketing Strategies

The company's product is selling well and nearly the amount of produced honey per year is sold. For right now the marketing plan is focused on the defensive strategy, that aims to keeping current customers loyal to the product. The marketing plan will include some aspects of the attacking strategy also, to attract new customers through the activation of social media channels.

The company has no real need to advertise to the big masses and this closes out out-bound marketing, instead the focus is strictly on inbound marketing, with the main goal of

creating committed long time customers with genuine interest in the company and its products. When considering the strategy, it is important to consider the 4 phases of inbound marketing.

1. Attract
2. Convert
3. Transform (close)
4. Retain (delight) (Chouaib & et al. 2018, 2).

The goal of this approach is to constantly lure new customers in with quality content. The first step is attracting new customers with social media posts that are topical and offer new interesting information. The converting them into leads. After that transforming the leads into customers and end the cycle to retaining the customers. This can be done by keeping up a regular posting schedule, with delighting content, the customer finds interesting. This way companies can create loyal customers, that are invested in more than just the product.

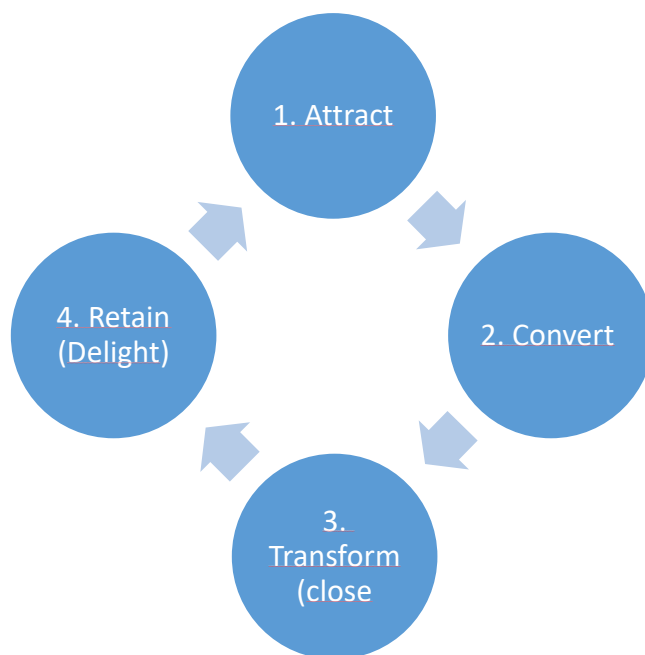


Figure 7 The 4 Phases of Inbound Marketing (Chouaib & et al. 2018, 2)

The 4C's Valosen Hunajatila

The marketing plan will be created considering the 4C-model, since it is described better and more up to date than the 4P-model.

Customer Value

The company sells two different honey products to the stores in the region. The soft crystallized honey, that comes in 450g jars is the bestselling product of the honey farm. The second product customers can find on the shelves of stores is the liquid honey that comes in squeezable tubes, that are easy and clean to use. The crystallized honey is produced inside a 20 km radius from the farm, so it is locally produced in Päijät-Häme. The liquid honey is called branded "Metsäkukkahunaja" (Forest flower honey) because it is produced strictly in the area of the national park Evo, the bees collect the nectarine from flowers in the forest and because of that the honey product taste's different. From start to finish the products are produced by the entrepreneurs with years of experience in honey production. Offering two different products, makes it possible to satisfy customers with different requirements for honey products.

The honey being locally produced and domestic brings customers satisfaction, because they know they are supporting locally produced food, produced by a local small company run mainly by two people.

Quality control is easy to maintain because every jar is packed separately. This ensures that the honey amount in the jar remains consistent and the chance of a not full jar is non existing. The honey has been produced in the same way for years and the product does not change

Cost to Customer

Cost to customer does not become a problem, because the product can be found on shelves of most of the grocery stores in Valosen Hunajatila's marketing area. Grocery stores are places where people acquire their food in case, there for purchasing the product does not create more expenses for the consumer, than going to the grocery store, where they would go anyway to buy essential groceries. The products are sold where the customers are.

If customers would prefer getting honey in their own containers, they can visit the farm and buy honey for 10€/kg, the price is cheaper than in the stores, this making the total cost to customer lower, even if visiting the farm.

Convenience

Considering the convenience for the customer to acquire the product, is in good shape. Like mentioned in the cost for customer section, the products are sold in grocery stores

around the region, so while going to the store, you can conveniently buy the product at the same time. Now the company is not in a situation to start up a web store, but if a new entrepreneur takes over the company, creating a web store is something to consider.

Communication

To increase communication between the company and the customers, the entrepreneurs will start adding posts to the company website. The Facebook page will get regular updates this coming summer, sharing information on bee keeping and the work phases of the summer season. Information related to the product will also be shared in the form of recipes that require honey and different ways to use the product in everyday life. An Instagram page will be started, with the idea of sharing pictures taken at the bee yards and showing what is happening during what phase. The idea of the Instagram is to give a peek in to the life of a professional beekeeper, that takes care of the bees and collects the honey. People who start following the social media channels will then have a direct channel for consumers to use to communicate directly to the entrepreneurs. This will also ensure quick answering times. Thus, Creating interactive communication between the customer and the company.

3.8 Segmentation

This part is about describing a few different descriptions of the customers the inbound marketing is set to reach, with 2 examples of segments with wanted characteristics and one example of a customer segment out of the target audience. Figure 8 has the segments numbered and listed, with the ideal customer segment on top.

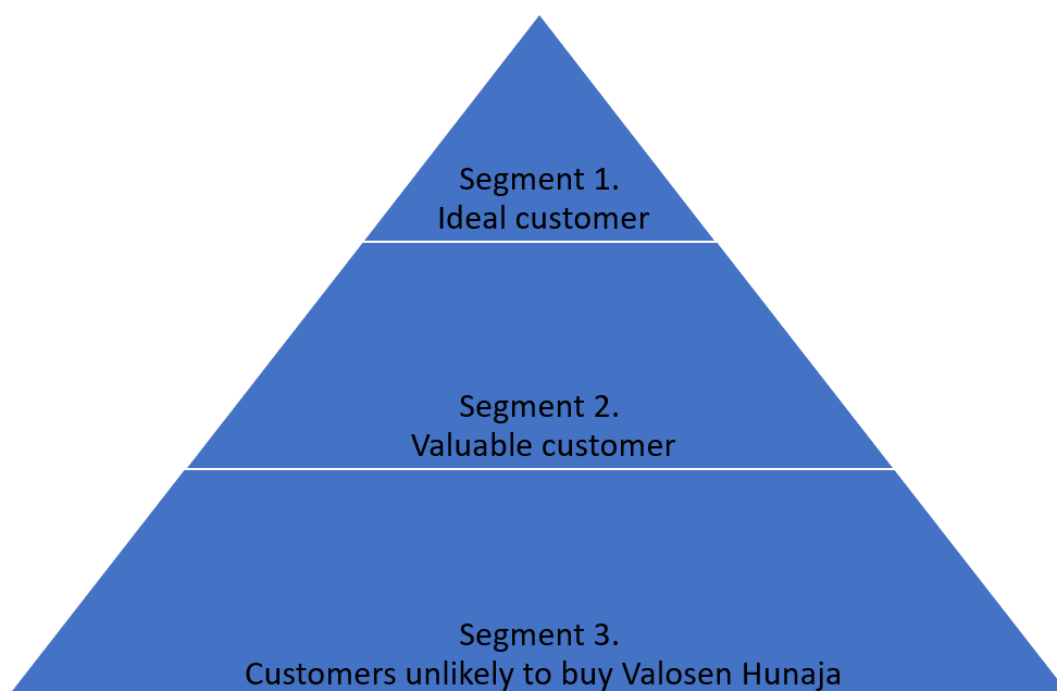


Figure 8 Customer Segments

Customer Segment 1

People who consume honey daily, with several different methods of consuming honey. Aged between 25-60. They think it is important, that the honey is produced in Finland and take pride in supporting local producers. They are interested in learning new ways to make use of honey in food or drinks. They are keen to learn more of the product and the people producing it. Are casual or active Facebook or Instagram user, that enjoy posts with pictures and knowledge on the matter. Demographically situated near Päijät-Häme.

Customer Segment 2

Young adults in the age group of 18-25-year old's, that consume honey weekly or monthly and are interested in quality honey that is locally produced. They want to more knowledge about the production steps concerning honey. They are active users of Facebook or Instagram. Demographically situated near Päijät-Häme.

Example of a possible customer segment is currently not in the target group:

Customer Segment 3

People who use honey only a few times a year or less. Do not use social media channels like Facebook and Instagram. Are only interested in the price of the honey and do not care where the honey is produced.

3.9 Social Media Marketing

The company will focus on two social medias. Facebook and Instagram. The main idea is to gain followers that are interested in the products, the work behind a finished product and the people behind the product. Below we dive more in depth to what the content planned to be posted is going to be like. In the beginning the company will not pay for advertisement on Facebook or Instagram. The starting step is to get familiar with creating content to Facebook and Instagram, that customers enjoy reading and find interesting. Having two different channels, the idea is to post different content to the pages. Facebook is going to be more informative and Instagram having light content that aims to please the eyes of the customers.

Facebook

The current Facebook page has 228 followers. It has been a long time since content was added to the page. The last post was added on the 24th of December in 2018. The messenger has been set with an automatic answer incase customers send a message, that includes Kathryn's phone number, in case the matter is urgent. The page is included with a link to the website and the address and a phone number to call, if there are questions or requests. One of the main ideas of the page is to establish a communications link between the producers and customers, with fast answering times, while building up the number of followers.

A weekly posting schedule will begin in the beginning of June. There will be 1-2 posts per week. The posts will be related to the process of making honey and what is happening at the bee yards while showing customers the people behind the product. There will be cooking recipes that acquire use honey as an ingredient to give people new ideas on how to use honey in new ways. Focusing the Facebook mainly on informative posts, is to make the page look professional and for it to be the social media front for the company.

Instagram

Creating an Instagram profile is free, and it is possible to change the page suitable for companies free of charge. In the company version, Instagram allows you to add a button you can press in the bio, to get in contact with the company via email for example. You can add the location and classify the company as a product provider. With 100 followers on the page, Instagram gives access to an analysis that offers extensive demographic information. The page can be connected to the Facebook page, that allows followers to move to the Facebook page. (Instagram-yritystilin perustaminen 2019.)

The company does not have an Instagram account now. A profile will be created in the beginning of June, and regular posts will start along with the Facebook posts but with a different schedule and different posting days. The main idea on the page is to keep the posts light on information, but instead focus on colorful quality pictures of the work phases. Making pleasant content with the main goal of pleasing the customers, with good nature pictures that are focused around the life of the bees. With the content aiming to be mainly pleasant, the posting schedule can be tighter, and pictures at the start will be added 2-3 times a week. To get the Instagram started it will be shared on the Facebook page of the company, the main goal at first is to reach 100 followers to unlock the analyses tools, so the results of posts can be followed.

Posting schedule

The author will personally start running the social media channels, because the author is potentially the person to start running the company in the future, and deeper knowledge on the matter can become useful in the future. The author has experience in using Instagram and Facebook, that the current entrepreneurs are lacking in. The posts can have interesting new from the beekeeping association linked in. Creating content that show what happens at the bee yards in what part of the summer and show the different parts of the production chain, with pictures on extraction and honey packing methods. The company produces honey, therefore most of the posts will be related to the usage, production and benefits of using honey. The plan is to advertise the possibility of coming to the farm to buy honey because the price is a bit cheaper and get some face to face time with the customers.

The posting schedule will be set so that Facebook posts are every Wednesday or Saturday. Wednesday posts will only be made, if there is a lot of action with the bees during that week. The idea is not to clutter the feeds of customers, with spamming posts. Only posting when there is actual content behind the post. Instagram posts will be made on different days than the Facebook posts. The idea is to post 2-3 times a week on the Instagram on Monday, Thursday and possibly Sunday. With weeks with less to post at least the Sunday post will be dropped. Just like with Facebook the goal is not to clutter the Instagram feeds of the customers with filler posts, with no real meaning behind them.

Analyzing results

The results of the social media marketing will be measured, through the changes in the follower count, how many likes the posts receive and how many people comment or share the post. The analytic tools that will be used are in built on Facebook and Instagram.

Facebook collects a wide range of information related to the visitors of the page. Counting the times people have opened the page, how many people the post reaches, how much attention the previous posts had achieved and much more. The information can be used to create better content, based on what kind of posts get more attention compared to posts that do not do as well. The analyzing programs are free to use.

4 CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Answers to Research Questions

This research focused on creating a marketing plan for a honey company and figuring out the steps to creating a successful marketing plan. The plan is based solely on marketing theory and a survey that received 142 respondents. The main research question was: How to create an effective marketing plan for a locally based honey farm? A sub-question was set and before answering the main research question, the sub-question will be answered. The research questions are presented below with the answers.

What are important production values to honey customers?

To answer this question the survey was created, especially the question about the factors that customers find important when purchasing honey products. The question allowed multiple answers, so it is a mix of factors the respondents consider when buying honey. The factors that got the most votes were Domestic with 103 answers, form of the honey got 87, price 81, taste 62, being locally produced 58 and the appearance of the jar 49 answers. In the written answers there were mentions of fair-trade products and knowing the producers as factors they consider.

As can be seen in the answers many people are interested in the origin of the honey and appreciate domestic products over foreign ones. Honey customers consider many things when purchasing honey and the results of the test answer the sub-question, although it is important to understand that with 142 answerers the results are not definite, but they give a good idea on the matter.

How to create an effective marketing plan for a locally based honey farm?

According to the theory, it is important to consider several things when creating a marketing plan. Starting with several analyses on the company's starting situation, including the starting situation, company, market, competition, swot and data analyses. Based on the analyses and the survey decide on the marketing strategies. The part started by deciding to focus on the defensive strategy, with the goal of keeping existing customers, this also part included the decision to focus on the approach on inbound marketing. Then decided to think about the company's services through the 4C's instead of the outdated 4P's. Then we established the segments with examples of the target audience and what values they would ideally have. The segments were influenced with the data gathered with the survey.

Getting an idea of what customers are looking for when buying the product, is helpful when considering segments.

With customer satisfaction being the goal of the company, it was important to consider communications between the company and the customers. So, it was decided that Facebook and Instagram will be the social media channels. As Komulainen (2018, 228-229) said, when the social media page has many followers the creditability of the company grows, because potential new customers see that many people are interested in the company and the services they provide. One of the main goals of becoming active on social media, is creating good communications channel. As Coles (2014, 4-5) stated, using social media has many benefits, it is free to use, and you can reach a massive audience, while it offers an easy way to communicate with the customers.

4.2 Validity and Reliability

The main goal of the thesis was to create a marketing plan for the case company Valosen Hunajatila and to answer the research questions. The objectives were reached, and the research questions were answered. Information was gathered from books related to the subject, online sources and e-books. Quantitative data was collected by an online survey, with the main goal of understanding what factors honey customers consider, before purchasing the product and what brands they use currently. The survey was shared on the authors Instagram and Facebook pages and received 142 answers and that is enough answers and gathered information that allowed the research question to be answered. The results would most likely remain the same if the survey was reproduced using the same channels, but it would be shared to groups with different age distribution, the results would not necessarily be the same in a different age segment. The answers were mainly focused on the age range of 15-36-year old's and concerning this age group the data is very reliable. Based on these statements, the research is considered reliable and valid.

4.3 Suggestions on Further Research

Researching the consuming habits of age groups above the age 40 with more accuracy could prove itself useful for the company, to create marketing aimed at the segments they are in. If the company gains more followers on the social media channels, a broader survey can be conducted, with more precise questions that are approached from a qualitative perspective to gain deeper knowledge of the customer needs and wants.

5 SUMMARY

The study was conducted to start up social media marketing for the case company, Valosen Hunajatila. The focus of the thesis is on getting better knowledge of honey customers consider when buying honey and figuring out the benefits of having active social media channels.

The thesis started with considering different aspects required to create a marketing plan. This included considering the needed steps to creating a marketing plan, marketing tools, segments and marketing with a digital approach. A look into the importance of social media channels to a company, was included in this part. Analyzing the current situation of the company through different analyzes like the competition-, market- and Swot analysis.

To research what customer consider when making the decision to buy a honey product, a short survey was created to gain quantitative data, related to consuming habits. The survey gave basis for what the future content that will go on Facebook and Instagram should focus on. The survey showed that customers consider the domesticity and the form of the honey important.

The case company's existing Facebook page and the soon to be created Instagram, will start being active in June 2020, ran by the author of the thesis, who can potentially become the next entrepreneur of the company.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Survey

Hunajan käyttötottumukset

Tämä kysely on tehty LAB-ammattikorkeakoulussa kirjoitettavaa opinnäytetyötä varten yhteistyössä Valosen hunajatilin kanssa. Kyselyn tuloksia käytetään Valosen hunajatilin markkinointisuunnitelman rakentamiseen. Kaikki vastaukset tallennetaan, säilytetään sekä käsitellään täysin anonymisti. Kyselyyn vastaaminen vie muutaman minuutin. Arvostan jokaista vastausta

1. Ikäsi?

- 15-25
- 26-36
- 37-47
- 48-58
- 59-69
- 70+

2. Kuinka usein käytät hunajaa?

- Päivittäin
- Muutaman kerran viikossa
- Muutaman kerran kuukaudessa
- Harvemmin
- En käytä

3. Mitä tekijät vaikuttavat hunajamerkin valintaan?

- Kotimaisuus
- Hinta
- Paikallisuus
- Olomuoto (Esim juoksevaa tai kiteistä)
- Brändi
- Purkin ulkonäkö
- Maku
- Luomu-tuote
- Jokin muu, mikä?

4. Mitä hunajabrändejä käytät?

- Rainbow
- Kotimaista
- Pirkka
- Sam
- Mesimestari
- Valosen Hunaja
- Jakobsens
- Hunajayhtymä
- Jokin muu, mikä?

Lähetä