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Social Media Marketing as Tool for a Small Company- Case: FinnEasy Oy

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Title
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The development of digital technology has moved marketing efforts to digital spaces, where social media marketing is the industry's most popular approach. In this situation companies have started to use content marketing to attract and retain customers' attention in the hopes of creating relationships and to drive profitable customer action.

The research objectives of the thesis were to create a theoretical framework for a social media marketing plan, to study and examine content marketing as a social media marketing approach, and to create a content marketing plan for FinnEasy Oy.

The thesis was concluded mainly via qualitative research methods using secondary data from books, articles, studies, and industry reports. Primary data was collected from the employees of the company to review the current situation of the company.

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1 Introduction

The development of digital technology has increasingly changed how we communicate, share information, access entertainment and shop for products and services (Kotler, Armstrong Harris & Piercy 2017, 21). This has radically changed marketing and morphed it into a new kind of marketing (Kuenn & Kuenn 2015, 12). Less money is spent on traditional advertising because marketers are moving their money online (Kuenn & Kuenn 2015, 12). The companies experiencing real growth online create content that engages with their customers and brings in the business. This is seen as an industry trend of shifting marketing efforts towards content and social media marketing. (Kuenn & Kuenn 2015, 12.)

The number of unique active social media users globally is approximately 4.62 billion (We are Social & Hootsuite 2022, 9). According to a survey by Visual Objects (2021), in 2020, 93% of surveyed small companies recognize that they struggle with challenges concerning social media marketing and practices across different social media platforms. From these factors, it is easy to state that social media marketing is an increasingly important topic for companies to study and research.

1.1 Aim and objective

The main objective of this thesis is to create a simple, usable framework that works as a roadmap for FinnEasy Oy to plan out its future social media marketing efforts. The thesis will also examine FinnEasy's current content marketing efforts and create a content marketing plan to increase market revenue in the United States. The framework is supposed to be usable for different goals while maintaining measurability and making it possible for the company to learn towards which direction the marketing efforts should be taken.

In essence, the research objectives of the thesis are:

1. To create a theoretical framework for a social media marketing plan.
2. To study and examine content marketing as a social media marketing approach.
3. To create a content marketing plan for FinnEasy Oy.

1.2   Methods

The thesis is conducted using mainly qualitative research methods. The information and secondary data for the literature review of the thesis are from books, articles, reports, and studies. In the third part of the thesis, the primary data for creating a plan for FinnEasy Oy is collected with via an interview with the company's sales and marketing manager, Heini Kultanen, and area manager Marko Ruuska. The primary data is used to examine if the study's findings are coherent with the current situation and to help create the plan tailored to the company's needs.

1.3   Outline

The first part of the thesis introduces the topic and the case company while outlining the aim. The second part of the thesis is a literature review, where the main concepts of social media and content marketing are explored and the theoretical tools for creating a social media marketing plan are studied. The thesis is outlined to concern only social media marketing, which leaves other digital marketing activities outside of the scope of the thesis. This does not mean that they are irrelevant. On the contrary, they are vital when creating a marketing strategy for a company where content marketing is only a part of the strategy. The theoretical framework is a general way to create a social media marketing plan with different approaches. As a limitation to this thesis, only the content marketing approach is used, but other approaches should be examined in the future. The practical and the third part of the thesis uses the theoretical tools to create a simple content marketing plan for FinnEasy, which is feasible in the current situation. The time frame of concluding the thesis limits the

analysis of the possible results gained by the content marketing plan, but in the latter part of the plan, an analysis for possible results is made in the best manner possible.

1.4 Company case introduction

FinnEasy Oy is a relatively small manufacturing company of the EasySwing cattle brush product line, located in Hammaslahti, Finland. Currently, FinnEasy has over 20 resellers worldwide. In a few countries there is more than one reseller that sells EasySwing brushes.

The EasySwing brushes are designed to independently brush livestock animals such as cows, horses, and goats. The end customers of EasySwing brushes are livestock farmers who recognize the need for the brushes to improve the health of their animals. The company's direct customers are distributors who sell the brushes to the end customers. On average, these distributors are small to middle-sized companies that sell products related to raising and improving the well-being of livestock animals. In 2021 FinnEasy Oy employed six people, and the revenue was 920,000 euros (Kauppalehti 2022).

2 Literature review

2.1 Social media marketing

Social media marketing involves using digital marketing tools such as social media, websites, mobile ads, apps, online videos, emails, and other digital platforms that consumers use with their computers, smartphones, tablets, and other digital devices connected to the internet (Kotler et al. 2017, 22). In essence, social media marketing (SMM) can be summarized as the marketing of products and services on social media and social networks (Hayes 2021).

Most companies use social media. As of 2018, nearly 97 per cent of all Fortune 500 enterprises used at least one social media platform to promote their brands and create customer relationships (Statista 2018). Additionally, in 2021 the number one way companies approached marketing was social media marketing (HubSpot 2021).

Social media is a great place to tell stories and interact between humans and companies. It is a powerful tool that brings people together and creates meaningful memories. Over time these social media posts and comments create stories about people and companies. (Quesenberry 2016, 28.) This nature of the social media interactions between humans allows companies to engage new and existing customers as they promote their mission and culture of tone (Hayes 2021).

The nature of the marketing efforts makes it difficult to create a single approach that works for every company, since the social media landscape is in an everchanging cycle where constant engagement and analysis are needed to achieve the best possible results for different objectives.

In conclusion, social media marketing is a vast concept of different possible marketing efforts done by companies through social media platforms. There are different ways of defining social media marketing concepts, but the overall understanding of why companies should engage in social media marketing and what should be considered during the process is consistent in different sources. Social media marketing is also a prevalent direction towards which most companies are taking more and more of their marketing efforts in the future.

As stated previously, creating one specific approach to social media marketing is very difficult, and the different ways companies catch customers' attention are almost limitless. In this thesis, the approach is limited to content marketing, which works as base layers for all social media marketing activity. For future research other social media approaches such as influencer marketing and paid advertisements should be examined so that a company can find out the most beneficial marketing activities.

2.2   Content Marketing

"Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly-defined audience and ultimately to drive profitable customer action" (Content Marketing Institute 2022). This content can be blog posts, videos, live streams, social media posts, podcasts and any other form distributed through social media platforms (Swartz 2020, 98-101).

Social media should not be treated as a broadcast channel for business. It is a way to connect and engage with the audience, which means that content should be sociable and conversational (Butow, Allton, Herman, Liu & Robinson 2020). When developing content for marketing purposes, it is essential to keep in mind that the story only needs to appeal to a single group already interested in the products or services sold by the company. The content should be about how people reflect on the company's brand and the moments they can experience with the brand. Therefore, content should resonate with customers' experiences and values. (Swartz 2020, 89-90.)

It should also be kept in mind that social media's purpose is not to promote business or content; it is rather to form relationships and develop them through conversations and discussions. This can be accomplished by commenting, asking questions, and answering questions. Providing social contact with the users makes them more likely to like and share the content while even becoming a customer. (Butow et al. 2020, 55.)
Content creation is all about storytelling and authenticity. Social media platforms are flooded with content, so the company should find its voice by sharing and creating content that is important to the company's values and views. This way, the content becomes personalized storytelling which helps to create communities around the company. (Swartz 2020, 93-100.)

2.2.1 Strategic goals for content marketing

According to findings in an empirical study by Koobs (2021), strong content marketing strategizing context is associated with higher content marketing effectiveness (Koobs 2021). This can be achieved by creating a compelling content marketing vision, formulating clear goals and objectives while defining content creation principles and standards, and clarifying key stories and main topics. Developing customer personas and studying what content formats would most benefit the targeted audiences should be consistently done. (Koobs 2021.) There are various goals for content marketing strategies, but in the context of the case company, there are four main categories for the content marketing strategy goals explored.

Promote Thought Leadership

Successful content marketing gets people talking, mentioning, referencing, linking, and sharing content. If the brand consistently provides valuable information to customers and potential customers, a perception that the brand is leading the market is created (Kuenn & Kuenn 2015, 13-14).
The more a company promotes and distributes new, helpful content, the more the company will boost thought leadership within the industry. If a company wants to build on their thought leadership, it should be a source of information and join the conversations in the industry. (Kuenn & Kuenn 2015, 13-14.)

Customer Retention

Customer retention essentially means producing articles, videos, or other content that keeps people engaged and actively listening to the brand. This keeps the audience informed about new products, services, or helpful information. (Kuenn & Kuenn 2015, 17.) Social media is an excellent way to leverage content so that customers keep visiting the company's sites regularly, for example, free guides, videos, FAQs, and tutorials that help customers make better use of a product or service create this kind of retention (Kuenn & Kuenn 2015, 17).

Lead Generation

Content marketing can generate quality leads and is potentially more cost-effective than other marketing alternatives (Kuenn & Kuenn 2015, 18). The content marketing strategy should include gated content that tracks lead and creates follow-ups with an informative newsletter, or another information source, that fulfils some customer needs (Kuenn & Kuenn 2015, 18). If executed properly, a free piece of content can generate many leads by placing content behind a lead capture form that requires users to give information before gaining access (Kuenn & Kuenn 2015, 18).

Increase Revenue

Content is not there to increase traffic or gain likes; it should also be geared toward the primary goal of all companies, namely increased revenue (Kuenn & Kuenn 2015, 18). Content should have a specific use for the customer to increase revenue. It should be pointed towards action, leading customers down the sales funnel. If a company has created a piece of content that interests the target audience, they will be more willing to act and learn more. The company must ensure that it helps users decide what to buy or then promote a specific action. (Kuenn & Kuenn 2015, 18-19.)

2.2.2 Content types

The Content Marketing Matrix may be a helpful content mapping tool that can be used to identify the most beneficial types of content to reach the target audience (Chaffey 2020).
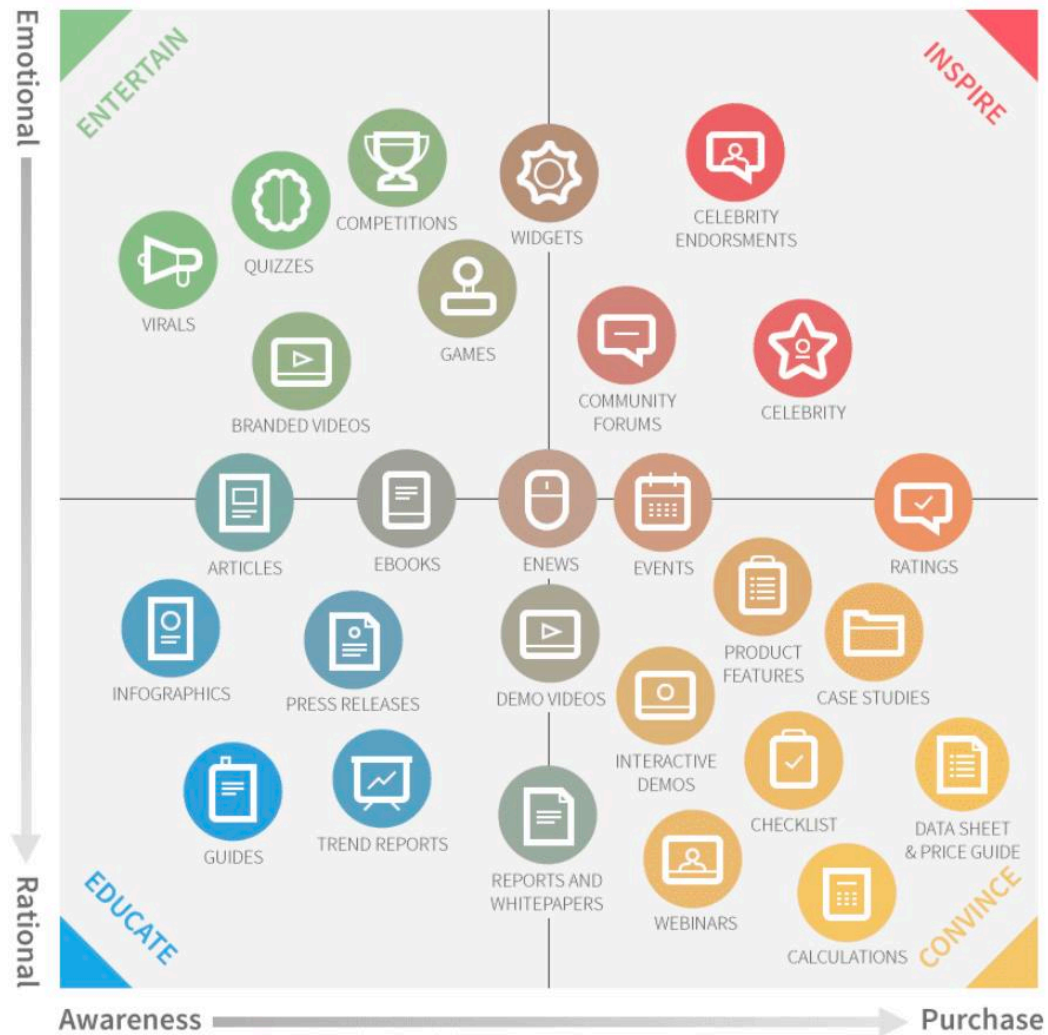
Picture 1. The Content Marketing Matrix. Chaffey D. 2022 (Picture: SmartInsights 2022).

The content marketing matrix's axes run vertically from emotional to rational and horizontally from awareness to purchase, representing the purchase funnel, with each quadrant depicting the purpose of the contents (Lipovic 2019). Four of these purposes are defined: to entertain, educate, inspire and convince. At the beginning of the sales funnel, customers would like to interact with brands before purchasing. It is beneficial to **entertain** and engage with the customer's emotional side at this stage. (Lipovic 2019.) Looking back to the content marketing matrix in this situation, the company should produce, for example, competitions or branded videos (Picture 1).

The basic idea of **educating** the customer through content is that when consumers feel empowered and educated, they feel capable of making informed decisions around a subject. This moves their emotional connection with the company to a rational one. (Lipovic 2019.) According to the Matrix publishing guides, infographics and trend reports would educate the most from the content types (Picture 1).

Inspiring consumers through the content allows them to engage with the brand from a positive perspective. This can be done by sharing positive reviews or opening community forums where the company can interact with customers. (Lipovic 2019.)

When customers are already far into the sales funnel, they need to be **convinced** and lead toward buying decisions. This is possible when the content is persuasive and reinforces everything the customers have learned about the brand. (Lipovic 2019.) The content marketing matrix expresses that product features and pricing guides would be an ideal form of content at this stage (Picture 1).

2.2.3 STEPP-model for viral content creation

In his book *Contagious: Why Things Catch On*, Jonah Berger (2013) explains why certain content is more likely to spread and become viral. During the analysis, he came across six "ingredients" that affect why certain content is talked about, shared and imitated (Berger 2013, 21-22). Keeping these "ingredients" in mind during the planning phase of creating social media content might help achieve better, more contagious content. At least they are worth trying out.

Social currency
The first principal concerns the reasoning why we share certain things online. Essentially, sharable information possesses social currency, and people share it to come across as intelligent and interesting to improve the way others perceive them. (Berger 2013, 22-23.)

Triggers

Triggers are vital for a great piece of sharable content. They are the hooks that keep an idea on the minds of people. While they might seem the simplest element, creating something genuinely memorable is exceptionally challenging. (Berger 2013, 23.)

Emotion

One of the main reasons people share content is that it has an emotional effect. If people see something that genuinely makes them laugh, cry or smile, they are far more likely to want to share that emotion with others. (Berger 2013, 23.)

Public

People will likely imitate something that is seen in public. Companies should always aim to create something with longevity that will continue to generate interest and remain popular as more people become aware of it is also essential to think about how products and services can be used in a public environment, both online and offline. (Berger 2013, 23-24.)

Practical value

The content published by companies should always be aimed at:
Solve a problem and give the audience something genuinely beneficial to them; furthermore, fill a gap in the market and provide them with unique insight and knowledge that will help them overcome an obstacle. (Berger 2013, 24.)

Stories

Creators should make a story or narrative that the user will invest in, with a product or service wrapped up in the middle. If a company can create a story in this manner, the people are interested in discussing it and sharing it with other people. (Berger 2013, 24.)

2.3   Social media advertisement

The best way to rapidly gain attention on social media is through paid advertising. There are paid advertisement features in every social media platform today, but the best return comes with the chosen social media platforms at the center of the strategy. Paid social media advertising is a powerful tool for two reasons: it is affordable and measurable. Regardless of which platform is chosen to invest in, it is far more affordable than traditional advertising, and it is possible to precisely measure the returns for the investment. (Butow 2020, 154.)

Online advertisement is a pointed, attack-like approach where companies try to attain customers' attention in hopes of them clicking on the ad to be redirected to a particular site (Swartz 2020). Today social media platforms also offer the opportunity to "boost" posts by paying a certain amount of money in exchange for greater visibility of social media posts (Swartz 2020, 166).

Choosing the right social media for advertisement and boosting posts should be done during the planning phase of the social media marketing framework. Creating an advertisement is a complicated topic that needs a complete study and perhaps even the consultation of experts. During this thesis, Jonah Berger's STEPP- model for creating viral content is presented. This can be used as a foundation to create social media advertisements.

2.4   Target groups and segments

The purpose of the STP Marketing Model is to analyze product offerings and how the company can communicate its benefits and value to specific groups. STP stands for segmentation targeting and positioning. The model is helpful because it helps to identify the most valuable customer types and then develop a powerful marketing message for them. The STP-model allows engaging with the target groups much more efficiently and effectively. (Yieldify 2020.)

Segmentation means separating people into groups based on common characteristics and needs. The marketing message can be tailored to meet one group's needs as effectively as possible. (Yieldify 2020.)

There a no single best way to segment a market, but the most common major variables are geographic, demographic, psychographic and behavioral variables (Source: Kotler et al. 2020, 200).

Segmentation variable	Examples
Geographic	Nations, regions, states, counties, cities, neighbourhoods, population density (urban, suburban, rural), climate
Demographic	Age, life-cycle stage, gender, income, occupation, education, religion, ethnicity, generation
Psychographic	Lifestyle, personality
Behavioural	Occasions, benefits, user status, usage rate, loyalty status

Table 1. Major segmentation variables for buyer groups (Table: Kotler et al. 2020, 201).

Targeting is the second phase of target group marketing. During the targeting phase, marketing activity is directed in a particular direction. (Yieldify 2020.) There is no one utterly right way to target since it is a sum of many different variables. During the targeting phase, cost-effectiveness should be the primary focus so that the marketing efforts can be directed toward the target audience. This is the most beneficial to the company's goals as it considers utilizing the most appropriate resources possible. (Kotler et al. 2020, 206.)

It is also possible and sometimes beneficial to select one or more customer segments so that marketing effectively reaches the target audience. By finding the most productive segments and excluding fewer valuable segments, the company can meet customer needs, improve its productivity, and lower the number of competitors. (Kotler et al. 2020, 20.) Criteria influencing the selection of segment may, for example, include the following factors:

1. The size of the of potential customer group.
2. The profitability of the segments.

3. The accessibility of the customer groups trough the company's communication strategy.

In essence, an ideal customer segment is one which is actively growing, has high profitability and is reachable with low costs. (Yieldify 2020.)

Positioning is the final phase in target group marketing. This refers to how the brand and public image of the company forms in the customers' minds. The purpose of the positioning phase is to be able to answer the question, "What sets the product apart from the competition?". (Yieldify 2020.)

If a company can identify the customer needs and differentiate and position itself so that it can provide better customer value, it gains a competitive advantage over the competitors (Kotler et al. 2020, 216).

There are different ways and factors which can be used for positioning, but many successful product positionings are some combination of different factors. For example, the following factors may help positioning and to gain a competitive edge (Yieldify 2020).

1. Symbolic positioning: enhancing the self-image, belongingness, and brand image of the product.
2. Functional positioning: Solving a specific problem of the customers and provide concrete benefits.
3. Experiential positioning: Trying to focus on the emotional connection that customers might have with a brand or product.

2.5 Social media platforms and how to choose them

Social media platforms and networks allow companies to effectively reach specific target audiences while keeping the investments in the marketing efforts relatively low but the results high. Social media platforms have become a natural environment for humans to interact, so customers naturally receive marketing messages. Social networks are also seen as more trustworthy since they are perceived to be consisting of real people. This has also created a

situation where businesses can appear less credible without a social media presence. (Hruska & Maresova 2020.)

Social media platforms are a part of today's fast-paced everchanging digital landscape where popular social media channels can shut down unexpectedly. Others can become extremely popular only in months. Choosing channels based on the company's strategic process and objectives makes it possible to quickly adapt to new emerging channels (Quesenberry 2016, 112).

When choosing social media platforms, one should focus on finding the platform where it is easiest to find as many people who represent the target audience as possible. This can be from major or minor niche platforms based on the target audience and their interests. Focusing on new and untapped platforms might also be helpful, since getting attention on channels that are not as clouded by other companies might be more accessible. (Weinberg & Mares 2015, 174.)
It is also essential that the company and employees are comfortable with the chosen social media platforms, since growing a reputation and creating an authentic feel to the social media activity needs much time and requires real social contact whit the targeted audience (Swartz 2020, 118-119).
During this thesis, an in-depth analysis of different social media platforms will not be done since there are many emerging and dying social media channels. An analysis of which social media channel a company should use is vital when creating a social media strategy with varying results, depending on the target audience, resources and chosen approach.

2.6   Framework for a social media plan

Swartz's (2020) simple plan framework is used during this thesis when creating and mapping out the desired action taken on social media platforms. The framework consists of a series of steps that can be modified into an iterative cycle that helps develop the strategy during and after the process (Swartz 2020, 8-13).

1. Set a goal

The first step is to set a specific, measurable, and actionable goal that clearly states what the company is trying to achieve (Swartz 2020, 8).

2. Choose a KPI

After setting a goal, a plan of how it will be measured should be made. It is essential to choose one metric key performance indicator (KPI), which shows whether achieving the goal is any closer. (Swartz 2020, 9.)

3. Measure (before)

The current situation should be measured related to KPI. The result of this measurement works as a starting point that is supposed to increase during the process. (Swartz 2020, 10.)

4. Leap

After taking the measurement, the next step is to act and make a leap, not a giant one, but a small calculated one. This is supposed to increase KPI. (Swartz 2020, 10-11.)

5. Measure (after)

After the chosen action is done, to which direction the KPI has advanced should be measured accurately. This is done by focusing only on the critical metric chosen beforehand. (Swartz 2020, 11.)

6. Learn

After completing all steps, KPI can be compared to the measurement taken during the third step. At this point, it is essential to ask questions such as, how

did it go? What should be done differently? What should be done in the same manner? Furthermore, why are the results like this? (Swartz 2020, 11.)

After following the first phase of social media marketing, the framework should be used again. This time however, the leaping phase should be replaced by the planning phase, creating an iterative cycle. (Swartz 2020, 13.)
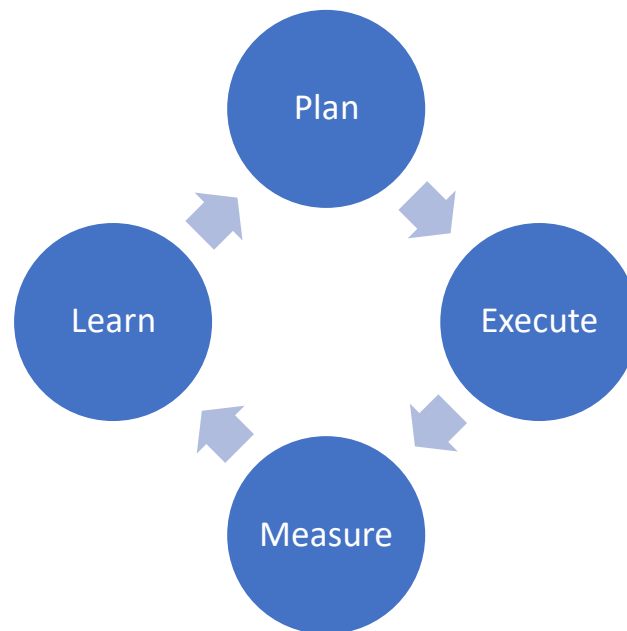
Picture 2. A simple plan in chart form (Swartz 2020, 13)

When using this framework, no steps must be overlooked, as the most important result of the framework is to increase the knowledge of things that are and are not working (Swartz 2020, 17). This framework will be used as a cornerstone for planning out all activities concerning marketing efforts in the latter part of the thesis.

2.7   SWOT- Analysis

A SWOT- analysis is a complete analysis of a company's situation. A SWOT analysis evaluates the company's overall strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. (Kotler, Armstrong, Harris & Piercy 2020, 53.)

Strengths include internal capabilities, resources, and situational factors that might help the company achieve its marketplace goals. Weaknesses include internal limitations and negative situational factors that might harm the company in the marketplace. Opportunities are factors in the external environment that the company might exploit to gain an advantage over the competitors. Threats are external factors that might hurt the company. (Kotler, et al. 2020, 54.)
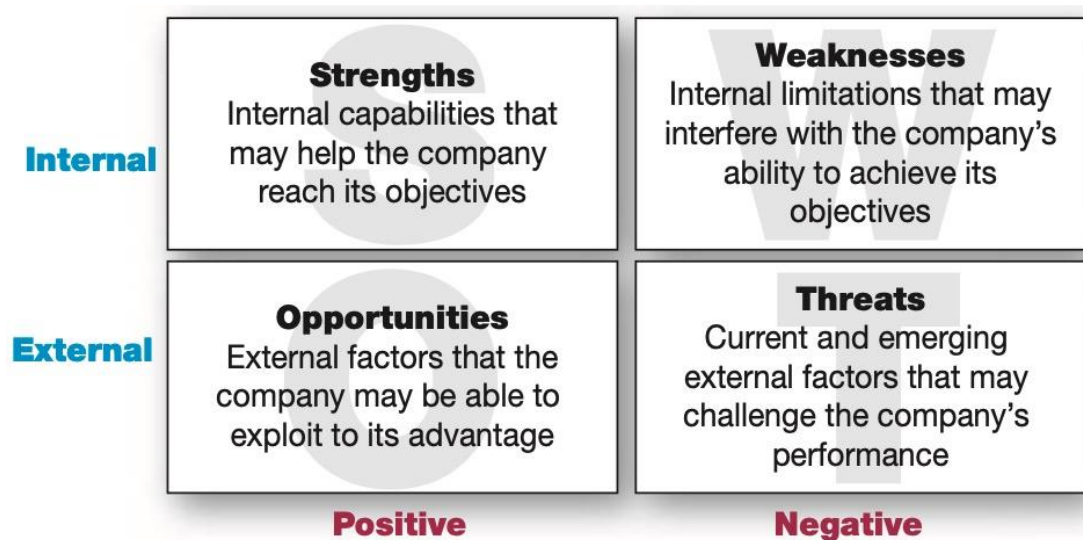

Figure 1. SWOT analysis: strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O) and threats (T). (Figure: Kotler, Armstrong, Harris & Piercy 2020, 54).

During the SWOT analysis, the current market situations and the marketing environment should be studied to identify the company's strengths and weaknesses and to determine which opportunities should be pursued. The goal is to connect the company's strengths to attractive opportunities in the environment while simultaneously eliminating or overcoming the weaknesses and minimizing the threats. (Kotler et al. 2020, 54.)

2.8   SMART- Guidelines

Whether performing a SWOT analysis or creating a social media strategy, the objectives should follow SMART guidelines. SMART objectives are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely. Expressing goals as quantified objectives that follow SMART guidelines ensures measurable progress that can be impartially assessed. (Quesenberry 2016, 56.)

When setting objectives for a social media plan, one should start with larger overall business objectives such as increasing sales or generating leads and make a mistake focusing on more minor social media activities such as "likes" or comments. (Quesenberry 2016, 56.)

Specific: Goals should be specific and narrow (Quesenberry 2016, 57).

Measurable: What key performance indicator is to be used to measure progress must be defined (Quesenberry 2016, 57).

Achievable: The goals must be achievable in the timeframe (Quesenberry 2016, 57).

Relevant: The goals should be in alignment with long term objectives (Quesenberry 2016, 57).

Timely: Set an actual end date so tasks can be prioritized (Quesenberry 2016, 57).

3 Implementing the plan for FinnEasy Oy

During this part of the thesis, a social media marketing plan is created using the theoretical knowledge from the first parts of the thesis. The main goal of social media marketing is to increase the number of products sold to the distribution company Agromatic Inc, the sole distributor in the United States of America. This works as an example of the company's larger long-term goal, where the content marketing is a supporting element.

3.1 Target groups and segments

In the United States, as of 1 January 2022, there were 91.9 million head of cattle and calves (Natural Agricultural Statistics Service 2022). From this number, it is easy to state that the United States holds immense possibilities for EasySwing cow brushes. If the assumption is made that it would be possible to sell one brush for every 50 cows, which is required by law in Denmark (Danish Agriculture & Food Council 2013), the United States would have a market size of approximately 1,838,000 brushes. It is vital to keep in mind that calculations like these give a mere understanding of the market's size since numerous factors affect the actual number and situation. To find more specific target groups, geographical locations can be decreased into one or more states. Texas has the most cattle inventory of all the states in the United States, with approximately 12.7 million heads (Natural Agricultural Statistics Service 2022). For this particular plan, we will focus on segmenting inside the state of Texas. This might needed to be re-evaluated in the future, but for this plan for small companies like Agromatic and FinnEasy it is easier to start from one state.

In the state of Texas, there were 187,985 animal production farms, and there were roughly six different types of farms which could have a use for EasySwing brush (United States Department of Agriculture 2019, 201).

Farm type	Number of farms	Percentage out of all animal production farms
Beef cattle farms	135,749	72%
Feedlot farms	282	0.1%
Dairy farms	429	0.2%
Sheep farms	7,709	4%
Goat farms	11,516	6%
Horse and other Equine Farms	17,739	9%

Table 2. The number of different livestock farm types in Texas 2017 (United States Department of Agriculture 2019, 201).
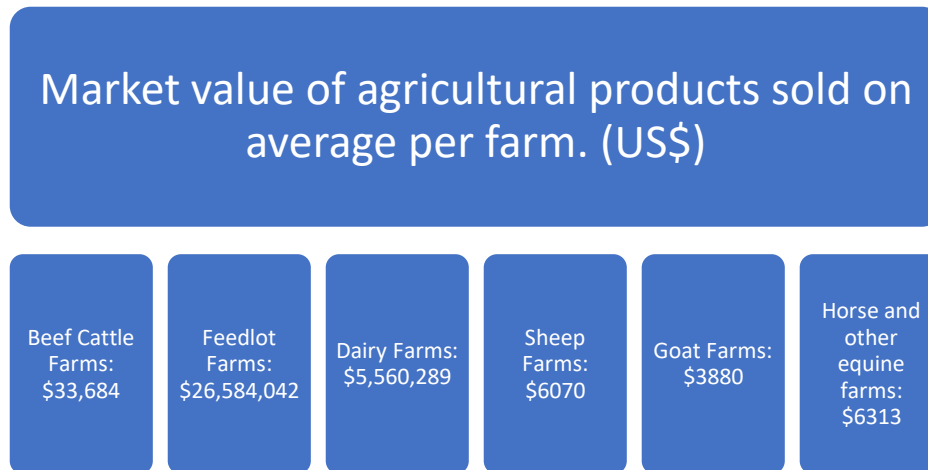
Market value of agricultural products sold on average per farm. (US$)

| Beef Cattle Farms: $33,684 | Feedlot Farms: $26,584,042 | Dairy Farms: $5,560,289 | Sheep Farms: $6070 | Goat Farms: $3880 | Horse and other equine farms: $6313 |

Figure 2. The market value of agricultural products sold on average per farm (US$). (United States Department of Agriculture 2019, 46).

Estimated market value of selected capital assets on average per farm. (US$)

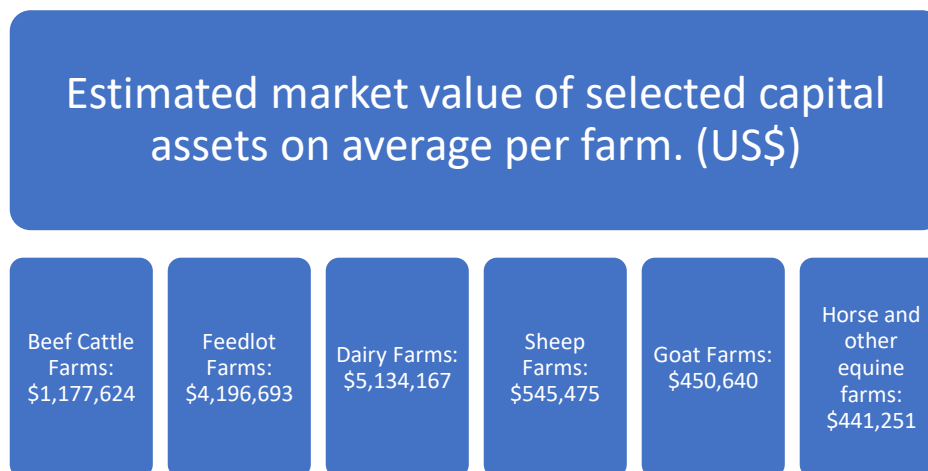| Beef Cattle Farms: $1,177,624 | Feedlot Farms: $4,196,693 | Dairy Farms: $5,134,167 | Sheep Farms: $545,475 | Goat Farms: $450,640 | Horse and other equine farms: $441,251 |

Figure 3. Estimated market value of selected capital assets on average per farm (US$). (United States Department of Agriculture 2019, 46).

When exploring the market value of agricultural products sold on average per farm (Figure 2), the estimated market value of selected capital assets on average per farm (Figure 3) and the amount the different farm types (Table 2), it is possible to assume that the spending power and small size of the segments make the sheep, goat and horse farm less attractive segments. Also, taking into account that Agromatic inc. is a company focusing on agricultural products sold

to producers of cows, at this stage, only the beef cattle farms, feedlot farms, and dairy farms are used to create customer target groups.

The EasySwing products are designed for different kinds of animals, EasySwing Maxi for bulls and adult cattle, Midi for cattle feedlots and young cattle, mini for calves and Totem for bovines in enclosures and pastures. Since the farms are focused on beef cattle, they usually keep the cattle on pasture, making the main product for these farms EasySwing Maxi, Midi and Totem. The farms focused on dairy cattle usually keep their cows in barns and closed enclosures. This renders out the use of EasySwing Totem since they might not have the space to use them. The farms focused on raising cattle feedlots would have the most use for EasySwing Midi and Mini.

The more significant portion of all three cattle farm types are family or individually owned by legal status, approximately 90% of cattle farms, 54% of feedlot farms and 63% of dairy farms. The majority of the farms also reported internet access: beef cattle farms, 70%, feedlot farms, 84% and dairy farms, 79%. This is a fascinating statistic when planning out a social media marketing plan since 30% of the potential target market might be directly beyond the reach of the marketing efforts (Table 3).

While segmenting the cattle producers demographically, it is possible to find a few different segments. The average age of cattle farm producers were 59.4 years, 58.2 years for feedlot producers and 53.4 years for dairy producers. The number of producers who identified themselves as young producers ages 35 or younger were 6.8%, 8% and 10% (Table 3). This creates roughly two segments: older and younger producers, the later who rely more on social media when searching for information about agriculture (Johansen & Barr 2017, 20).

The gender of the producers sees the portion of male producers being 63%, 76% and 73% across the main segments (Table 3). In all the main segments, the largest racial group was white with 94%, 89%, and 94% (Table 3). The second largest group was African Americans with 3%, 0.8% and 0.2% (Table

3). In addition, 12%, 7% and 5% of the producers reported serving in the military (Table 3).

From this data, it is possible to create numerous segment groups, but since the goal of this thesis is to work as a road map and as a general example, the segment group will be made by creating the most significant and a most general group of cattle farm owners in the United States which in this case is beef cattle farmers. An assumption is also made that cattle farmers can be defined with the same attributes that are used to define farmers as a larger target group. Future research on the other segments would be beneficial since only after an in-depth view would it be possible to find the most influential segments without overlooking certain groups, especially since the other farms seem to have more money to spend (see Figures 2 & 3).

The average targeted customer in Texas for EasySwing cattle brushes is a 59-year-old man who works or owns a small to medium-sized family-run beef cattle farm in Texas. He views himself as a working man who has a solid understanding of cattle farming. He views himself as Caucasian. His values and beliefs align with family values, and there is a high possibility that he or someone from his family has some military background translating into personal values. According to a survey conducted by Pew Research Center in 2021, among the age group 50-64, the two most popular social media platforms were Facebook and YouTube, where 73% said that they use Facebook and 83% said they use YouTube (Pew Research Center 2021).

Beef cattle farms	135,749 farms = 72%
Average size of the farm	621 acres
Farms family or individual owned by legal status	123,158 farms = 90%
Farms reporting internet access	96,253 farms = 70%
Total amount of producers	225,207 producers = 100%
Total amount of male producers	142,326 producers = 63%
Total amount of female producers	82,881 producers = 36%

Average age	59.4 years
Number of young producers	15,462 producers = 6.8%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1,468 producers = 0.6%
Asian	624 producers = 0.2%
Black or African American	7,407 producers = 3%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	76 producers = 0.03%
White	211,887 producers = 94%
More than one race reported	1,613 producers = 0.7%
Served in the military	28,005 producers = 12%
Feedlot farms	282 farms = 0.1%
Average size of the farm	1,980 acres
Farms family or individual owned by legal status	154 farms = 54%
Farms reporting internet access	237 farms = 84%
Total amount of producers	578 producers = 100%
Total amount of male producers	444 producers = 76%
Total amount of female producers	134 = 23%
Average age	58.2
Number of young producers	47 = 8%
American Indian or Alaska Native	2 = 0.3%
Asian	-
Black or African American	5 = 0.8%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	-
White	518 = 89%
More than one race reported	-
Served in the military	44 = 7%
Dairy farms	429 farms = 0.2%
Average size of the farm	1,383 acres
Farms family or individual owned by legal status	271 farms= 63%
Farms reporting internet access	340 = 79%

Total amount of producers	829 producers = 100%
Total amount of male producers	609 producers = 73%
Total number of female producers	220 producers = 26%
Average age	53.4 years
Number of young producers	89 producers = 10%
American Indian or Alaska Native	-
Asian	-
Black or African American	2 producers = 0.2%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	-
White	781 producers = 94%
More than one race reported	3 producers = 0.3%
Served in the military	44 producers = 5%

Table 3. Chosen data of Texas agricultural statistics. (United States Department of Agriculture 2019, 46-75, 196-201).

3.2 SWOT- Analysis

During the SWOT analysis, the current content marketing efforts and other factors that may impact FinnEasy Oy's marketing efforts are analyzed.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• A unique patented product • Considerable amount of marketing material available. • Products have had viral attention • Personnel are part of the target group • The company's values are aligned with target customers	• A relatively unknown brand • Lack of human resources for content creation and social media activity • No direct selling to end customers • No consistent lead capturing • Unclear strategy for published content

• The chosen social media platforms fit with the target audience	
Opportunities	Threats
• Increasing interest in animal welfare amongst the target audience • Rising costs might end bringing attention to the product • The target audience is slowly becoming easier to reach by social media. • Viral attention • Increase customer retention • Targeted-sales ready leads	• Legal changes might favor the competitors • Competitors have larger following • Content gets buried on social media platforms • Content provides low amount of value which translates to low engagement. • Customers do not recognize the value of the product

Table 4. SWOT analysis of FinnEasy's content marketing efforts.

EasySwing products are unique patented products that do not need electricity and as much maintenance as competing products making it cheaper and possible to install places where other products cannot be. The company has established a social media presence with a considerable amount of marketing material available.

The products have achieved viral attention on the Tom Pemberton Farm Life YouTube channel, where two videos made in collaboration with FinnEasy have almost 10 million views (Tom Pemberton Farm Life 2022). Also, in 2020 a digital content publisher, LADbible, released are short video about EasySwing brush which currently has over 57 million views on Facebook (LADbible 2022).

Company personnel are connected to the target groups since they have a background in livestock farming. The company is also a family-owned company whose products are meant to increase the well-being of livestock animals. This ties into the values of American cattle farmers, who are reportedly increasingly interested in the well-being of their animals. They are family-oriented individuals who are also active contributors to their communities (Mayer, Ranch, Ruskamp, Feedlot & Feedlot 2017).

The most used social media platforms align with the platforms used by the target audience. The social media platforms, especially Facebook, have a solid foundation of followers and the distributors who share posts, increasing the reach.

FinnEasy is a relatively unknown brand in the United States since the product is relatively new and the distribution company is also relatively small. This is also a result of Hammaslahti being a remote location from the United States, which excludes the possibility of direct selling to the customers.

The number of employees and lack of resources restricts the number of marketing efforts taken up by the company. This creates a situation where content created for social media platforms is mainly made in-house, since hiring outside marketing companies is expensive. The lack of personnel time makes monitoring and analyzing the social media marketplace difficult.

In Denmark, the cow brush market has faced legislation that requires that there must be a cow brush with a rotating brush part for every 50 cows (Danish Agriculture & Food Council 2013). This excludes the EasySwing brushes since it does not have a rotating part. In the United States, such regulations are not known to be coming up, but this should be kept in mind in the future.

Competing companies like DeLaval and Albert Kerbl GmbH have more extensive distribution networks and more significant social media audiences.

Precise significant, scientifically proven evidence of the benefits of mechanical cow brushes is hard to use in marketing at the moment, since currently there are not enough studies on the topic. This includes mechanical brushes such as EasySwing brushes, and such a matter might translate into customers not recognizing the benefits of the brushes. This might change in the future when ongoing research is published, which would allow the use of research data on the marketing.

The most significant threat would be that the content will not provide enough value to the customers. This translates into low engagement. As stated in the strengths part, the increased interest amongst the cattle farmers in the welfare of the animals is a strength and opportunity for the company since the product's primary purpose is to increase well-being. In the same way, legislation might be a positive thing for the company if the mechanical brushes also qualify for the needed equipment on the farms. The increase in the costs faced by farmers might also benefit FinnEasy, since the products are cheaper, require no electricity, and do not need the same amount of maintenance work.

In the United States, farms are going through generational change; Gen Z is taking over the farms that are more reliant on social media marketing than BOOMXY (Johansen & Barr 2017). This is an opportunity for FinnEasy since social media marketing is the primary channel where the company can reach possible customers at acceptable costs.

3.3 Framework for a plan

A content marketing plan is mapped out in this part using the social media marketing plan framework and the information gained during the customer segmentation and target and SWOT analysis.

The strategic goal for content marketing at this stage is to increase customer retention through thought leadership. Creating content that works as a lead generation tool might not be the most beneficial for this target group: under ten followers on the Facebook site are from Texas. It would be effective at this stage to increase customer retention, build an audience of the target customers and then create a lead capturing system.

3.3.1 Set a goal

The plan's goal is to increase the reach and commitment to the future amongst the target audience in Texas. Regarding content, there is not that much one can do to reach farmers more efficiently in Texas rather than other states. This works in favor of FinnEasy since if it is possible to increase overall reach and commitment to the posts, it will be the right content for Texas beef farmers. One way to target Texas beef farmers is to publish content and leverage the paid features of boosting a post in the right geographical and demographic region, which would be, in this case, 40–64-year-olds who live in Texas and who have shown interest in cattle farming and for example Texas Cattle Feeders Association on Facebook.

3.3.2 Choose a KPI

The leading *key performance indicators* for this plan are:

1. Coverage and reach of the Facebook posts amongst the users located in Texas.

2. Number of the users engaged to the posts located in Texas.

Usually, it is recommended to use one key performance indicator for the plan (Swartz 2020, 9). However, for this plan, two indicators are chosen since comparing these statistics might give valuable information to the company regarding in which direction the content should be taken. If the post has

extensive reach on the target audience, an assumption can be made that the chosen channel Facebook and the content posted on the page are correct for marketing efforts. If the engagement to the posts are low, we can assume that something must be done differently so that it brings enough value to the users to get them to engage.

3.3.3 Measure (before)

Published	Post		Type	Targeting	Reach		Engagement	
16/02/2022 12:58		Guess how long it takes these cows to get used to EasySwing® Totem	◼◀	🌐	537	▮	20 21	▮ ▮
14/02/2022 09:05		Happy Valentine's day! ❤ Farmers around the world love their cows	⧉	🌐	728	▮	9 28	▮ ▮
07/02/2022 11:56		Check out how different animals love their EasySwing® Midi! Also,	◼◀	🌐	291	▯	15 17	▮ ▮
31/01/2022 09:31		We hope that every one of you will have a great start to the week!🐄	◼◀	🌐	679	▮	36 46	▮ ▮
27/01/2022 10:46		Cut your electricity costs, by choosing mechanical EasySwing®	◼◀	🌐	1.2K	▮	16 21	▮ ▮
24/01/2022 15:03		Thank you Engsbo highlander for sharing this video!	◼◀	🌐	640	▮	40 36	▮ ▮
18/01/2022 10:18		We make EasySwing Cattle Brushes 100% ourselves since we	⧉	🌐	714	▮	43 40	▮ ▮
11/01/2022 14:35		EasySwing brushes are simple, robust, and made to last. They are	⧉	🌐	1.8K	▮	97 54	▮ ▮

Picture 3. Statistics of eight published posts on EasySwing Facebook page.

To analyze and measure the current state of content marketing, eight Facebook posts were used, including four posts which were pictures and four videos. One of these was a video posted initially by a customer. This was shared on the Facebook page. These posts' average reach was approximately 800, and the average engagement is almost 70. The posts that have the vastest reaches were, in essence, adverts where one focused on the strengths of the products, and the other one brought out the fact that EasySwing brushes do not need

electricity, making a statement that farmers could save money by choosing EasySwing brushes. The videos outside of the shared ones were compilations of animals using EasySwing brushes, which seem to have lower reach but solid engagement. Since 1,420 people like the Facebook site reaching, 1,000 users with every post in the future is a solid objective.

3.3.4 Leap

Going back to the content marketing matrix (Picture 1) and the strategic goal being customer retention through thought leadership shows that this point might be beneficial to try to educate and entertain the users simultaneously and see which approach works better. One of the content types on the emotional and entertainment side of the content creating matrix is viral videos (Picture 1). The videos where cows use cattle brushes and look like they are enjoying themselves seem to have the potential to be viral videos. Looking back to the Berger's (2013) STEPP model, those videos probably evoke emotion, which makes people share them. The problem with videos like these is that they need to be short and funny so that people would share them, thus increasing their reach.

To get customers to come back and follow the page, the matrix (Picture 1) suggests educating the customers with, for example, infographics and guides to make the customers more likely to have a rational connection with the company. Posting helpful content concerning the cattle farming industry also evokes thought leadership and customer retention since the target group should be interested in all things concerning cattle farming. Posting content concerning things that are not directly linked to the company, but for example cow comfort, could also increase the possibility that the distribution companies would also share the posts on their Facebook pages. An alternative approach would be to post about the general business area, manufacturing, and the export industry.

This could reach a larger audience, but most of the audience would probably be outside of the chosen target audience.

The content about cattle farming should always start from the idea of creating value for the customers. One could consider: "what I would like to read about on Facebook if I was a cattle farmer? What information would provide value for me?" For example, this content would be how many farms are already using cattle brushes, what benefits healthy animals bring to the producers, the current trends in the industry, what the future looks like for farmers or statistics about the industry or what solutions local farmers have found for a problem which are occurring in the industry. The important part is to find the company's voice and to make social media marketing enjoyable for the employees.

In essence, the chosen leaps are as follows:

1. Keep posting short videos of cows enjoying the EasySwing brushes.

2. Begin posting more general content which is related to agriculture and cattle farming.

3. Examine if boosting the posts in the chosen geographical areas are worth it for the company.

Taking into account the current resources of the company, trying to post a single post every week or to create three to four educational posts per month would probably be a good goal.

3.3.5 Measure (after)

A suitable timeframe for FinnEasy to start looking back and measuring the success of the new content created could for example be one week later from the publication. The coverage and reach of the Facebook posts amongst the users located in Texas and the number of the users engaged to the posts located in Texas are the indicators which show the possible success of the content and the usefulness of the "boost" feature.

3.3.6 Learn

Covering this part of the plan beforehand is difficult, but at this stage, if the plan has worked flawlessly, the reach and engagement should increase, and there is understanding of if boosting the individual posts on Facebook is worth it. Most importantly, this stage is to figure out what should be done differently or the same way in the future (Swartz 2020, 11). After figuring that out, it is time to plan again what will be done differently and measure and learn in what direction the content marketing should be taken (Swartz 2020, 12).

4   Conclusion and recommendations for future

The development of digital technology and the transition from traditional media platforms to digital and social media platforms have forced the companies to find new ways to attract new customers, keeping them interested, and to lead them along the new sales funnel. During this thesis the concepts STEPP-model, STP-marketing model, SWOT-analysis, SMART-guidelines, and simple framework for social media plan are used to create a content marketing plan for FinnEasy Oy. The purpose is to increase the retention and to enlarge the audience of the company's social media channels. In the future, when the audience of the social media channels is larger, it would be beneficial to study the possibilities of creating some sort of a lead capturing system or email-marketing campaign which would allow the company to connect with their audience in a more personal manner.

The outcome of this thesis provides a customer segment with a general ideal customer, which would be the focused customer of the content marketing efforts. The recommended actions of this thesis for the company are to focus on creating general content about the themes that the cattle farmers are interested in while keeping the limitations of the company's current situations in mind. Posting short funny videos of animals experiencing the EasySwing brushes is also recommended since they seem to have ingredients of viral videos. In the

future, an examination of creating some sort of an editorial calendar might be beneficial if the company's resources enable the larger scale of content creation.

Also, in the future, an in-depth analysis of real cases is needed in order to understand how in specific cases a company has been able to reach out to desired audiences through influencers and content marketing. A future analysis on new emerging social media platforms and the changes in audiences inside old platforms is important so that companies can find the most efficient channels.

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Interview questions for FinnEasy Oy

Questions about social media marketing:

1. What strategic goals does FinnEasy Oy have regarding social media marketing?

2. What social media channels are FinnEasy Oy using and why are those channels chosen?

3. How are the social media marketing efforts measured and evaluated?

4. How many working hours can be dedicated in a month for social media marketing?

Questions related to content marketing:

1. What are the posts about?

2. Is there type of content that seems to perform better and is there factors that increase the social media content performance?

3. What ways does the company engage with social media users?

4. What are the things that need to be developed in the FinnEasy Oy content?