

**EFFECTIVENESS & THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN A
SMALL ORGANIZATION'S STRATEGY IN THE
PERSONAL TRAINING INDUSTRY**

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JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

ABSTRACT

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Title Effectiveness & the Role of Social Media in a Small Organisation's Strategy in the Personal Training Industry	
Subjects Accounting & Management and Leadership	Type of Study Master's Thesis
Date 17.3.2018	Pages 61
Abstract <p>The consumers' interest towards well-being and fitness have grown in the past decades. Demand for personal trainers has increased and the industry is growing. At the same time, social media has become a part of our everyday lives. Nowadays, it is not only used by consumers, but many organizations have learned to utilize the possibilities social media offers as well. Social media has enabled a new way for organizations to communicate with consumers, bringing organizations and consumers closer together. However, many organizations still do not know how to utilize social media effectively.</p> <p>In this study, the effectiveness of social media, along with its role in an organizations strategy and the competitive advantage it brings to the personal training industry, will be examined. Both, the personal training industry and social media are current themes, and the purpose of the study is to examine and evaluate how personal trainers perceive the use of social media and how important of a part it is, both financially and strategically.</p> <p>Nine personal trainers were interviewed for the study. The results received support previous research in the field, in the aspect of previously identified connection of the importance of social media in the industry in, for example, reaching consumers. However, previous research on the social media practices of personal trainers in Finland has not been done before. According to this study, personal trainers consider social media as playing an important role in the accomplishment of set goals. They also used social media to gain a competitive advantage in the market place. Social media was also considered a profitable investment.</p>	
Key Terms Social media, social media strategy, profitability of social media, effectiveness of social media, personal training industry	
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Abstract - Tiivistelmä <p>Ihmisten kiinnostus omaa hyvinvointia sekä fitness-alaa kohtaan ovat kasvaneet viimeisten vuosikymmenten aikana. Kysyntä personal trainereille on nousussa, ja itse ala kasvattaa suosiotaan koko ajan. Samaan aikaan sosiaalinen media on noussut vahvaksi osaksi ihmisten jokapäiväistä elämää. Nykyisin sosiaalista mediaa ei käytä vain kuluttajat, vaan monet organisaatiot ovat myös oppineet hyödyntämään sen tarjoamia mahdollisuuksia. Sosiaalinen media on mahdollistanut uudenlaisen tavan organisaatioille kommunikoida kuluttajien kanssa, mikä on tuonut organisaatiot ja kuluttajat lähemmäksi toisiaan. Monet organisaatiot eivät kuitenkaan tiedä, kuinka hyödyntää sosiaalista mediaa tehokkaimmalla mahdollisella tavalla.</p> <p>Tarkastelemme tässä tutkimuksessa sosiaalisen median tehokkuutta, sen asemaa yrittäjän strategiassa sekä sen tarjoamia kilpailuedun muotoja personal training -alalla. Sekä personal training -ala että sosiaalinen media ovat ajankohtaisia teemoja nyky-yhteiskunnassamme, ja tarkoituksemme on tutkia, miten personal trainerit kokevat sosiaalisen median hyödyntämisen ja kuinka tärkeä osa se on heidän liiketoimintaansa, niin taloudellisesti kuin strategisesti.</p> <p>Haastattelimme tutkimustamme varten yhdeksää lisensoitua personal traineria. Tuloksemme tukevat aiempaa tutkimustietoa siinä mielessä, että sosiaalinen media on tärkeä työkalu fitness-alalla muun muassa kuluttajien tavoittamisessa. Aiempaa tutkimusta personal trainereiden sosiaalisen median käytöstä ei kuitenkaan ole Suomessa tehty. Tutkimuksestamme selvisi, että personal trainerit pitivät sosiaalista mediaa tärkeänä liiketoiminnalle asetettujen tavoitteiden saavuttamisen kannalta. He myös käyttivät sosiaalista mediaa kilpailuedun saavuttamiseksi sekä näkivät sen kannattavana sijoituksena.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Objectives and Research Questions

We live in an era, where it is almost expected of a person and an organization to have an online presence. Self-image and the interest in well-being, among other factors have made the personal training industry grow over the last few decades. More and more people are looking to personal trainers and to the internet for more information on health and fitness. Increasing the quality of our leisure time and reshaping our identities through services, such as personal training, has become increasingly popular, with competition within the industry growing. Need for differentiation within the industry, and in comparison to various competitors, is increasing.

Being one of the biggest trends of the 21st century, social media has contributed to business to consumer marketing, and the importance of utilizing it in the organization's strategy has become relevant. Icha & Agwu (2015) state, that social media has proven to be as effective, if not more effective than traditional marketing. Consumers are looking to social media to evaluate businesses and their products, and with this, organization's image online becomes increasingly important. Personal training markets health and fitness services to a consumer through a brand built around the entrepreneurs themselves, so using social media as a marketing tool is validated. Being a frontline service job, when marketing personal training services, personal trainer's appearance becomes an important part of the business in showcasing professionalism (Adler & Adler 2004). Sharing content on social media is creating an image and an online presence for your business. Social media can also be utilized to reach larger groups of consumers regardless of your demographic or geographical location, since many personal trainers operate exclusively online.

In deciding the subject of this study, we took into consideration the growing trend of both, the Personal Training industry, and utilizing social media as a part of the organization's strategy, considering also the perceived value-relevance of online presence. Different diets, exercise, and attitudes towards fitness industry have become popular topics among social media services. Due to their current popularity, and the potential of social media to create competitive advantage, both social media and the fitness industry are interesting research items (Kendall et al. 2011).

Research questions are stated as:

- What kind of a role does social media play in the strategy of an entrepreneur in the personal training industry?
- Is social media used to gain a competitive advantage?
- In terms of performance, is social media perceived as value-relevant and a profitable investment?

This study will examine, based on qualitative semi-structured interviews conducted with licensed personal trainers, the role of social media in the strategy of the business, and how important social media is in reaching short-term and long-term goals. Being a highly competitive industry, we are also interested in the role of social media in differentiating services to gain a competitive advantage. Viewing social media as an investment of both time and money, we will also focus on the profitability of social media and whether it is seen as cost-effective investment.

This study will also consider measuring performance measures, such as ROI, and how the interviewees see brand awareness in social media. Due to little amount of research and conflicting views on the necessity and calculation method of social media ROI, we will not consider ways of calculating ROI, but rather discuss the views of the interviewees on the profitability of social media and how they view social media as an investment. The amount of public financial data available for small businesses in the personal training industry is limited, and therefore this study is limited to the qualitative discussion on the issues, rather than a quantitative calculation of financial measures.

1.2 Structure of the Study

In this study we will examine the importance of social media as a part of a small organization's strategy and the interpretation of profitability of social media. The structure of the study is as follows: chapter two introduces the personal training industry and the use of social media in the industry. With health and fitness being popular discussion points on various social media platforms and personal training being highly about the entrepreneur branding themselves, it can be argued that use of social media in such an industry is useful.

In chapter three the social media and strategy will be discussed by defining social media and different social media platforms significant to the study, and social media as a strategic tool. We will bring focus to the element of democratization of discussion through social media being a highly customer-controlled environment and argue social media to be an important part of an organization's strategy in today's business world.

In chapter four the competitive advantage gained through of using social media will be discussed. Porter's three general strategies in competitive advantage will be discussed along with implications to social media.

Chapter five focuses on the concept of profitability and the return on investment for social media. There is no consensus among researchers on the ability or calculation of ROI for social media, with views ranging from some researchers stating the Web 2.0 being the most measurable medium ever invented to some stating that ROI cannot be calculated at all. In this study we present the views of the interviewees on the profitability of social media and present a basic example of how to calculate ROI for a sponsored post on social media generating customers.

In chapter six the methodology of the study will be discussed in respect to data collection and analyzing the data. Chapter seven will present the results of the study.

Lastly, in chapter eight, we will discuss the theoretical contributions of the study to the personal training industry. Issues such as reliability and validity and limitation of the study will also be addressed along with suggestions for future research.

2 PERSONAL TRAINING INDUSTRY

The consumer market has reached a strong foothold in people's daily life by offering different options and opportunities through which people can enrich their leisure time, or even reshape their identities through differentiated use of products and services (Brooks 2000; Featherstone 1982; Zukin and Maguire 2004). Therefore, more people are pursuing careers as personal trainers, life coaches, assistants or, for example, hair stylists. Demand for individualized care is one of the reasons behind the proliferation of occupations that focus on lifestyle enhancement and self-improvement. In addition, ever growing amount of occupations require professional and specialized knowledge to provide customized services and solutions to individuals. (George, 2008.)

Fitness and health industry has grown dramatically over the last few decades, alongside with the demand for personal care services. In the USA, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2005), employment in the service-providing industries has grown drastically and is estimated to be responsible for approximately 20.8 million of the 21.6 million new wage and salary jobs generated between 2002 and 2012, with personal care services being the fastest growing industry at 27.6 percent.

Personal training is one of the many occupations that require workers to use specialized knowledge to provide customized services for individual clients. Personal trainers offer different set of services depending on their level of expertise. Usually they design customized exercise programs for individuals one on one and help them with their diet. For some trainers, personal training is only about making gym programs and having training sessions with the client, as for the others, personal training can be, for example, a longer period, during which the trainer and the client form a closer bond, in which case the client's overall well-being has been better considered. Due to the lack of standardization within the personal training industry, there is a remarkable variation among trainers considering their education, qualifications, and competence. However, one thing that is common in personal training, is that it usually starts with an analysis, where the trainer becomes familiar with the customer as he or she reviews the client's background and medical and exercise history. (George, 2008.)

2.1 Use of Social Media in the Industry

Diet and exercise, along with general commentary on fitness activities, have become popular discussion points within social media platforms recently (Kendall et al. 2011). Being a frontline service job, a personal trainer's appearance has been recognized to be an important part of the business in the industry (Adler & Adler 2004; Hochschild 1983; Leidner 1993; Ronai & Ellis 1989). Many personal trainers emphasize their education and the certification to work in the field, but a failure to appear as the idealized image of what is expected from a personal trainer can hurt their credibility. Marketing a product that some consumers may think to be able to produce themselves, using their appearance become physical capital for a personal trainer. Promoting knowledge on exercise and fitness comes naturally through showcasing results on their knowledge in themselves. (George 2008.) With many researchers concentrating on this aesthetic part of the business (Warhurst et al. 2000; Warhurst & Nickson 2001; Witz, Warhurst, & Nickelson 2003), it can be said that social media is a tool used to facilitate this aspect of the industry.

Previous studies have suggested that supportive friends can increase the chance of success in a lifestyle change and long-term weight maintenance (Wing & Jeffery 1999). Social media can bring the supportive, social, aspect of health and fitness to a user through facilitated platforms and communities within the network. Social awareness streams (SAS) are most commonly used to communicate information on issues such as general attitude towards health and fitness, plans for exercise etc. (Naaman et al. 2010). SAS includes platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Google+. According to Chou et al. (2009) & Paul & Drezde (2011), platforms within social awareness streams, such as Facebook, provide implications for public health promotion. Theodoro & Naaman (2013) find that leveraging SAS features in social media and providing a structured support on health and fitness activities could prove effective in maintaining lifestyle change. Features such as goal setting, and tracking can be exposed to a wide variety of users and used as a motivational tool for both, the user and others within the platform. With social media being a highly consumer-controlled environment, social learning through other users' efforts can be enhanced through tracking similar content and goals as one has set for themselves. Behavioral changes towards health and fitness can also be seen through the consumer's desire to fit in with the particular group or audience (Boyd, 2008; Newman et al. 2011). This makes them a relevant tool in the promotional efforts of a health and fitness professionals.

Previous studies have shown positive results when combining social media and the fitness industry. Development of technology and social media in itself have positive implications for reaching consumers, which is important considering general public health promotion (Chou et al. 2009; Paul & Dredze 2011). According to Wilfley et al. (2010), behavioral approach provided by a professional is not enough to maintain a healthy lifestyle, but a social component is shown to increase the possibility of long-term success. Compared to behavioral skills maintenance, with a basis in self-regulatory efforts in maintaining a healthy lifestyle, individuals included in a social facilitation maintenance groups were less likely to relapse into old lifestyle habits (Wake et al. 2009; Wilfley et al. 2010). Social media has also been shown to support learning in health and fitness knowledge. Frimming et al. (2011) showed how college-aged students' health and fitness routines benefitted from the use of social media. This makes social media platforms beneficial in the profession of a personal trainer.

Social media platforms are highly customizable to include unique features for a specific customer group, as well as providing an interactive and favorable space for e-health communication and promotional efforts of a personal trainer (Neuhauser & Kreps 2003). According to a study by Teodoro & Naaman (2013), participants showed interest in learning about other users' health and fitness activities and were seen to observe these through hashtag communities on Twitter. Appreciations were shown for "real life" information shared and retrieved through social media, information that the participants would not have otherwise learned. Being a highly interactive environment, social media brings, what would have previously been private information on health and fitness efforts, to a wide range of other users allowing learning and motivation through other users' shared content.

3 SOCIAL MEDIA AND STRATEGY

3.1 Social Media and Different Social Media Platforms

This chapter opens the concept of social media and presents different social media platforms. We will discuss how social media is becoming more important for the organizations in modern-day business world as organizations and consumers are in closer interaction than ever before.

Traditionally Internet was used to consume content: order products or services, watch videos, read blogs etc. This one-sided consuming of online content, however, has expanded to a consumer-controlled environment, where the organization is no-longer solely responsible for providing the consumers with content to receive. Social media is the outcome of Internet-based applications, that have their roots strongly connected to the foundations of Web 2.0. Web 2.0 can be described as the technical infrastructure that has enabled the birth of collective media and made it easier to produce consumer-generated content. Social media includes text, pictures, videos and networks, text being the first form of social media (principally in the form of blogs). (Berthon, 2012.) Social media comprises variety of channels that can be used for, and to ease, interaction between individuals and, for example, organizations (Brogan, 2010; Zarella, 2010). Today, social media is filled with picture- and video-sharing websites, such as Flickr and YouTube, that enable their users to upload and share pictures and videos. In addition, networks, such as Facebook, allow users to add friends and contacts, create and update personal profiles, send messages to friends and, for example, join groups that share similar ideas and desires (Berthon, 2012).

The traditional Word of Mouth communication has transformed, along with the way we share and receive information through social media altogether, to Electronic Word of Mouth. Consumers are now utilizing these different social media platforms to share, modify, create and discuss and the reach of these activities is much wider, since anyone online has access to this content. (Icha & Agwu, 2015.) Platforms have distributed the power of information back to the consumer, making the Web 2.0 a consumer-controlled environment powerful enough to strongly influence businesses, their sales or even threaten their existence. It is a powerful tool if wielded correctly but is still disregarded among some businesses regards to poor understanding of social media as a strategic tool.

Kietzmann et al. (2011) state that “social media employ mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals and

communities share, co-create, discuss and modify user-generated content.” Almost everyone from celebrities to local berry farmers can now be found on various social media platforms, with personal trainers having up to millions of followers. With the amount of exposure social media gets on the press today, we can state that it has become altogether a new communication landscape with tremendous power to shift popular opinion, and through that, consumer behavior. This democratization of corporate communication takes away power from the organizations creating and sharing information through the consumers re-sharing, commenting and interpreting this message. A campaign gone wrong can taint a brand quickly and have an impact on sales.

The power and speed of social media content can be shown from various examples of campaigns gone wrong. For example, in 2013, Pepsi’s subsidiary in Sweden released a set of advert pictures displaying Cristiano Ronaldo as a voodoo doll after a World Cup qualifier football game between Portugal and Sweden finishing in Portugal’s favor. Ronaldo scored three goals in the game. The adverts displayed the doll tied up on train tracks and stabbed with multiple pins. The adds got a lot of attention in Portugal, with fans quickly creating and sharing a page on Facebook titled “I will never drink Pepsi again”. The page gained over 130,000 “likes” in a matter of days resulting in a formal apology from the company. Even though Pepsi Sweden, a sister company of PepsiCo, released the advert campaign, the result affected the entire brand showing the power and rapidity of social media. A campaign arguably created as a joke, went worldwide, with little consideration towards the culture and importance of football in a country like Portugal. With information, events and phenomena rarely staying local anymore, organizations need to be aware of the entire social media community, not just local consumers.

According to Hansen, et al. (2010) social media technologies have produced new ways of interacting. These highly interactive platforms form the space where content is created and shared with Harris (2009) stating that there are hundreds of social media platforms today. Alexa is a web information company that provides website traffic rankings. According to Alexa (2018) the top ten global websites by early 2018 were: (1) Google; (2) YouTube; (3) Facebook; (4) Baidu; (5) Wikipedia; (6) Yahoo; (7) Reddit; (8) Google.co.in; (9) Qq.com; and (10) Amazon.com. The biggest social media channels, after a decade of existing, are used by over one billion users worldwide (Icha & Agwu, 2015).

With the wide variety of platforms available, and in high use, companies are present and experimenting on various social media platforms. Smartphones provide the means for two-way interaction, YouTube videos marketing various products are not only created by the organizations themselves, but also marketed by individual content creators through self-interest or designed brand deals, blogs share awareness and create sales providing a space for detailed marketing and organizations are no-longer tied to a geographic place of business. (Hanna et al. 2011.) Social media has transformed the way we communicate and with this, the way organizations relate to their customers.

On some social media platforms, organizations may choose to utilize paid advert campaigns in their promotional efforts. For the purpose of this study, an example used here is Facebook, due to this being the dominant platform used and invested in by the personal trainers. An organization may choose to increase the visibility of a post of a campaign through Facebook. The desired consumers to be reached, along with the duration of the campaign, will be selected. The user may choose either a daily budget, or an overall budget for the campaign, and whether they will be charged based on clicks

or views. The minimal budget for a day is 1€: the budget can be very small not requiring a large investment. The paid advertorials are charged based on clicks (every click will cost x amount of money) or by views (every thousand views cost x amount of money). By aligning where the advert will be shown can better increase reaching desired consumers. This is one of the ways organizations may increase the reach of their promotional efforts, and through this gain followers or potential customers.

Due to this study focusing on the personal training industry in Finland, the platforms in use among the interviewees were Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube and personal websites containing blogs. The focus of the study will be aligned to these platforms to better serve the purpose of the study.

3.2 Social Media as a Strategic Tool

Strategy itself has been defined numerous times, and in very different ways. There are certainly some elements that have retained their importance when talking about strategy. Porter (1996), for example, stated that companies are required flexibility to respond to market changes, continuous benchmarking for profitable business, and focus on few key competences to gain advantage over competitors - things that still are relevant for every organization in modern-day business world. Porter (1996) also describes how an organization can benefit from differentiation, but only if the difference can be preserved. For example, a company should be able to offer greater value to customers or create value equal to competitors but with lower costs or do both. Being different is emphasized in the discussion of competitive strategy. The core of strategy is to operate with different set of activities, compared to rivals, that deliver unique value. (Porter, 1996.) A deeper look into how organizations can gain competitive advantage against rivals, and how social media could be utilized in the process of it, will be discussed later. For the purpose of this study, strategy is defined as the plan of action to achieve the long-term goals the personal trainers have for their organization. The discussion on strategy will also include the short-term goals designed to achieve the long-term goals along with the different ways the personal trainers pursue these goals. The inclusion of the short-term goals and the ways the personal trainer pursues these goals is included to better understand the role of social media in the use of personal trainers now, and whether the interviewees perceive the importance of social media increasing.

Organizations operating in today's everchanging business environment need to modify their strategies to gain a strong foothold and a competitive advantage in their industries. Fierce competition between companies, and the external pressure caused by the unpredictable environment, have forced companies to come up with a new set of skills and tools through which organizations shape their strategies to stay in the competition. To deliver unique value and to offer a customized mix of services, companies are required constant interaction with customers when organizations and their customers are connected to each other more closely than ever before. This is mainly due to the Internet and social media, that both have made it possible for the companies and customers to be in close interaction.

For the purpose of this study, effectiveness of social media is considered as more, than just profit for the organization. Social media effectiveness is perceived as an increased following on social media platforms, increased amount of "likes", developing a brand for the personal trainer, increasing visibility and gaining revenue. These factors

contribute to the personal trainers' businesses and are therefore all part of the effectiveness of social media.

Strategies and ways for communicating with customers have changed drastically after the emergence of social media, which can also be described as consumer-generated media. Not only can companies communicate to customers through social media, but it also enables customers to be in direct interaction with each other (Faulds & Mangold, 2009.) As stated before, the democratization of communication through the Internet and different platforms of social media has transformed online interaction from a one-sided provider - receiver format to a two-sided, consumer controlled, discussion between organizations and consumers, giving consumers power to affect sales and even a brand through sharing, discussing and creating content. Hanna et al. (2011) claim that consumers play a rather active role in co-creating marketing content alongside companies.

It is no wonder, that various social media platforms have become a remarkable factor in influencing different aspects of consumer behavior, such as brand awareness, attitudes and purchase behavior. Even though social media usage has exploded in the past decade, many managers do not have the proper knowledge and understanding of how social media could potentially be used in company's promotional efforts. Hanna et al. (2011) describe how organizations do recognize the need to be active in social media, but the problem lies within the effective use of it, and the difficulties of measuring the right performance indicators. Whilst social media can be a very useful tool, for example, for interaction with customers, it does have its grievances. It is impossible for marketing managers to completely control information that is spread through social media, and at the same time companies cannot afford to ignore the impact of information transmitted through different social media platforms on consumer behavior. (Faulds & Mangold, 2009.)

There are, however, different methods through which organizations can modify the discussion taking place on social media. They can create network platforms, where customers sharing the same ideas can share and talk about their similar interests. Companies can also engage customers by using blogs and other social media tools, through which customers can, for example, send feedback. In addition, organizations can provide exclusivity, or simply, lots of information about them, making customers feel like they really know a lot about the company they are interacting with. One way is to support causes that consumers have emotional connections to. Companies can exploit customers' emotional bonds by embracing matters meaningful to them. Lastly, organizations can utilize stories and storytelling, which are known to make things more memorable and more likely to be repeated. (Faulds & Mangold, 2009.)

The very first role of social media for companies is the same as the traditional ICM (integrated marketing communications) tools; interaction with the customers. What gives social media a unique position in promotion-related role, is its enabling nature that gives consumers the opportunity to talk to one another. Traditional word-of-mouth communication, which obviously still exists, has grown into a new level of communication: previously mentioned electronic word of mouth. An illustrative example of this extent of communication is that consumers now have the possibility to reach thousands of other people on social media, simply by few clicks and keystrokes. (Faulds & Mangold, 2009.)

Bacon (2011) states that there are four basic considerations, organizations need to have, to successfully utilize social media in their marketing efforts: content, engagement, skills and consistency. From platform to another, social media is all about

sharing content. Organizations need to be aware that sharing fresh and timely content is the backbone of their social media presence. With the massive amount of content created and shared daily across different platforms, and fast pace of this sharing, social media channels that fail to create current content are considered dead and will not demand traffic. The second key factor in a successful social media presence or campaign is the engagement of consumers on platforms. Organizations that engage with their customers are viewed as friendly and welcoming, and this generally generate sales, goodwill, brand affiliation and loyalty, to name a few. Managing a successful social media presence also requires skill. Trends are ever changing on different platforms, and knowing how to utilize graphics, optimization, designs, etc. becomes important, and is also connected to keeping the organization's content timely and fresh. The last point in the basics of a successful social media campaign is consistency: the number one reason for most failures in social media efforts of organizations. Having timely content with the needed skill level does not make a successful social media presence unless it has consistency. (Bacon, 2011.)

With any strategic planning model, such as the balanced scorecard and Porter's Five Forces, the need to assess the costs associated with implementing a social media strategy may rise. For the purpose of this study, social media strategy is defined as the long-term goals the personal trainers have for their social media use, how social media is used to support their business, as well as the social media practices to pursue these goals. With social media being such a new tool for organizations, the costs involved with them might not be clear from the beginning, but a fair starting point to justify social media efforts was stated by Schottmuller (2014): "How much would it cost if you had to pay for the equivalent achieved by social media?". When making an investment in social media, the usual costs of social media practices include cost of time for content creation, cost of time for posting of materials, cost of time for responding to consumers interacting with the brand, including research on the ongoing discussion on the topic, cost of software for fee-based programs and cost of alternative backup systems in case of primary system failure (Crumpton, 2014). With social media being a communication tool, where different platforms serve a different purpose and form of communication, activities such as listening and engaging with the consumers is increasingly important (Nair, 2011). Other variable costs related to social media practices may be, for example, research usage and the need for new equipment investments.

The growth of costs is directly associated with the amount of media in use and should be considered as any other marketing effort. Tracking these costs along with analyzing the impact of social media efforts helps determine whether there is a gain, or a possible loss, from the social media practices of the organization (Crumpton, 2014). As Crumpton (2014) states, social media is replacing or enhancing the existing marketing efforts of an organization, so the importance of understanding the value social media marketing represents becomes increased, even if the company in questions does not spend money on marketing. This will help managers condone the time, if not directly a financial investment, spent on social media efforts, or make a change in the social media strategy if needed.

Social media can work as an effective tool for an organization, as pointed out earlier, but implementing an effective social media strategy is anything but simple. One major problem is associated with the attitude of engagement. Marketers are required the ability to listen and learn to truly engage customers. Even though social media can be a useful tool in engaging stakeholders, some companies prohibit their own employees the use of social networking tools at work. Organizations may also face problems during

the implementation process of social media strategy due to unnecessary bureaucratic rules still existing in organizations. Like in the implementation of any strategy, executing an effective social media strategy requires companies to be flexible and ready to respond to changes caused by the business environment. (Berthon, 2012.)

Apparent barrier in implementing social media strategy lies within technology. Employees may simply lack needed IT skills, and therefore companies lose the possibility of utilizing social media in the most effective way. Lastly, some executives do not see social media as a profitable tool, but rather a pastime activity of teenagers. Therefore, it is important for the marketers to try to limit the power of bureaucracy, train and educate employees and inform senior management about the opportunities and benefits that social media has to offer. (Berthon, 2012.)

We will consider the ways of measuring social media return on investment, as well as, social media profitability later in the thesis. Actual calculations of ROI will not be made due to the qualitative nature of this study and the little amount of financial data available from the study subjects. The perception of social media as an investment, however, will be considered along with the idea of profitability of social media efforts.

4 GAINING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

Organizations that operate in modern-day business world widely recognize the importance of intangible assets, such as innovation, knowledge and different networks, that can offer significant and sustained competitive advantage for their business (Seggie et al., 2007). 2010 Social Media Marketing Benchmark Report from MarketingSherpa stated that social media is a prime example of an intangible asset that most organizations exploit today, which is no wonder, given the benefits of social media described earlier.

Competition between organizations occurs when an organization senses the pressure or sees an opportunity to improve their position. As an organization makes a competitive move, it usually influences the activities of other organizations in the industry. (Porter, 2004:17.) Due to the ever-changing business environment and the increasing utilization of intangible assets, organizations are more prone to rapid changes and moves that also require fast responses. A demonstrative example of this, as stated earlier, is that organizations can reach thousands of potential customers in an instant through social media. Social media gives the opportunity for organizations to be in direct contact with their customers, enabling, for example, instant customer feedback, which might bring forth new innovative ideas for new products or services. Therefore, social media can serve as a platform through which the benefits of both organization's and customers intangible capital can be utilized.

Porter (2004) identifies three internationally generic strategies that organizations exploit to gain a solid position in the industry and to outperform competitors. The three generic strategies, first introduced in 1980 by Porter, are:

- Overall cost leadership
- Differentiation
- Focus

It is possible, but not probable, for the organizations to pursue more than one strategy as their main target and to be successful at the same time (Porter, 2004:34-35.) Porter's model of three generic strategies may be old itself, but all three of its dimensions can still be utilized by organizations operating in modern-day business world. One of the key elements in today's business environment is the ability to be different from the

others and to stand out from the competitors. Porter (2004:37) describes how differentiation is about making and serving differentiated products and services and creating something that is considered unique in the whole industry. One approach to differentiation, and remarkably important today, can be in form of brand image. Successful branding can lead to brand loyalty, which in turn might result in lower sensitivity to price (Porter, 2004:38.)

Social media is fast expanding and becoming an increasingly important part of any organization (Nair, 2011). It is no coincidence that most organizations are utilizing social media, as it can serve as a great tool in differentiation and creating successful brand image, because it enables, organizations and entrepreneurs, for example, to share and create different content, such as text, images, videos and blogs. It also allows bilateral communication between an organization and consumers, enabling one sided media monologues to be transformed into social media dialogues (Berthon, 2012). According to Hanna et al. (2011), marketing is no longer about gaining attention by reaching out to every consumer. Organizations must focus on, not only capturing attention, but preserving it via engagement. Consumers are now expecting to be active members in content creating and in the whole media process. This calls for media choices that enable involvement and engagement, just as social media does (Hanna et al. 2011.)

Listening to consumers and communicating with them closely is more and more important for organizations as consumers, as Bethon (2012) states, are now transforming from content consumers into content producers. Personal training is a good example of a profession where an entrepreneur is in close interaction with customers, as personal trainers offer tailored services for individuals according to their wishes and goals. Different social media platforms enable personal trainers to share and create content and to create personalized brand image that is different from the others in the industry. Social media enables its users to highlight their own personality, as it allows people to create content in their own personal way. Therefore, personal trainers can show more of their personality to consumers, which is a prominent part in creating personal brand image and gaining brand loyalty. By utilizing social media personal trainers can also concentrate on a certain customer segment and focus their services and social media content on that segment, which can give a significant advantage compared to the trainers who fail to find the right target segment to focus their efforts on. To find the right target segment, personal trainers need to take into consideration their own personal knowledge and expertise. They can also utilize social media by following ongoing discussion on health and fitness on different social media platforms, which shows what consumers are interested in right now.

5 EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

5.1 Organizational Performance: The Balanced Scorecard

Developed by Robert Kaplan and David Norton in the 1990's, balanced scorecard is one of the most used means of management and measurement for organizations today, and fully applicable in assessing organization's social media strategy. The balanced scorecard was elected as one of the most influential business ideas of the past 75 years by the editors of Harvard Business Review, and still has a strong hold in measuring and managing organizational performance, operational goals and strategy.

As balanced scorecard is a tool which helps organizations assess and manage their strategy, it can be used to understand and measure the social media activities successfulness in an organization (Nair, 2011). It uses both financial and non-financial measures to assess where the organization is lacking in the execution of the strategy and reaching its operational goals (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). As with any tool, in order for the balanced scorecard to produce data useful for the organization, the measures and targets assessed need to be selected correctly. (Icha & Agwu, 2015.)

The balanced scorecard is divided in four perspectives: Customer, financial, internal and learning and growth (Kaplan et al. 1992). In the customer perspective of the balanced scorecard, Nair (2011) highlights the importance of considering what the organization is offering to the consumer, who these consumers are and what voice the organization has or wants to have. Icha & Agwu (2015) state that in this area, customer satisfaction is the key measure that should be taken into account: if the customer is not satisfied with the organization, they will most likely take their business to the competitor. In considering the financial aspect, Nair (2011) draws attention to the investment approach the organization has, and the way to measure returns, while Icha & Agwu (2015) highlight the importance of timely and accurate financial data in general. In the internal considerations, Nair (2011) urges organizations to consider what needs to change and transform in order for a social media strategy to succeed. Lastly, in the learning and growth side of the balanced scorecard, the organizations should look to what competencies they are creating through implementing this new strategy, and how they can make use of them in the future (Nair, 2011). This also includes the necessary employee training and corporate attitudes towards change (Icha & Agwu, 2015). Norton

and Kaplan stated that in fast technological change, learning is more than training: it is a constant process.

Even though the balanced scorecard can be considered a classic tool in the assessment and management of a strategy, as stated above, it transforms into a useful tool to use in a social media strategy implementation and management through considering other factors, such as visibility and brand awareness, in addition to the increase in profit. If done successfully, social media brings much more than financial returns to an organization, so considering, for example, the increase in sales, is too narrow a view to assess the gains from a social media campaign or strategy.

5.2 Measuring the Value of Social Media

Organizations are taking to social media to raise brand awareness, market their products and services and to diversify their communication, to name a few, but the effectiveness, more in depth, the value measure of social media is still much debated subject. According to Gilfoil & Jobs (2012) some organizations invest in social media, because they see a benefit in it, while many corporations still invest in social media for the sole purpose of being scared not to. Social media technologies reflect our social behavior: social media is designed to change the way we connect and communicate. We are social beings and inclined to social networking as it is. By changing the way, the society is communicating and connecting, social media cannot be seen as an organization's media outreach program, but as a way for the organization to go where consumers go. (Nair, 2011.)

People are searching for health information on the web more than any other single topic (Nair, 2011), so to be present in the ongoing conversation already had on social media is important for a health and fitness professional. Consumers expect organizations to be present in social media, and with the personal training industry strongly related to outer appearance, a social media presence is also expected of personal trainers. As stated, since consumers go to social media to connect, search and share information, listening to the conversation of consumers can help personal trainers tackle their customers' issues. Along with investing time and possibly money into a social media presence, organizations are wondering if and how they can monetize their social media practices and whether the risk of doing so is worth taking (Nair, 2011).

Even though social media is a communication tool, organizations can utilize it in various practices in addition to engaging in conversation with the consumers. Social media is widely already used in serving customers through different social media platforms, listening to the active discussion on the market to determine and monitor future trends, customer needs and impressions, engage customers through creating an online community where consumers can identify themselves as a part of an organization or a brand, and even, through the listening of the conversation, co-create products and services with consumers. Social media can also be a way to connect the entire value chain of the organization in open and timely dialogue. In order to establish such a wide usage and utility of social media, the practices need to be established through and as a part of the organization's strategy (Nair, 2011). Social media, in some cases, requires an investment, but should not be only seen as a monetary expense, but a tactical

implementation of capability (Nair, 2011). Through this, the need to calculate the profitability of social media, arises.

Nair (2011) states that organizations should not start their social media strategy by measuring its value in advance. Social media is designed as a tool of communication, but as stated above, this fact does not make it an irrelevant tool for the use of businesses: value should still be measured. Nair (2011) suggests connecting and mapping the general business strategy to the social media strategy to determine whether the media is used to its correct purpose. Through questioning if the organization is building the internal capability to create financial returns through customer acquisition and service, the organization can evaluate the success of the strategy executed through social media. This approach, Nair (2011) states, will allow the organization, through learning, to monitor, manage and measure the results of the social media practices.

Drury (2008) & Dean (2014) addressed the most common questions managers have on the outcomes of investing in social media efforts. Improvement of sales is one of the most common goals of organizations taking to social media, but this requires connections and consistency in the use of this tool. More than half of the marketers, who had been using social media for at least three years, reported that it has helped increase sales, with more than half of the organizations spending six or more hours on social media weekly having the same results. With at least six hours of social media efforts weekly, vast majority of the marketers also reported increased visibility for their business. (Dean, 2014.)

The benefits in the decreased marketing expenses through utilizing social media were more significant in organizations employing less than 10 people, with 57% of businesses identifying a reduction in marketing expenses, compared to only 40% of businesses employing 1000 or more agreeing to this cost reduction (Assaad & Gomez, 2011). Kietzmann (2013) stated that 74% of those spending at least six hours a week on social media marketing were more likely to gain a better understanding of the marketplace. The gain of business partnerships was more significant to B2B organizations than B2C organizations. The more time invested in social media efforts, the more business partnerships were generated through social media, with more than half of the marketers, who had been using social media for at least a year, reported having gained new business partnerships. In addition, 66% of marketers investing at least six hours to social media weekly saw an increase in generated leads for partnerships or customers. Along with leads, 60% of those spending at least six hours a week in social media efforts, reported an increase in search engine rankings. (Dean, 2014.)

As stated before, through social media efforts, organizations can, along with increasing sales, increase their brand visibility and recognition, as well as, loyalty among consumers. Assaad & Gomez (2011) stated that organizations selling to consumers were more likely to develop loyal fans through social media, than those selling to other organizations. Of the marketers, who had been using social media for at least a year, 69% found social media a useful tool in the creation of a loyal fan base. There is an increase in research done on the benefits of social media, as stated above, to justify an investment to an asset not offering a value up front. However, as it can be seen from the results of these few studies presented here, more than half of organizations already view their social media efforts beneficial. While others may not have the same view on social media, the tools to a successful social media strategy are commonly discussed and as we become more familiar with using social media in marketing efforts, the amount of benefits gained may rise.

5.3 The Value of a “Like”

With social media being a communication tool, measuring the value of social media activities becomes relevant. Being able to measure such a metric creates understanding on how social media creates value. One of the easiest, and widely used metrics of measure is the value of a “like” on social media. By “liking” an organization’s post, the consumer is publicly engaging with and endorsing the company. For example, the pages and posts liked by a user on Facebook will appear on the user’s “friends” pages when they go and view their newsfeed on the platform (once a user becomes “friends” with another user on the platform, the posts and pages “liked” will appear on the user’s friends’ newsfeed). This creates visibility and is a way for many consumers to receive information on products, services and organizations, as well as, read the news and follow up on current events.

The value of a “like” is commonly calculated through determining the average value of customers that are fans of the organization on social media. Fans of the company can be defined by the platform users who publicly endorse the company by, for example, “liking” their posts and pages or sharing content. From the average value of a fan, subtract the average value of customers, who are not fans and the end result is the value of a “like”. These are the consumers using the organization’s products and services but are not publicly endorsing the company. In establishing the link between the social media efforts of the organization, and the value of a customer, Bendle & Bagga (2016) emphasized that calculating the value using average sale price would overestimate customer value in revenue leaving costs unaccounted for. (Bendle & Bagga, 2016.)

In some cases, marketers define social media strategy through the difference in value of fans and non-fans. According to Bendle & Bagga (2016) social media strategy is not the driver of value between these two groups of customers, and state that these two groups differ in relation to one another due to reasons unrelated to the organization’s social media strategy. They found fans to be younger and more active users of social media, as well as, more technologically literate. In addition, the preference to a brand, compared to competitors, was stronger in fans than non-fans, resulting in more active endorsement of the organization on social media. (Bendle & Bagga, 2016.)

This study will be conducted on personal training entrepreneurs. The ability to assess the value of a fan or a non-fan is limited within a small organization, so actual calculation examples of this value determination will not be provided. We will, however, discuss the importance of fans and non-fans and how the entrepreneur would value these customer groups differently.

5.4 Return on Investment for Social Media

Return on Investment (ROI) is traditionally defined as a tool to help either differentiate between investment options or define the return on an investment already made.

$$ROI = (\text{Return} - \text{Cost}) / \text{Cost of Investment}$$

Formula 1: Return on investment (Source: Sonnenreich, W., Albanese, J., & Stout, B. (2006, 46).

This tool has been traditionally used to calculate the performance of an investment (Bendle & Bagga, 2016). For the purpose of this thesis, return represents the gain, or sales, from an investment made on social media, such as paying for an advert on Facebook.

Measuring the return on investment for social media is a debated subject among trade publications, corporate blogs and professional publications, since many organizations' social media campaigns produce different data opposed to the traditional ROI measure used in financial accounting (Gilfoil & Jobs 2012). The debate on the issue varies from researchers and other parties stating that return on investment cannot be measured, all the way to some stating that the Web 2.0 is the easiest tool invented for such calculations. Different conclusions, methods of research, along with other publications written on the issue will next be presented to gain better understanding of the current state of ROI research on social media.

The first group of researchers view the return on investment for social media as an impossible measure to calculate, with attempts in doing so are nearly impossible or unnecessary. Zeng, Chen, Lusch & Li (2010) view the topic as a social media analytics issue. Social media intelligence research is stated to require "well-articulated and clearly defined performance measures" to conduct calculations in application settings. Challenges in modeling social media intelligence to create quantifiable measures leaves difficulties in judging social media intelligence's return on investment. Filisko (2011) argues against social media performance measures calculations, along with return on investment, as a whole. In this context social media is seen as a networking tool to create relationships and facilitate business, with measuring performance left irrelevant. Dorfinger (2011) provides a broad view of different return on investment arguments for social media but concludes that such performance measures cannot be calculated. Zheng et al. (2010), Filisko (2011) & Dorfinger (2011) all concluded that the return on investment for social media was either impossible or extremely difficult to calculate due to the difficulties in measuring and quantifying social media analytics, as well as seeing such calculations as irrelevant for social platforms.

Mangiuc (2009), Pooja et al. (2012) and Hoffman & Frodor (2010) suggested that return on investment can be calculated, but only by explicitly defining it and measuring it in a certain way. This challenges the traditional way of measuring ROI introduced earlier in this chapter. Mangiuc (2009) discusses a model for the measurement of the return on investment for social media based on the classic ROI measurement. The method measures the investment from the view of the organization and accounts for both, "hard" and "soft" benefits of social media. Pooja et al. (2012) introduces a framework for measuring Customer Lifetime Value (CLV), with the ROI of social media having some effects on the financial ROI of the organization. Customer Lifetime Value is defined as the total of the financial profit, calculated from the existing point to the future, with a focus on customer engagement, potential customer value and the improvement of customer relationships (Kasemsap, 2018). Considering CLV in social media performance calculations is also supported by Turner (2014) with a focus on the financial outcome of a social media investment.

With social media being a consumer-controlled environment, Hoffman & Frodor (2010) suggest considering the motivations of the consumers to use social media and measuring the investment the customer makes while engaging with an organization as the investment in the calculations. This approach considers the short-term returns that social media has through, for example, increase in sales or reducing costs, including long-term returns on social media investments the organization makes. When approaching the calculation of the return on investment through this method, the first step is to consider what marketing objectives different social media platforms might satisfy and how the customer engages with the organization on these platforms. Different behaviors are considered and calculated as the customer investments in the marketer's social media efforts. The calculation of ROI in such a way will not, in most cases, produce a monetary result, but a customer behavior results in each platform, such as increase in word-of-mouth, and brand awareness. Hoffman & Frodor argue that with social media being an interactive environment, traditional marketing measurements with a "reach and frequency" -focus are not suited for such platforms. It is argued that this narrow focus on viewing social media as "just another marketing tool" is an incorrect way to view a qualitative, consumer controlled, space. (Hoffman & Frodor, 2010.)

Hoffman and Frodor introduce a 4C -framework, connections, creation, consumption and control, to define social media investments in an organization as a customer-oriented framework. A qualitative method of calculating the return on investment for social media takes into account the value of, for example a tweet about a brand from a well-known person, which can have big impacts on the brand awareness of an organization. To physically calculate an estimate of the return on investment for social media, the social media metrics are linked to an additional set of proxy benchmarks, for example the likeliness to purchase a product or a service again while contacting the brand through a specific social media platform. The method is argued to be beneficial even in small social media efforts with focus on brand awareness, brand engagement and word of mouth. (Hoffman & Frodor, 2012.)

While this is an intriguing idea, it can be argued that measuring "likes", the amount that the customer spends on a website and other customer behaviors is not measuring ROI, it is measuring another performance measure for social media. This noted, measuring a customer behavior return on social media investment can still be argued to be a valid measuring point for an organization. This calculation approach also leaves out a holistic perspective on the issue, where social media is seen as a part of the organization's marketing mix with an effect on the financial return on investment, a key problem in most organizations trying to unify their marketing efforts.

Turner (2014), Kaske (2012), Kugler & Smolnik (2012) and Blanchard (2009) argue that ROI for social media can be calculated in financial terms, with social media statistics only considered in a way they affect financial outcome. Turner (2014) also focuses on the calculation of Customer Lifetime Value emphasizing that the calculation method chosen by an organization must ultimately generate income, for example lead a consumer to a chosen platform to produce a paying customer through a created sale. Blanchard (2009) states that the qualitative measures of social media need to be translated into financial data to produce relative results. Kaske et al. (2012) present an extension on the traditional return on investment measure with applications from CLV concept and long-term marketing data.

Measuring the return on investment for social media has been viewed by some as a calculation that should be done as a part of a larger contextual framework (Murdough 2009; Bartholomew 2011; Nair 2011). Murdough (2009) presents a measurement

process for social media with five steps that all should be defined based on how the organization, and their brand, wants to engage with the consumer. The steps include concept, definition, design, deployment and optimization. Social media is viewed as a means in getting to a specific goal, so measuring social media statistics begins with defining objectives the organization wants to achieve. Through identifying key performance indicators, the organization should define key performance benchmarks. Murdough (2009) states that through defining these key performance measures, the organization in question is to develop, or customize a social media analytics program, which will accurately collect performance data. Nair (2011) conducted a case study in healthcare in which he argues for the use of a social media Balanced Scorecard. This is a strategic approach in the implementation of social media efforts throughout monitoring, managing and measuring social media data. Bartholomew (2011) emphasizes the evaluation of what the organization wants to measure. Measurable objects, that are aligned with the organizational goals, need to be determined before defining social media metrics.

Authors arguing for the calculation of ROI, among other measures, for social media also state that utilizing Web 2.0 (including social media platforms) tends to improve organization's performance, and have better ROIs (Bughin & Chui, 2010). According to some, Web 2.0 is seen as the most measurable medium ever invented (Gillin, 2010). In a business article, Gillin (2010) argues that organizations do not understand what they are measuring when it comes to social media data and provides example calculations to represent the simplicity of such calculations. Hall & Hume (2011) also argue for the measurability of social media return on investment by providing six step evaluation approach to the calculation.

The issue of calculating the return on investment is a debated issue among different sources. The views stated above vary from business blogs to journal articles, so more research on the calculation method is needed to better understand the necessity of the calculations and different methods available. Therefore, in this study, it will not be specified what the measures should be used to calculate ROI for social media, but instead the issue of social media as a part of the strategy and how the participants view the profitability of social will be evaluated based on individual interviews. With the study focusing on small organizations, the amount of financial data available might be low, along with the initial investment the personal trainer must make to market themselves through social media. We will look at the profitability of social media through the data we are able to gather and how the interviewees view this issue in their own promotional efforts. Some rough examples of how ROI can be calculated for a single promotional Facebook post providing a single customer can be calculated, but it should be noted that this calculation method is argued to be too simple and does not take into consideration the various other forms of effort behind the post, or the consumers investment in engaging with the service provider through a social media platform.

6 METHODOLOGY

6.1 Research Design & Strategy

This study was executed by two people with different backgrounds in studies. The study was influenced by both, leadership and management, as well as accounting. Executing the study, with all its parts from theoretical background to interviewing the personal trainers and analyzing and presenting the results, was done collectively. Due to the different backgrounds of the writers, the writing process of the theoretical background was divided to ensure efficiency of the process. However, the different elements in each part were discussed and later reviewed by both writers leaving only the writing process itself to either one. All in all, the execution of the study was a collective effort, with neither one having clear responsibilities on different sections of the study. The writers felt that this would help with the data analyzation process, with both having familiarized themselves in all the necessary previous research.

Exploratory research design can be defined as research that is targeted at finding perspectives on phenomenon by asking questions and evaluating the phenomenon (Saunders et al, 2012: 670). This research design was chosen for this study due to the purpose of trying to find out and understand the viewpoints of personal trainer entrepreneurs on the importance and profitability of social media. Conducted through qualitative, semi-structured interviews, the participants of these interviews were selected due to their profession as a certified personal trainer and the existence of social media activities. Questions regarding social media, and their personal opinions on the use of social media, were asked from the participants to be able to understand the importance of using social media in a personal trainer's profession.

The aim of the research was to find out the personal trainers' views on the importance of social media in an organization's strategy and the profitability of social media. Due to the previous research on the issue not being conclusive, and the social media being a fairly new tool in the use of organizations, exploratory research design was chosen. Previous research has not been executed in Finland, the need for an exploratory research was recognized to find answers to the research questions posed.

Deriving from the research design, a qualitative research method was chosen to for this study. As in the nature of a qualitative study, this thesis focuses on what the interviewees say, the words used to describe the phenomenon, rather than quantifying

the results received. As the subject is new in the field of research, and no previous studies have been executed on the matter in Finland, the inductive approach of a qualitative study in the relationship between theory and research was seen as the correct way of research as the emphasis is on the attempt to create theories from the research (Bryman & Bell, 2011: 27). To examine the true viewpoints and experiences of the personal trainers on social media, a qualitative strategy was chosen.

The aim of the research is to understand this phenomenon from the viewpoint of the entrepreneurs using social media as a tool in their organization. This made it possible to examine both, the perceived use of social media, the potential of it, and the importance of social networking in general in the personal training industry. The aim was also to give a framework for further, possible, quantitative research on the issue.

6.2 Sample & Data Collection

The sample chosen for this study was personal trainers who are legally certified to work in the industry, and who use at least one social media platform in their work. Nine personal trainers were interviewed for the study, six of whom were women and three were men. The age of the participants ranged from early 20's to early 40's, but this was not one of the dominating factors in choosing the study subjects. The age variation of the interviewees well represents the actual age variation in the industry. It was preferred that all participants had experience in working as a personal trainer. In choosing the study subjects, it was taken into consideration that all had the appropriate licensing to work in the field, as well as, one or more social media channels in use. The amount of time working in the field varied from a year and a half to ten years, with the focus of the customer niche varying from one to the other. Some interviewees also worked exclusively online, while others practiced a face-to-face training method. The amounts of followers each subject had was looked up online, as it was publicly visible, but the activity on each platform was discussed during the interview.

The sampling technique used in this study was a mix of purposive sampling and convenience sampling. As the research questions limit the relevant study subjects for this research, a non-probability sampling, such as purposive sampling is, was chosen to strategically align the interviewees to receive relevant data (Bryman & Bell, 2011: 442). With experience in working in the industry itself, convenience sampling was also used to acquire needed interviewees. Convenience sampling itself is defined to utilize participants available for the study in the bases of accessibility and was used to gain some of the study subjects (Bryman & Bell, 2011: 109). These personal trainers were familiar with the author, Joonatan Jussila, before due to connections made during his training to certify as a personal trainer, and work in the industry, and were identified as suitable participants. Through both sampling methods, participants were chosen in regard to their suitability to the research, and the limitations set for the interviewees, rather than easy accessibility.

As stated in the theoretical background of this study, many organizations take to social media with little to no knowledge on why they are doing so. Many are simply afraid not to. With the personal training industry, and the importance of utilizing social media as a communication tool, growing, the need for a qualitative research on the views of the strategic value and profitability of social media was recognized. The aim of this study, along with the research questions, was to give background and insight into

the views of social media according to the personal trainers to further pave way for a quantitative study on, for example, profitability measures in the industry. The organizations in question are small, but the fit of social media and the industry is valuable, and with the rise in both, demand and supply, the research is interesting and beneficial.

This study was conducted through single person, semi-structured interviews, with nine participants in total. The reason for an interview-based study was, that the aim of the research was to find out the study subjects' views on the research questions, rather than a quantifiable relationship between, for example profitability and social media use. Due to this, interviews enabled the collection of the appropriate data to answer the research questions. Moreover, because of incoherent views on social media usage in organizations in the past research, it was seen appropriate to study views on the research questions formed, rather than test, or develop, new ways of measuring social media in strategic use, or the profitability of social media. Interviewees remain anonymous to ensure free discussion on the issues presented in the interview structure. During the interviews, no differences in any of the themes present were found based on the gender of the interviewees. Due to this, the gender of the interviewee will not be discussed in the results of the study.

The upside to an interview-based study is that it enables the access to deeper and richer data not receivable through plain surveys (Krishnaswami & Satyaprasad, 2010: 100). Eskola & Suoranta (1998: 86-88) conclude that doing a theme interview has two major upsides. One, with the interview being an open discussion, it gives the interviewee a chance to describe the phenomenon in their own words. In doing so, it is easier to get in touch with their personal experience on the issue. In addition, the interview consists of preassigned themes, which ensure that the discussion does not derail, and in the case of multiple interviews, the topics do not differ from one another. The semi-structured interview method included having pre-assigned themes with specific questions (see Appendix 1.), with additional questions differing in each interview, based on the answers given. This enabled the collection of the data needed to answer the research questions posed, but gave the interviewees flexibility to answer the questions more broadly, from their own personal viewpoints. Semi-structured interviews give power to the interviewees to emphasize what they see is important in the issue, which suited the aim of this study (Brymann & Bell, 2011: 467).

The questions were based off of the existing research on both, the personal training industry and social media, with the research questions in mind. The questions were also formed in terminology understandable to the interviewees to gather the data needed to answer the aim of the study. Altogether, the interviews lasted from 20 minutes up to an hour, depending on the length of the answers given during. In most cases, conducting the interview face-to-face was not possible, so most were conducted via Skype or phone call.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed soon after. The recordings and transcripts remain only with the authors of this thesis, which was made clear in the beginning of each interview. Even though the thesis will be written in English, the interviews will be conducted in Finnish. This eliminates the possibility that the interviewee would give more narrow answers having to give the interview in their second language. The interviewees were made known of the public nature of the study, but full disclosure was attempted to create through anonymous interviews. It was made clear that at any point, if they wished to not answer a question, they could do so. If

willing, the interviewees each have the right to the transcripts of their interview in case any misinterpretations or error are made.

6.3 Qualitative Thematic Analysis

Qualitative thematic analysis is the most commonly used method of analyzing data in qualitative research and is also the data analysis method of this study. In this analyzing method, the focus from the researcher's side is on identifying and describing the implicit and explicit themes within the data, rather than counting phrases or words used during the interviews. As the purpose of this study was to find out the views on the importance of social media in an organization's strategy, and the profitability of this tool, thematic analysis was chosen because it enables finding the complexities of meaning in the data received. (Guest et al, 2012: 11.) Moreover, this method allows focused interviews, serving the purpose of this study (Kuckartz, 2014: 70).

The analyzing of the data followed the seven steps of a qualitative thematic analysis. The first step of the process includes reading the text carefully and highlighting the main passages important to the study. Thematic analysis utilizes a process of coding for the text, which begins in phase two by developing the main categories or themes within the data. These topics were taken from the research questions posed in the beginning of the study, and naturally the interviewing process was designed around these themes. In this coding process, the researcher goes through the text ones more, assigning the passages under each theme or category. The next step is the second step of the coding process itself: developing sub-categories under each main category, and assigning each passage chosen to these sub-categories. After the coding process, the main step of the process is the analysis and presenting of the data. (Kuckartz, 2014: 71-84.)

As stated before, in practice, this study followed the steps typical for a qualitative thematic analysis. Before dividing the data into any categories, each interviewee was given numbers to represent their identity in the study, such as Interviewee 1, 2 etc. This enabled anonymous analysis of the data and protected the interviewees identities in the presenting of the results. In the first step, the transcripts from the interviews were gone through, with highlighting the most relevant passages for this particular study. Next the main categories were developed according to the research questions posed: the role of social media in an organization's strategy, gaining competitive advantage through social media, and social media and profitability. This process was simple, since the interview questions (see Appendix 1) were designed accordingly. The data was separated under each main theme. In the sub-coding of the data, the passages relevant to each theme were reviewed again and categorized to be able to better compare the similarities and differences shown within the interviews. Since the research in this particular aspect of social media and personal training has not been executed in Finland before, the main focus in the analyzing process was to divide the data according to the themes set by the research questions and the data received during the interviews. Dividing the data according to previous research was not seen necessary, but rather approaching the analysis by the categories and sub-categories emerging from the interviews. The last part, analyzing of the data and results, will be shown in chapter 7 of this study.

7 RESULTS

7.1 Social Media in an Organization's Strategy

7.1.1 Different Social Media Platforms Used

Facebook and Instagram were the social media platforms most widely used by interviewees. Snapchat, blogs, YouTube, personal websites, and Google's Search Engine Optimization were less commonly used by the personal trainers. All the interviewees said they were using Facebook, and seven felt it was the most important social media platform, because they felt that their customer base used Facebook. While eight interviewees were using Instagram, only one of the interviewees saw Instagram as the most important tool for acquiring customers. Instagram was more regarded as a channel used by young people and a good tool for acquiring young customers, while Facebook was seen as a service used by more adults and slightly older people.

Facebookki on ihan selkeesti. Siellä on paljon enemmän niinku sitä porukkaa ja seuraajaa, että Instagram on ihan selkeesti semmonen kun ite kun on melkein neljäkymmentä ni sanotaanks et se on niin paljon nuorempien käytössä se Instagram tänä päivänä. (H1)

It is clearly Facebook. A lot more people and followers are there, Instagram is clearly like, as I am almost forty, let's say it is much more widely used by younger people these days. (I1)

Mä käytän Facebookkia, tai Facebookillahan se alko silloin, ja vaikka se onki nuorison keskuudessa vähän niinku laskemaan päin se Facebookki, niin edelleen se mun kohderyhmä on siellä ja oikeestaan ne yli nelikymppiset, mitkä on sitä mun kohderyhmää ni nehan on nyt vasta tavallaan löytäny sinne, plus 50 plus 60 -vuotiaat on löytäny sinne Facebookkii vähä aikaa sitte. (H8)

I use Facebook, or with Facebook it all began then, and even though among young people it is decreasing, my target group is still there and actually the over forties, which are my target group, they have just found their way there, over fifties, over sixties have found Facebook only a little while ago. (I8)

Varmaa oisko se Instagram -- näkyvillä tavalla kaikista paras. Se on nii nopee semmonen some sitte että sitä on helppo ja nopee selaa. Facebook on jotenki, se vähä on semmonen vanhusten paikka nykyää. Mäki yritän enemmän tavotella semmosta nuorempaa porukkaa ja kyl sen tavottaa enemmän tuolta noista trendikkäimmistä someista. (H2)

Probably would it be Instagram -- visibility wise the best. It is such a quick social media that it is easy to use, easy to scroll through. Facebook is kind of, kind of a place for old people these days. I try to reach more of a younger group and it is reached more through those trendier social media channels. (I2)

Four of the interviewees used YouTube, but its role was not considered as important as Facebook's or Instagram's. One of the interviewees mentioned, however, that they will invest in it increasingly in the future.

Nyt ens vuodelle pitäis kehitellä vaan tota Youtube-tiliä, omaa tube-kanavaa ja tällasta. Sillä tavallaan pääsee enemmän, et nyt tällä hetkellä se on enemmän Oulussa ja Vaasassa pöyrii toi homma ni jos sulla ois oma kanava lähtis sitte niinku lentoo ni sithän se ois koko Suomen laajusta. (H8)

Now for next year I should probably develop a YouTube account, my own YouTube account and such. Through that you can get more, so at this moment it is more in Oulu and in Vaasa where I run this, so if your channels take off then it would be extent to whole of Finland. (I8)

Three interviewees reported using Google's search engine optimization, one of whom said it was the most important tool for acquiring customers. For one of the interviewed, personal blog was the main social media channel. Only one of the interviewees mentioned using Snapchat.

Even though Facebook was viewed as decreasing in popularity, most personal trainers saw their potential customers as still being active on the platform. The use of different platforms was decided based on the possibility of customer acquisition and the visibility gained through a channel.

7.1.2 The Role of Social Media in Strategy

Social media was generally seen as an important tool for achieving business goals and its significance was expected to continue to grow in the future. The objectives of the interviewees, both short and long term, were mainly related to business growth, gaining visibility and increasing customer base. Three of the interviewees found social media to be extremely important for their goals, and the overall importance of social media became the biggest theme of the study. Here is what three of the interviewees answered when asked to describe the importance of social media in achieving their business goals.

Se on ihan ykkösväline siinä. Mullaki on kuitenkin melkei 3000 seuraajaa tuolla Facebookissa, ni ku sinne jotaki laittaa, ni se aika hyvin leviää ja sama sitte Instagramissa, ni mullon vuodessa tullu, ku muutin Ouluun, niin tuhat uutta seuraajaa, ni se on iha hyvä tämmöseltä tavikselta, niin sanotusti, mun mielestä. (H5)

It is number one in that. I, after all, do have almost 3000 followers on Facebook, so when you put something there, it spreads pretty well and the same with Instagram, so I have in a year gotten, when I moved to Oulu, a thousand new followers, so it is pretty good for a regular person, as you say, in my opinion. (I5)

No sosiaalisessa mediassa pääsääntöisesti mainoskanavana toimii Facebook ja Instagram, eli käytännössä somen vaikutus myynnin edistämiseksi on tosi korkeella tasolla tällä hetkellä, et jos et oo esillä sosiaalisessa mediassa ni kukaa ei tunne sua sä et oo käytännössä olemassakaan. (H7)

Well in social media the main advertising channels are Facebook and Instagram, so in practice, the influence of social media in promoting sales is really high at the moment, so if you are not visible on social media, no one knows who you are, you practically don't exist. (I7)

Super tärkeä. Kyl se niinku nykypäivänä ihan super tärkeä juttu mun mielestä. Kaikki muu, vanhanaikainen media, printtimedia ja muuta, niilleki varmasti on oma paikkansa, mutta sit jos haluu tavoittaa nuoria ni ei missään tapauksessa. Tulee hyvin toimeen, eikä tarvi tehdä hirveesti mitään oikeita töitä. Nyt on hyvällä mallilla. Ja ilman somea, ei ikinä ois tapahtunu, ei ikinä. Siinä se vaa on. Sovittaa et puolet on mun panostusta ja puolet somen ansiota sitte. (H2)

Super important. Nowadays it is a super important thing in my opinion. Everything else, old fashioned media, print media and others, they surely have their own place, but if you want to reach young people, then no way. You get by really well, and you don't have to do a lot of real work. Now it is in a great place. And without social media, it would have never happened, never. There it is. Let's say half is my input and half is due to social media. (I2)

The other interviewees, except for interviewee five, also considered social media as a substantive tool for achieving their goals. In addition to social media, some of the traditional marketing methods were also mentioned by some of the interviewees. These interviewees, except for interviewee 5, however, stressed the importance of social media alongside traditional marketing.

Puskaradiohan on yks paras mahdollinen. Jos teet työs hyvin ni eiköhän ne ihmiset kuule siitä. (H1)

Word-of-mouth is one of the best. If you do your job well, people will probably hear about it. (I1)

Näkyvyys siellä salilla on aika iso juttu. Mitä enemmän siellä valmentaa ni sehän sitä parasta mainosta on itelle myöskin siellä sitte salilla, mutta joo et se on semmonen yks mihin ison panostan, mut toki myös sitte se sosiaalinen media. Blogi ehkä isoin semmosena isoimpana kanavana ja toki insta ja facebookki tulee käytetty lisäks. No nyt just yritystoiminnan myötä on hyvin paljon niinku tavallaa miettiny sitä ja niinku tavallaa vieny sitä (somea) enemmän siihen suuntaan et se tukis sitä liiketoimintaa. (H3)

Visibility at the gym is quite big of a deal. The more you coach there the better marketing you'll get for yourself, so that will be one of the things I'll be investing in, but also in social media, Blog as the biggest platform, but I also use Instagram and Facebook. I've been thinking about how to take the social media to a direction that would support my business more. (I3)

Interviewee 5 was the only one who reported that social media was not an important tool for achieving their goals. The interviewee said that their goal was, however, to be one of the most famous and most accomplished personal trainer in a small city and its nearby areas.

En ole tehnyt yhtiölleni somestrategiaa, vaan toimin lähinnä fiilisohjalta - sometän, kun viitsin ja ehdin. Käytän sosiaalisen median kanavista ainoastaan Facebookia. Koen, että Facebook-sivu on nykyään oltava, ja että toisaalta nykyisessä elämäntilanteessa minulla ei ole aikaa käyttää muita kanavia. Käytän somea mainostamiseen, tunnettuuden lisäämiseen, imagon luomiseen, liikunta- ja terveystiedon tarjoamiseen asiakkaille. Some tukee tavoitteiden saavuttamisessa, mutta myös täysin ilman sitä tavoitteet olisivat saavutettavissa. (H5)

I haven't done a social media strategy for my organization, rather I act on a feelings - basis - I use social media when I bother and have time. Out of the social media platforms, I only use Facebook. I feel, that you have to have a Facebook -page nowadays, and on the other hand, in the current life situation, I don't have time to use other channels. I use social media to advertise, increase awareness, create an image, to offer exercise and health information to customers. Social media supports achieving of goals, but also without it, the goals would be achievable. (I5)

This was interesting, because the interviewee also mentioned that they felt that being on Facebook was necessary today. They were also the only one who used the term "social media strategy". All the other interviewees, in turn, thought that social media was a useful tool to reach a large number of people and at the same time potential customers, but none of them mentioned having a separate social media strategy. Actually, only one of the interviewees mentioned that they are doing actual business planning and strategic planning to achieve their goals. However, eight out of the nine interviewees mentioned that social media was an important or moderately important tool for achieving their business goals, with three stating that it is extremely important. Although none of the interviewees mentioned having a separate social media strategy, one of the interviewees stated that they were clearly thinking about what and when they were posting on different social media platforms.

Joo, kyllä me niitä katotaan ja pyritään aina julkaisemaan niitä semmosina aikoina tietysti, et jos sä nyt yöllä laitat kahdeltatoista jonku videon ni se ei nyt välttämättä hirveen hyvin leviä, se hukkuu sinne. Eli pitää olla tietty aika milloin niitä on paras julkaista. (H8)

Yes, we do look at them, and of course try to post them at times, so if you post a video at twelve o'clock at night, it will not necessarily spread very well, it will get lost in there. So there has to be a certain time when it is best to post them. (I8)

Tosi paljon tota Instagramia tulee käyttöön sitte stooria, ja sinne pitää aina tietyin aikaväleihin tosiaan sitä materiaalia laittaa. Eli ihan tietoisesti tehdään niin et sinne pitää tulla tietty määrä postauksia, esimerkiks viikossa. (H8)

I have used Instagram story a lot, and you have to put material there at certain intervals. So knowingly we do so, that there has to be a certain number of posts, for example in a week. (I8)

Previous studies indicated that organizations may not yet realize the true potential of social media, and how to use it effectively. In this study, out of all the platforms, Facebook was seen as a dominant platform and the use of other channels was surprisingly low, given that many interviewees noted, for example, that young people mostly use Instagram and that these personal trainers would specifically target this group of consumers. From the interviewees' speeches, it emerged that this social media channel was not, or has not been tried yet.

Instagrammi on ihan selkeesti semmonen kun ite kun on melkein neljäkymmentä ni sanotaanks et se on niin paljon nuorempien käytössä se Instagrammi tänä päivänä. Et mun pitäs tavottaa taas ne nuoremmat sieltä. Ehkä mä en osaa käyttää sitä häshtäg juttuu, jotenki vähä omalaatusia. (H1)

Instagram is clearly, since I am almost forty, let's say it is used by a lot younger people, Instagram nowadays. So I should reach the younger people through there. Maybe I don't know how to use the hashtags, somehow a little peculiar. (I1)

Oon miettiny tota instagramia et kuinka hyödyllinen se on ja mitä siel voi tehdä, oon alkanu seuraa viisaita ihmisiä ja koittanu sielt löytää sitä omaa juttua, en oo päättäny et panostanko kuntosaliin (jossa haastateltava on töissä, nimi vaihdettu) vai omaa instaa ja mikä se on niinku se mulle hyödyllisin juttu, ja sitte se tyyli, et mitä sinne laittaa. Pitäs varmaa ihmisiä haastatella siihen et mikä kiinnittää huomion tai seurata mistä ihmiset tykkäilee, voihan se olla samat asiat mitä itteeki kiinnostaa, mutta sitä on ite niin sokeena sisällä jo liikunta-alalla ettei tiä mikä tavallista tallaajaa kiinnostaa, et se on vähän vielä lapsen kengissä. (H9)

I have thought about Instagram, how useful it is and what you can do there, I have started following smart people and tried to find my own thing there, I haven't decided whether to invest in a gym's (gym where interviewee works, name deleted) or my own Instagram, and what the most useful thing for me is, and then like, what to put there. I should probably interview people on what draws attention and follow what people "like", they could be the same things that interest me, but you are blind inside the sports-industry that you don't know what regular people are interested in, so it is in the beginning still. (I9)

This clearly demonstrates how social media is still not made efficient use of in the wide variety of platforms available. The argument is supported by the fact that only one of the interviewees said they were starting to invest effort in YouTube and only one reported using Snapchat, which is another social media channel used by young people and young adults alongside Instagram. It should be noted, that young people are not necessarily the target group of all of the personal trainers, but more and more people of all ages use different channels of social media, and especially in the future, both the young and the adults will be found from different social media channels. One of the interviewees mentioned that even 50-60 years old have recently found Facebook, which suggests that the use of other social media channels is increasing both among adults and young people.

One of the interviewees clearly highlighted the difficulty of customer engagement, which was mentioned as one of the obstacles in implementing social media strategy and with the effective use social media itself. The interviewee's answer demonstrates well how the communication with customers is not always so simple and why a separate social media strategy can be difficult to create.

Sitte taas ihmiset ni niitten pitäis kaikkien seuraajien pitäis koko ajan tykätä, jakaa, kommentoida, jotta se näkyy. Muuten se ei vaan yksinkertaisesti toimi se juttu. Ni se on semmonen vaikea suo et ihmiset saa (tykkäämään). Heität jotain ihan shittiä sinne, ihmiset on sillei "hei jes vähän siistiä". Sit heität jostain asiasta ni siinä käy yks tykkäämässä. Just sillee, mitä te haluatte. Ja silti ne haluaa hirveesti kaikkia jumppavideoita ja ohjeita ja kaikkee mut sit niistä ei kuitenkaan tykätä, mikä tois sitä yrityksen näkyvyyttä ja sitä semmosta että siellä oikeesti olis sitä keskustelua ja sitä, mitä itse toivoisin. Ehkä ne on sitte joku blogi-kirjotus tai joku mitä niinku ihmiset oikeesti jakaa. Kyllähän sillä on hirveen paljon merkitystä että mitä sinne laittaa. Mä en oo vielä löytänyt sitä kultasta tietä siihen että mikä se on se oikeesti mitä ne haluaa. Ei ne halua aina asiaakaan. Et siellä pitää olla vähän jotain muutakin. Ja sitte ku mä en kuitenkaan oo semmonen kuka kerjää Instagrammissa tai Facebookissa ni millää tämmösillä peppu-kuvilla. Se ei oo mun tyyliä. (H1)

Then again people, they should, all the followers need to like, share, comment, all the time that it will show. Otherwise it just simply does not work. It is a hard thing, how to get people (to like). When you post some shit there, people are like "hey yes, cool". The you post about an issue then one person goes and likes it. Like, what do you want. And still they want a lot of workout videos and instructions and everything but then no-one likes them, which would bring the company visibility and the aspect that there would be conversation and that, what I hope for. Maybe it is a blog post or something, what people actually share. It does matter a lot, what you put there. I haven't yet found middle ground on what it is what people actually want. They don't always want information. There has to be a little something else as well. And then I am not a person who begs for (likes), on Instagram or on Facebook, with any of these butt pictures. It is not my style. (I1)

All interviewees thought that social media was a good tool for reaching consumers and potential customers, as well as, for increasing visibility and popularity. With the amount of content on social media being posted daily, the interviewees saw a challenge for the consumers in separating disinformation from fact. The variety of information being shared is diverse, and the personal trainers themselves had witnessed poor quality health and fitness advice being given to consumers, who might not possess the knowledge to differentiate between right and wrong information. The reach of social media, both in good and bad sense, emerged as a major theme as the interviewees saw both opportunities and threats in it.

No yleisesti, ja joskus itekki törmää tähän, että sitä ei oikeestaan ymmärräkään, kuinka moni seuraa sua siellä, ku mullakaa ei oo mitenkään niin valtavasti seuraajia, mut kuitenkin normi ihmistä verrattuna enemmän, et kuinka ne niinku tietää kaikki asiat musta, koska mä kuitenkin aika paljon kerron mun elämästä ja mitä mä teen. Mulle saattaa tulla tuntemattomilta ihmisiltä viestejä, vaikka että "nii joo että sulla meni se selkä". Ja sit mä oon sillai että mitenkä sä tiedät tästä? Mut tietenki se tietää ku mä oon ite kertonu siitä. Ja jotku tyylii tietää, muistaa minkälainen huppari mul on ollu päällä kuukaus sitte. Se on tosi hassua. Sitä ei tajua, kuinka voimakas väline se on. (H8)

Well generally, and sometimes personally you see this, that you do not realize, how many follows you there, like I do not have that massive number of followers, but it is still a lot compared to a normal everyday guy, like how they know all about me, because I tell quite a lot about my life and what I do. I might get messages from strangers who say like "oh yeah you hurt your back". And then I be like how do you know about it? But, of course they know because I have told about it. And some like know, they remember the color of my hoodie I wore a month ago. It is really funny. You do not realize how strong tool it is. (I8)

It is impossible for the personal trainers to control the information being shared and spread through social media, but they also cannot ignore this information reaching the consumers, since it will directly affect their job through consumer behavior.

However, it was remarkable that all interviewees reported using social media and only one said that their goals could be achieved without social media. Three interviewees described social media as a very important tool for achieving the goals they set for their business, and the rest of the interviewees described it as being at least an important tool. Eight interviewees believed that social media would remain as an important part of, or become an even more important part of, their business.

7.2 Social Media and Competitive Advantage in a Market Place

Two themes emerged from the interviews that the interviewees saw clearly as a competitive advantage in the use of social media; utilizing own personality, and specialized knowledge and expertise. Both means were considered effective tools to stand out from the competitors. Interviewees agreed on that there are hardly any differences between the content published by personal trainers, so by doing it on your own unique way or by sharing content that demonstrates your expertise, trainers could stand out from the competitors.

Six out of the nine interviewees emphasized the importance of bringing forth one's personality in their use of social media, and it was seen as the best way to stand out from the mass.

Samoja asioitahan siellä kaikki tuuttaa tulemaan, mutta se millä tuolla ratsastetaan on varmaan kuitenkin sitte se oma persoona, et sun pitää olla jollaki tavalla kiinnostava ihminen et sua rupee siellä ihmiset seuraamaan. Ja tietenki siinä pitää jollakin tavalla miettiä sitä että niiden videoiden, tai kuvien tai vinkkien, et pitäis antaa sille ihmiselle jotain, et sil ois jotain arvoa, mut siinä ei oo mitään erilaista ku mitä muut tekee. Mut se on vaan et pitää lyödä se oma persoona peliin. (H8)

Everyone is posting the same stuff, but the thing that people thrive with is probably still their personality, you have to be an interesting person in some way that they start to follow you. And then you have to, in some way, think that the videos, or pictures or tip, that you have to give people something, that it has value, but that again is not different from anyone else. You just have to put your personality out there. (I8)

No tottakai, mul on se oma tyyli miten mä teen. Et tottakai niinku se miten mä vaikka kirjoitan postauksiin, nii tottakai sielt käy ilmi se et mitkä arvot mulla on, mitä mä kannatan, minkälaisia asiakkaita mä haluaisin tai kenen kanssa ne arvot sopii yhteen. Et jos mä en vaikka arvosta pikadieettejä, ni mulle ei tule asiakkaita, jotka haluavat pikadieettejä, koska siel mun some-markkinoinnis tulee aika selväks, tosi useinki aika kärkkäästi selville se, että mitä mä ajattelen asioista. Et jos mä kirjottaisin vaikka vaan semmosia postauksia, että kuntoilu on kivaa, syö porkkanoita, ni eihän siin tuu mitään kosketuspintaa. Mut sen sijaan, et mä sanon aika kärkkäästikin joitain asioita, ni okei kaikki ei tykkää musta, mut sit taas ne jotka ajattelee samalla tavalla ku minä, niin tykkää niist mun jutuista. Et mun mielest tossa some markkinoissa on

aika tärkeä se, et on aidosti se kuka on, tekee aidosti sitä mitä näkee tärkeeks ja välittää ja aidosti myös sanoo mitä vastaan on. Ja sillä mun mielestä tulee aika selväks se jako. (H6)

Well of course, I have my own style of doing thing. Of course, for example, the way I write posts, it of course shows my values, what I am for, what I am against, what kind of customers I would want or with who the values go together. For example, if I don't value quick fix -diets, then customer who want them won't come to me, because in my social media marketing it becomes very clear, very often and eagerly, what I think about them. If I only wrote posts like, exercising is fun, eat carrots, then there is no reach. But on the other hand, I say rather eagerly some stuff, then okay not everyone will like me, but then again, the people who think in the same way as I do, like my stuff. In my opinion, in social media marketing it is important to truly be who you are, do what you see is important and care and generously state what you are against. And with that the division becomes clear. (I6)

Mutta kun mä kuitenkin teen työtä omana itsenäni, minä olen minun firman brändi. (H1)

But when in the end I do the work as myself, I am my own company's brand. (I1)

As interviewee one mentioned, personal trainer is a brand him-/herself for their business and company, so bringing forth one's personality to stand out from the competitors makes more than sense. Personal trainers can bring forth their personality on social media in different forms of videos, pictures, audio and text. Interviewee eight, for example, said that they posted only positive things on social media, which was their way of showing their personality.

None of the interviewees said that they utilized social media to show their well-trained bodies or any results of their own personal training. Two of the interviewees said that they did not want to seem too pushy by posting anything too superficial.

Minä en äiti-ihmisenä halua lähteä siihen että mä siellä niinku oikeesti heruttelen takapuolta. Sekin on vähän semmonen kun nykysin se on joka myy, jolla sä saat oikeesti niitä, että sulla on oikeesti piukat vaatteet, toppi, ja sit sä reenailet, teet jotain ihan perus kyykky-liikettä, ni ai vitsi, monta sataatuhatta tykkääjää samantien. Sattuu olee perus vaatteet päällä ni se ei oookkaa nii myyvää enää. (H1)

As a mother I do not want to show off my booty. The thing is that nowadays it is what sells, with what you get, that you really have tight clothes, a top, and then you work out, do basic squats, and oh boy, hundred of thousands likes instantly. Wear some basic clothes and it is not selling that well. (I1)

Sit myös että se ei oo, ei missään tapauksessa semmosta tyrkytys-meininkiä taas semmosta niinku. (H2)

Then also that it is not, under no circumstances, anything kind of pushy. (I2)

This was interesting since according to George (2008), personal trainers use their bodies as a physical capital, and they promote their knowledge by showing the results of training in themselves. Other studies have also pointed out that social media is used as a

tool to facilitate aesthetic part of the business (Warhurst et al. 2000; Warhurst and Nickson 2001; Witz, Warhurst, and Nickelson 2003).

The second emerging theme among the personal trainers interviewed was standing out from the competition through a customer niche and specialized expertise. Two interviewees stated that personal trainers need to focus their services and knowledge to a specific customer group.

Juu, ja varsinki niinku valmennuksessa ni se on vaa fakta et jos sä oot tämmönen yleisjantteri et "olen hyvä kaikessa" millä sä sitten markkinoit ja mainostat ittees ni okei sun täytyy siis olla hyvä kaikessa mutta et sä voi niin mainostaa ittees vaan täytyy olla se joku juttu. (H4)

Yes, and specially in training, it is a fact that if you are general dude, that "I am good at everything" with what you market and advertise yourself with then, okay you have to be good at everything, but you can't advertise yourself like that, but you have to have that one thing. (I4)

Four out of the nine interviewees specified having a customer niche through which they market their services, while interviewee seven stated that they try to highlight their professional capability in their posts, but they do this more casually, rather than constantly focusing on a customer group.

Mä en pelkästään ihmisen kanssa urheile, vaan me laitetaan koko hänen hyvinvointi kuntoon. Mulla on lähihoitaja-koulutus, mä oon tehny työtä siellä, mä tiedän aika paljon varmaan enemmän ku tosi moni muu, varmaa joku parikymppinen pt just alottava. Mä luulen et mulla on silläkin osa-alueella sitä että mä teen sen niin kokonaisvaltasesti. Ja siitä mä oon saanu tosi paljon kiitosta. (H1)

I don't just work out with people, we fix their whole well-being. I have a degree in practical nursing, I have worked there, I probably know a lot more than many others, twenty-something personal trainer who is just starting out. I think I have in that are too, that I work holistically. And I have gotten gratitude from it. (I1)

Kyllä joo -- millai mä ite koen erottuvani, on siis ku mä oon myös mä urheilen, niin tavallaa se, että mä pystyn tuoma vähä niinku omia tavallaa saavutuksia ja muita esiin, mikä tuo ehkä, erottaa monesta muusta. Et tavallaa et se että on ite tavoitteellinen. (H3)

Yes -- how I see myself standing out, is that I do sports myself, then in a away, I can bring my own achievements and stuff forth, which might bring, separate myself from many others. So basically, that I am myself goal-directed. (I3)

Saa sitä omaa juttuaan tuotua eteenpäin. Itellä ku se on se liikkuvuus ja kehonpainoharjoittelu ni ei kukaan tuu mulle fitness-valmennukseen ku ne tietää et millanen sälli mä oon. (H4)

You can bring forth your own thing. For me it is mobility exercises and bodyweight training, so no one is coming to me for fitness training when they know what kind of dude I am. (I4)

This shows that personal trainers utilize social media to highlight their knowledge and target a focused customer niche, such as athletes or people looking to lose weight. Interviewee one even stated that they do not consider other personal trainers as competitors but feels that all customers are going to find the right personal trainer for their needs. Interviewee four found it important to share their own knowledge on mobility exercises and bodyweight training, in order for a potential customer to discover his services or the need for such training. Sharing free advice on social media was not seen as taking away from customer acquisition, but rather aiding it. Social media, they stated, was a good place to stand out and acquire a customer base.

Interviewee five also stated that since their customer niche consists of overweight and out of shape people, they use social media to stand out from their competitors in the region by sharing transformation pictures of their customers. These personal trainers felt that they could bring forth their expertise through social media to attract potential customers, and customers they themselves wished to train.

Ihmiset katsovat kuvia mielellään ja miettivät, "pitäisikö minunkin ryhtyä...". Kuvista näkyy konkreettisesti treenaukseni tuloksellisuus. (H5)

People like to look at the pictures and think "should I start...". From the pictures you can concretely see the results of my training. (I5)

Interviewee five also stated that other personal trainers in their region do not use the same practice, of sharing transformation pictures, which helps motivate customers to choose their services. To be able to show the results of your work on social media creates credibility and help differentiate from the competitors.

In general, interviewee two found social media to be a factor in competing with others in the region. They stated that social media enables creating a "hype" about their business, an image that it is something special.

Joo tottakai, no siis. Jos nyt miettii vaikka tätä sali-hommaa ni mun onneks ykskää paikkakunnan (paikkakunnan nimi poistettu) sali ei niinku osaa somettaa, tai siis niillon ihan onnetonta se, niinku se et ei ei hirveesti ei tarvii yrittää et sieltä erottuu. (H2)

Yeah of course, well. If you think about this gym thing, to my luck none of the gyms in the region (name of the city deleted) know how to use social media, or it is hopeless, so that, that you don't have to try hard to stand out from there. (I2)

The inability of others in the region, in utilizing social media was recognized also by interviewee five in sharing transformation pictures. Interviewee two also stressed keeping content versatile and stated that if you can stand out through social media, you can compete and win those, who through their skills or services outperform you. This is an interesting statement about the power of social media: the ability to succeed in competition with other superior to your offering by gaining visibility through social media.

Interviewee three also stated the importance of social media in the personal training industry.

Et kyllä koen niinku tärkeeks. Sanotaa, et tällä alalla on hirveen tärkeä, että näkyy ja kuuluu ja koska kilpailu on kovaa, se on että et ketkä erottuu, se ratkasee vaan aika paljon ja edukseen mielellää tietysti. (H3)

I feel it is important. Let's say, that in this industry, it is really important to be seen and heard and because the competition is tough, it is that who can stand out, it comes down to it a lot and hopefully in your favor of course. (I3)

Social media is a cheap, or even free, way of standing out from the competitors, creating and image and raising brand awareness for personal trainers. The ability to stand out from the competitors, and create a name for your image, becomes increasingly important as the competition gets more intensive.

7.3 Profitability and Social Media

In the interviews, the personal trainers were asked to estimate the amount of income, new customers and other, they received from social media. The interviewees in this study varied from working as a sole proprietor, working at a gym as a personal trainer to owning their own small corporation. Out of the nine interviewees, one stated that 30% of their income came from social media marketing, while four estimated it to be around 50%. Two of the interviewees also provided online personal training services, with one stating that a 100% of those customers derived from social media marketing. Two of the interviewees stated promoting partnerships on social media: one getting the partnership brand's products from these sponsorships as compensation and the other getting paid for the promotional efforts. None of the interviewees stated having no income from social media marketing, but none also were getting paid directly from their social media channels, for example Google AdSense -programs available for creators on YouTube. For all of the personal trainers, social media was responsible for a part of their monthly and annual sales.

Social media can also be a career for creators, and two of the interviewees wished to gain revenue through social media platforms in the future. Interviewee three viewed their blog as the most important of the social media platforms in use and wished to gain revenue from that in the future. Interviewee eight also planned on starting their own YouTube -channel to expand their place of business nationally through making videos available for anyone to watch. When you have a social media presence, and gain revenue through this, when, for example, moving, you will not have to acquire a new customer base in the new city. One of the positive sides to social media is, that it can be managed and maintained from anywhere, a benefit in the personal training industry. This shows that the personal trainers in question see a future potential for utilizing social media further in their career. Furthermore, as stated before, all of the interviewees saw an increase in using social media in the future. As previous studies have mentioned, social media is not considered a passing trend, and entrepreneurs rely on using it in the future. Utilizing social media in an efficient way to increase sales, visibility and to develop brand identity will become an even larger part of a personal trainer's career.

The efforts of following the number of customers social media generates was varied among the study subjects. As stated above, all of the interviewees had a general idea of the percentage of customers and income deriving from social media, but only one stated that they ask every customer where they found their services from.

Seuraan (kuinka suuri osa tulonlähteistä tulee somesta). Kysyn jokaiselta asiakkaalta, kuinka hän "löysi" minut. En ole pitänyt tarkempaa kirjaa somen tuottavuudesta, mutta minulla on selkeä käsitys, miten paljon sen innoittamana tulee asiakkaita. (H5)

I follow it (the amount of income deriving from social media). I ask every customer how they "found" me. I haven't kept a closer record of the profitability of social media, but I have a clear idea of how many customers comes through it. (I5)

Others did not vigorously follow, where customers have discovered them from. Interviewee one stated, that they do follow where the customers found them from but were not able to do so in precisely. Interviewee four said that they don't follow the amount of views and clicks generated by every post but do it once in a while. When they had acquired a customer, through the person discovering them on social media and liking their page, the platform in question was Facebook, a platform preferred by seven of the nine interviewees in customer acquisition.

In the interviews, the personal trainers were asked about the amount of funds spent on social media, for example for paid advertisements on Facebook, to get general idea of the size of monetary investments made. Social media is free to use, for anyone, but paid advertisements offer a possibility to make a post visible to users, that are not familiar with the organization before. Eight out of the nine interviewees stated that they have invested money in social media, with interviewee eight saying they personally have not done so, but as they work at a gym, the advertisements are paid for by the employer. Interviewee eight stated that they still have noticed that unless you pay for the advertisement, it will not spread well among users.

The amount of money the interviewees had spent on social media, all of them on paid advertisements on Facebook, varied between 20 to 40 euros a month. Interviewee two, three, five, and six stated that they have tried the paid advertorials, and are not using them anymore, or use them very occasionally, while interviewees four and seven spent money on social media adverts on a monthly basis. Both personal trainers felt that the amount spent was justified through the created visibility and customer acquisition and didn't see it as too large of an expense. Interviewee three also mentioned an initial investment cost in setting up a website, and purchasing a domain, which cost around a hundred euros. Having a blog on their own website, made it seem more professional, and justified the cost of the domain and web page maintenance. Altogether, investing in social media was seen as justifiable.

Interviewee six saw investing in Google-advertisements as more profitable than investing in social media platform adverts.

Ehoton ykkönen, mist ne asiakkaat tulee, on Google-markkinointi, eli sinne vaa pitää syynää rahaa, eli Google on varmaan tällä hetkel se kovin, mistä ne asiakkaat tulee loppupeleissä. Sen jälkeen ehkä suusta suuhun ja sit vaan ehkä ne somet. Et oikeesti se some ei oo niin isossa määrässä siinä, mistä ne asiakkaat tulee. -- Siihen vois laskee, että, mitä se on, 130e kuussa, ni että paljon se on vuodessa, kyllähän sinne rahaa oikeesti menee. -- Kyl mä joo, koska sielt on tullu kuitenkin nii paljo asiakkaita. Et se

jos mä maksan siit vaik 130e kuussa, ja mä saan jo yhen asiakkaan, ni se kannattaa. (H6)

Unconditional number one, where the customers come from, is Google -marketing, so you have to put money there, so Google is at the moment probably the best, where the customers come from in the end. After that, maybe word-of-mouth, and then maybe the social medias. Really, social media is not in such a big role on where the customers come from. -- There could be calculated that, what is it, 130€ a month, so what is it a month, it does take money, really. -- Yes I do (see Google adverts as profitable), because a lot of customers have come through there. So, if I pay for it for example 130€ a month, and get one customer, it's already worth it. (I6)

Interviewee six was the only one, who focused their spending on Google search engine optimization and Google advertisements, rather than those in social media, and generated the most customers through this.

All of the nine interviewees in the study saw social media as a profitable investment. The most common theme in considering social media as an investment, and profitability of this investment, was the favorability of the amount of time and money put in, and the return received. Five study subjects stated that with little money and effort, the number of customers acquired, and the visibility achieved makes social media a profitable investment. The reach of social media, together with being a free, or inexpensive, way of marketing services to consumers, was seen as a possibility and as a perk of using different platforms in promotional efforts.

Nään ehdottomasti, tietenki sen, et sä et maksa siitä mitään, niin nimenomaan sehän on silloin ilmaista, eli se et kuinka paljon maksaa johonki lehteen laittaa joku sivun mainos, hyvä ettei maksa jotain tonni, jos laitat johonki etusivulle jonku kuvan ni se on aika kallista, ja kuinka moni loppujen lopuksi sen mainoksen tulee näkemäänkää niin sitä ei tiedä. (H8)

I definitely see it as such (social media as a profitable investment), of course the thing, that you pay almost nothing, so it means that it is free, the amount you would pay to have a page advert on a paper, it can pay almost a grand, if you want it on the cover with a picture, it is expensive and how many people in the end even see it, I don't know. (I8)

Kyl mä nään. Se on niin suures näkyvyydes, et jos ei yrittäjällä oo kuitenkaa näkyvyyttä siel somessa, et ei vaik oo noita some-kanavii, ni jos mietin ite, et mä olisin vaikka valitsemas jotain palvelua ja käy kyylää vaikka kokemuksia ja niitten somee ja jos niil ei oo somee, ni mä en todennäkösesti mee sinne, koska se ois vähän epäilyttävää. Ni kyl mä silti nään et se aika ja kamerat ja tarvikkeet on sen somen arvosia kuitenkin. Koska sil on niin suuri vaikutus kuitenkin ihmisiin nykypäivänä. (H6)

Yes, I see it that way (social media as a profitable investment). It is in such a wide visibility, so if an entrepreneur doesn't have a presence on social media, that they don't use any social media platforms, if I think for myself that I was choosing a service and go look up experience and they don't have social media, most likely I wouldn't go there, because it would be suspicious. So I see that the cameras and equipment is worth being on social media. Because it has a big impact on people nowadays. (I6)

As seen in the first quote, when compared to the cost of traditional media, social media is less expensive, or even free to use for an organization. The ability to track how many people have seen your adverts is also a benefit of social media, in comparison to the traditional newspaper mentioned by interviewee eight. With traditional media, you cannot know exactly how many people see and pay attention to your advertisement, if they like it etc., when in turn in social media, you can see how many people saw your post through your page, how many saw it through a paid advert -program on other pages, and how many people like/comment on the post. Interviewee seven also stated that compared to the effort put in daily and weekly, social media does not require a lot, and with the return received, the efficiency is extensive. Interviewee four also stated that social media is such a big phenomenon in today's business world, that social media investment is profitable.

Interviewee five also stated that social media is a profitable investment but saw the actual practice of social media usage as supporting the other main marketing efforts.

Kyllä. Vähällä rahallisella panostuksella aina joku tarttuu täkyyn. Mutta edelleenkin näen sosiaalisen median muuta markkinointia tukevana kanavana. Parhaiten ainakin pienellä paikkakunnalla toimivat puskaradio (ihmiset suosittelevat), ilmainen näkyvyys (paikallislehti tekee jutun), suoramainoskampanja (esite jaettuna kotitalouksille), kokosivun ilmoitus paikallislehdessä, Google Adwords -kampanjat sekä ihan tavalliset kotisivut, jotka löytyvät helposti Google-haulla. (H5)

Yes. With little monetary investment, someone always takes the bate. But still, I see social media as supporting the other marketing efforts. What works best, at least in a small town, is word-of-mouth (people recommending), free visibility (a story by a local magazine), advertising campaign (handing brochures to households), a full-page advertisement in the local paper, Google Adwords -campaigns, and ordinary websites, that are easily discovered through Google search. (I5)

Interviewee five and interviewee eight had different points of views on the profitability of traditional media. Interviewee eight saw this as an inefficient way of advertising, while interviewee five preferred traditional media in marketing efforts and saw social media as supporting this style of marketing. As stated in the quote, interviewee five works in a small town, that might explain the difference in the preferred platform use.

Interviewee six also mentioned, that personally they wouldn't hire a personal trainer, who does not have a social media presence. Being able to compare services and see other consumers' experiences with the service provider was seen as bringing credibility to a personal trainer. As mentioned in the theoretical background of this study, companies are almost expected to have an online presence. Interviewee six stated that without this, they would find the personal trainer unreliable.

The personal trainers interviewed for this study invested in social media, because they saw a benefit in it, while also stating that an online presence is expected of a personal trainer today. The results of this study support the previous studies done in the subject, which state that most organizations do invest in social media through gaining a benefit from it, while others are scared not to. This also shows that the possible risks associated with a social media presence are worth taking.

The learning required in order to use social media in an organization, was realized by two interviewees. Interviewee one stated that social media efforts are still in the training state in the corporate world, but they believe that they bring benefits and

visibility to personal trainers, when learned the proper way of utilizing platforms in marketing efforts. They also viewed that the profitability of social media, Facebook advertisement, can be increased if the personal trainer has funds to invest in the paid advertisements. The ability to be able to specify the focus of the advert was seen as the key in acquiring customers. Interviewee three also stated that they have researched how to profit from social media using little funds.

Joo, toki, toki. Toi on paljo opiskellu et miten pystyy vähän niinku tietyllä tavalla vähällä rahalla saada sitä näkyvyyttä, kaikkea hakukoneoptimointia on tullu täs syksyn aikana treenattua ja niin edelleen et millä mä pystyn saamaa sitä liikennettä maksamatta mitää, mutta olisin periaattees valmis joo (maksamaa). Esim. ei mua haitannu maksaa niist nettisivuista, se oli vaa et totta kai maksan niinku. (H3)

Yes, sure, sure (social media is a profitable investment). That (themselves) has studied a lot, how to, in a way, with little money, get the visibility, everything, like search engine optimization, I have practiced during this Fall, and further on, how I can acquire traffic without paying anything, but in principle I would be ready to (pay). For example, it didn't bother me to pay for the website, it was just like, of course I will. (I3)

Social media practices were seen to have a learning curve to acquire the knowledge needed to gain benefits with small investments of funds. Features of social media platforms, for example hashtags on Instagram, were mentioned to be unclear in regard to how to utilize them to gain visibility and reach consumers that weren't familiar with the personal trainer beforehand. Nair (2011) encourages organizations to transform and consider the needed change in order to achieve a successful social media strategy. Practices stated by interviewee three can be seen as an effort to try and optimize social media usage to gain benefits and execute a successful social media strategy to gain profitability.

Interviewee two stressed social media to be enjoyable, with interviewee eight agreeing that it has always come natural to them. The most time out of all the platforms the interviewee two spent on YouTube videos. He saw social media as profitable, even though making the videos can be time consuming. YouTube was considered more of a hobby, even though promotional efforts, such as seeing the place where the personal trainer was training, and seeing the actual practice of training in motion, were happening through the YouTube -videos. They did not see the necessity of calculating the hours spent on this platform, since it was viewed pleasurable.

Even though actual return on investment calculations will not be presented in this thesis due to its qualitative nature, interviewee four provided a concrete example of a single Facebook advertise campaign acquiring one customer. The investment needed to share advert on defined geographical regions and pages was 2€. The customer acquired through this campaign was worth 670€. With the traditional return on investment formula presented in chapter 5.4., a traditional ROI could be calculated for this campaign. This calculation method, however is not supported by the previous studies presented in the chapter. The traditional ROI-formula does not take into account the length of the investment. Moreover, it does not consider variables, such as the content of the post and the time of the post being uploaded, making it a poor tool in evaluating different social media campaigns. As stated before, the purpose of this study was not to present concrete calculation of ROIs, but the discuss how the profitability of social

media investment was viewed among the personal trainers. The concrete example of the campaign shows the favorable ratio of the investment and the gain.

Showing the lack of knowledge in the actual calculation method for the profitability of social media, interviewee two said that they would like to follow the profitability more closely, if there, for example, was an app to make the practice easier. This shows the need for more structured tools for organization to use in the measuring this aspect of social media. Following the profitability of social media was done through the amount of people viewing the posts and the number of customers acquired, but none of the interviewees stated to having calculated actual profitability measures. In the financial aspect of the balanced scorecard, Nair (2011) stresses the importance of timely and accurate financial data. This brings forth a need for such calculations to justify social media practices and investments in the future. Interviewees did not have specific ways of calculating financial data for social media, but with the predicted rise in social media practices, such tools would be valuable in the future.

Social media was not valued as a monetary expense, but rather a strategic implementation of competence. When asked about the amount of funds spent on social media, most of the interviewees did not know the exact amount spent, but rather looked at the investment from the perspective of gained visibility and customers. The results show that social media was thought of as a strategic tool with profitability possibilities and growth potential in the future. The investments needed for social media activities were small-scaled for personal trainers, not prominent to raise the need to calculate value up-front. However, as the amount of utilizing social media increases, the need for such calculations to justify the amount of time and money spent, may surface.

In the interviews, the personal trainers were asked whether they try to affect the profitability of their social media efforts in any ways. Interviewee eight mentioned that they monitor the time, when they publish anything on social media platforms. They publish posts during times, when they expect most consumers will see the post. For example, publishing material at night time was not seen as sensible, since fewer consumers will see the post, and the reach of it will not be as great. Interviewee eight also stressed the importance of good quality videos, locations and appearing positive, and smiling, to generate pleasurable content for consumers. Interviewee seven stated that they ask consumers' opinions on what they wish to read about.

No lähinnä kysyn ihmisten mielipiteitä, itselle tärkeiltä ihmisiltä kysyn mitä ne iteki haluis kuulla ja seurata somen välityksellä. Esimerkiks minkälaisia päivityksiä ja muuta ni vähän sitäki kautta mietin sitä ja seuraan tottakai minkä tyyppiset päivitykset saa eniten seuraajia jne, mistäki pystyy analysoimaan mikä ihmisiä kiinnostaa. (H7)

Well, mostly I ask people's' opinions, people important to me, I ask them what they themselves would like to hear and follow through social media. For example, what kind of posts and other, so through that I think about it and follow of course what kind of posts acquires most followers etc., where I can analyze what people are interested in. (I7)

They viewed profitability, and affecting it, through gaining the most followers, and likes possible for a post. Through more followers, the reach of each post is wider, which naturally may result in potential customers. Modifying posts to serve this purpose, and to satisfy the needs of consumers, was seen as valuable. Writing about subjects that

people are interested in serves as a good way to grow your following on social media. As stated in the theoretical background of the study, Nair (2011) also encouraged organizations to consider what the organization is bringing to the consumer and who these consumers are. Modifying content to better meet the need and want of consumers online can be considered also as a strategic practice, alongside of trying to affect the profitability of social media. In the customer section of the balanced scorecard, customer satisfaction is stressed and since customers are moving to social media, creating content for the consumers is necessary. With the increasing competition in the industry, if personal trainers' social media efforts do not match the idea or need that the customer has, it is easy to take the business to a competitor.

The value of different content was also recognized by interviewee one, five and nine. Interviewee five saw that "transformation pictures", pictures showcasing the change in a customer, achieved through training and nutrition, was liked by 20% of her following. Interviewee one said that they try to write shorter blog posts to acquire more readers.

Mutta sen mä oon huomannu, henkilökohtasesti teen aika lyhkäsiä, ku mulla on siis niinku nettisivuilla blogi, ni mä teen tosi lyhkäsiä blogi-tekstejä. Ihmiset ei jaksa lukee pitkiä. Ja mä huomaan ite sen, et jos on pitkä blogi teksti, mä en lue niitä. Sit se on rivi sieltä, rivi tuolta, mä rullaan sitä ja sit mä luen sieltä vaan. Et jos on niinku tosi hyvin tiivistetty se asia, joku lyhyt juttu, ni mä luen ite henkilökohtasesti enemmän niitä, kun semmosia oikeesti pitkiä. (H1)

But that I have noticed, personally I make rather short (blog posts), I have a blog on my website, so I make really short blog posts. People will not read long ones. And I notice it myself, if there is a really long post, I will not read them. Then it is line here and line there, I scroll through and read from here and there. So if it is a really well summarized thing, a short post, then I personally read more of them, than actually long ones. (I1)

Interviewee one referred to consumers' shortened attention span and reflected on what they themselves would read in a blog post. Summarizing content will get more readers, when the amount of time spent on reading the post is not as long. Interviewee nine stated that a post where they were doing a headstand, in promotion of a "basic fitness class" spread widely and boosted the advertisement. They also stated that they attempt to post material that will interest consumers.

Interviewee nine, who works at a gym, also stated that using professional marketing firms to create content was not seen as necessary for them. Posting self-created content, rather than costly ready-made content, was also a factor in cutting costs and making the social media investment more profitable and the time spent on the platform short.

Three of the interviewees saw hosting raffles on their social media platforms as boosting the profitability of them through acquiring followers. Interviewee four hosts raffles with the products gotten through brand deals in order to gain more followers. Interviewee eight also stated that they gained a thousand new followers in a short time span, through a raffle on their Facebook-page. Through gaining a larger following, the content shared on a page will reach a larger group of consumers organically, without having to pay for advertorials.

Altogether the interviewees stated that social media provides a cheap, or even free, platform to promote their services and generate a brand around themselves.

Interviewee three saw their blog as bringing together and supporting their business by providing knowledge about themselves as a personal trainer while promoting their services. The more they have expanded their business, the more they also have acquired acquisitions and customers through social media. Interviewee two also relied on their social media following in expanding their business and believed that it would result in profitability.

Ku saa nimee vähä esille, ni kyl sit niit asiakkaita tulee. (H2)

When you get your name on display, the customers will come. (I2)

The challenge was creating the initial following, but again, interviewee two stated that it came naturally, with time. Interviewee six also stressed the simplicity of sharing information through social media, and the ability of that information to reach a large consumer base. Social media provides a free platform for promotional efforts, and branding, for entrepreneurs, who might not be able to compete with larger service providers, such as gyms, and a chance to brand themselves. This is an important factor in the personal training industry, as the personal trainer themselves are the business brand.

Figure 1. illustrates the main themes emerged in the study. Social media was examined through different perspectives determined by the research questions set: the role of social media in strategy, social media and competitive advantage and social media as an investment. A common theme emerged from all viewpoints: the importance of social media in today's business world.

Social media was described to play important role in achieving both short and long-term goals. The reach of social media and the visibility it can offer were noted as one of its best sides considering goal achieving. Interviewees also emphasized the negative aspect of social media as the information put on social media cannot be controlled and the amount of misleading information posted is remarkable.

When interviewees were asked about how they used social media to gain competitive advantage against competitors, two themes came up: personality and specialized knowledge and expertise, with bringing forth one's personality being the number one method.

Social media was also seen as a profitable investment by all interviewees. That was mainly because the ratio of time and money and income was seen lucrative.

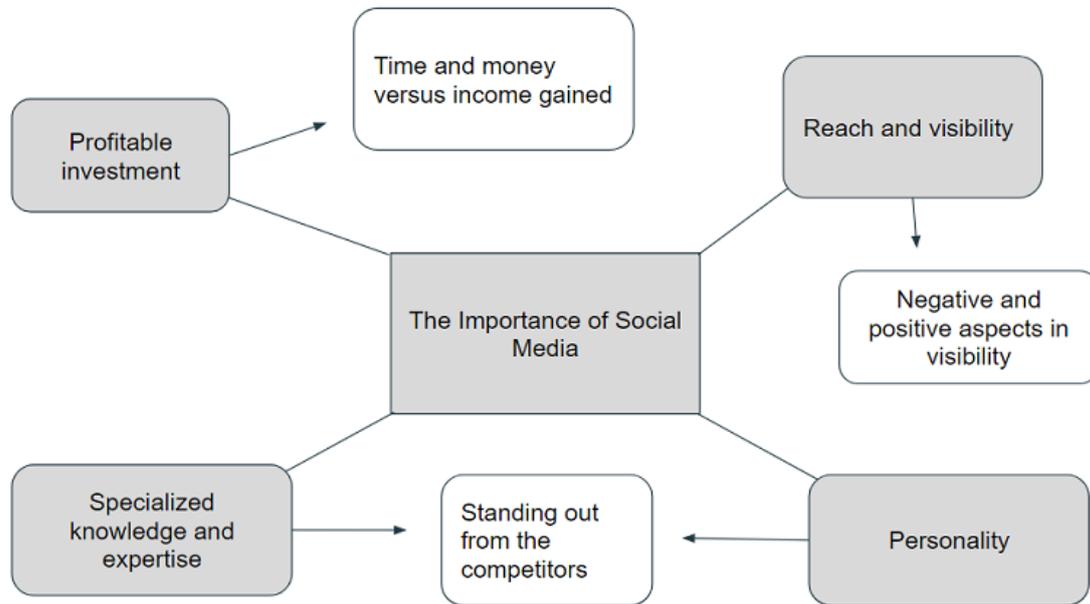


Figure 1. The Main Themes of The Study

8 CONCLUSION

8.1 Theoretical Contributions

In the last chapter, the results of the study will be discussed and interpreted under theoretical contributions. This chapter also includes evaluation and limitations of the research and provides suggestions for further research. The purpose of this study was to find out how personal trainers in Finland view the role of social media in an organization's strategy, whether social media is used to gain advantage over competitors and how the profitability of social media was viewed. This was achieved through semi-structured interviews, focusing on the issues, letting the personal trainers speak from their own experiences and viewpoints. The results of the study confirm many of the findings in previous studies, i.e. the importance, and expectancy, of visibility on social media, the ability to use social media as a competitive tool in separating from others in the industry, and that social media is viewed as a profitable investment, even if concrete calculations, or tools for evaluation, are not being used.

RQ1: What kind of a role does social media play in the strategy of an entrepreneur in the personal training industry?

All interviewees reported using social media in their work. Only one interviewee mentioned that their business goals would be fully achievable without social media. Social media was strongly involved in the pursuit of goals for eight of the interviewees. Each interviewee's goals, both short and long term, were related to business growth, awareness raising, and customer acquisition.

None of the interviewees mentioned any thoughts on a separate strategy for social media, but eight interviewees said it was an important tool for achieving their business goals. Three of the interviewees stated social media being extremely important for them. Social media was considered a useful tool in achieving every major goal mentioned by the interviewees; to increase business growth and customer acquisition, as well as, increase awareness and visibility. The main reason why social media was considered as a helpful tool for achieving goals was, that through social media trainers could relatively easily and quickly reach a large number of people and potential customers. All interviewees, however, noted that the challenge with social media is the multitude of

vague information that is posted, and that the spread of information cannot be controlled. Information in social media, in turn, has its effects on consumer buying behavior.

All in all, social media was considered an important or very important in the process of reaching business goals. The interviewees agreed that social media will play an increasingly important role in the future, as the use of social media itself will increase and people's interest in well-being and training will not be decreasing in near future. Even though the interviewees emphasized the important role of social media, it became obvious that social media could still be utilized in more efficient way. Two of the interviewees did not really know how to use Instagram and the variety between different social media channels remained rather small since only one of the interviewees used Snapchat and Facebook was the only platform used by all the interviewees.

RQ2: Is social media used to gain a competitive advantage?

Social media was used to gain a competitive advantage through bringing forth one's personality and highlighting personal trainer's specialized knowledge and expertise. The content posted on social media by personal trainers was considered similar, but the above mentioned two aspects as a way to stand out among similar information being posted by most.

Six out of the nine interviewees highlighted the importance of showing your personality through social media, while two interviewees stated highlighting their specialized knowledge to stand out. Four personal trainers focused social media to their own customer niche, modifying content to reach this group.

Unlike previous research on the issue, none of the personal trainers stated using their own appearance and trained bodies to market their expertise. Two interviewees even specified that they saw this practice as superficial and avoided posting pictures in this manner.

RQ3: In terms of performance, is social media seen as a profitable investment?

For all the interviewees in the study, social media was responsible for some of their monthly income, whether it was through their own promotional efforts, or through those made by their employer. Five out of the nine interviewees stated investing funds in social media, with the amount varying from 20 euros to 40 euros monthly. This investment was responsible for 30% of income for one personal trainer and 50% for the remaining four. However, only one personal trainer out of the nine stated that they knew precisely where all their customers discovered them from. The most common investment made in social media was paid advertisement on Facebook. Two of the interviewees also wanted to gain revenue directly from their social media channels.

All the interviewees viewed social media as a profitable investment. The most common positive aspect was the favorability of time and money spent versus the income gained. All the interviewees also agreed that a social media presence is required of personal trainers. The visibility and reach of social media was also valued. Only one interviewee stated that their goals would be achievable without social media, while one said that they believed in their social media following when expanding their business and making a sizable investment.

This shows that social media is becoming an increasingly important part of a personal trainers' occupation. Social media presence is expected by consumers, and personal trainers realize this. The results in this study support previous research done on the issue, stating that social media presence is expected of organizations. While many organizations invest in social media because they see a benefit in it, some organizations still invest in it, because they are scared not to. As with the interviewees in this study, all saw social media as a necessity, but at this stage, the amount spent, and the profitability gained was not vigorously followed, even though investing in it is a common practice.

The learning aspect of social media practices was also realized in this study. In the effort of trying to make social media platforms as efficient and profitable as possible, two interviewees stated that this needs practice. As stated in the previous studies, social media is still somewhat unaccustomed tool in the use of organizations.

The views on social media as an investment showed, that the personal trainers thought of it more as a strategic, than as an accounting, tool. Even though it was responsible for a part of their monthly income, most did not use any accounting practices to calculate for the profitability of it.

Four of the interviewees tried to affect the profitability of their social media practices through modifying their posts, following the trends and interests of consumers and posting at times when the post will get the most views. The previous studies suggested these practices to organizations in guiding them to social media. Being present in the conversation online has been seen as important and through this gaining awareness in consumer preferences and demand.

The need for differentiation, standing out from your competitors, was one of the main themes when describing the social media use of the personal trainers. Porter (1996) emphasized the importance of differentiation that can be preserved. Delivering unique value through operating with different set of activities compared to rivals, the core of competitive strategy stated by Porter (1996), was realized through the personal trainers bringing forth their personalities and values, as well as specialized knowledge, on social media.

Previous studies examining the social media use of organizations found that organizations do not yet know how to utilize the full potential of social media. In this study it was found that this realization applied to personal trainers as well. Hanna et al. (2011) describe how the need for social media presence is realized in organizations, but social media practices lack in efficiency. Many of the personal trainers used social media without considering much whether this use was effective. None of the interviewees stated having actual social media strategies, a plan and goals for the long-term use of social media. At the same time, the importance of social media was predicted to grow. This is contradictory: considering how important social media was stated to be, the amount of planning the use of it was low. A reason for this may be the lack of knowledge on how to utilize social media to serve the organization's strategy, or the required IT skills. Berthon (2012) states that the lack of the required IT skills is a factor in the inefficient use of social media in organizations. Developing a social media strategy to support the strategy of the organization is a way of making the use of different platforms more purposeful. If the personal trainers would develop a clear plan on what they want to achieve through social media, the potential different platforms have, how they want to develop their social media presence and the goal they wish to achieve through this use, the effectiveness of social media use would increase. This may help the entrepreneurs realize the full potential this tool has to offer for their business.

The demand for individualized care, well-being and self-improvement provided by the service industry has increased, along with the competition in the different fields in addition to the personal training industry. As George (2008) states, more people are pursuing careers as life coaches, assistants, image consultants etc., through which they can provide services that people seek to improve their personal lives. The potential social media offers in standing out from the competition and developing an individualized brand, especially in the service industry, is still inefficiently used. The need to separate yourself from the competition will become increasingly important, and social media offers a tool for this practice regardless of the industry.

8.2 Evaluation of Research

The aim of a research is to always execute it without flaws to receive results that are accurate. Taking this into consideration, the validity and reliability of a qualitative research can still vary (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008: 231). The quality in a qualitative interview-based research is found to correlate with the reliability of a study, so the emphasis in the interviews is on the quality of them. According to Hirsjärvi & Hurme, the key to reliable research data is to construct the interview form in advance and familiarize yourself with it to better be able to control the conversation. The transcribing of the study should be done soon after the interview, when the occurrence is still fresh in one's memory. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008: 184-185.)

Reliability and validity can be difficult terms to use, when describing a qualitative study. To better ensure this in the thesis, the empirical process was described in depth. Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2008: 232) state that the key to describing the validity and reliability in a qualitative study is to openly and truthfully discuss the choosing of the study subjects and the gathering of data, as well as the way the data was interpreted into the results. The analysis of this study was presented in English, while the data gathered from the interviews was in Finnish, shows a possibility of undermining the reliability of the study due to the risk of the meaning of the original data being transmitted to the reader unauthentically. To reduce this risk, the content of the quotes is described in depth in the study, while also providing the corresponding quotes in their original language, Finnish. The challenge of interpretation is still present due to the qualitative nature of this study, and the thematic analysis of the data: other researchers might not interpret the data in a similar way as it was done in this study.

8.3 Research Limitations

As this was an independent study, it has limitations in scope and depth. As a qualitative research method was used, the sample size of the study was nine, leaving room for a larger scope of interviewees. The sample size served the purpose of the study, as it was the first of its kind executed in Finland in the personal training industry, however it is not sufficient enough to support larger scale generalization of the results.

Acquiring the interviewees for the study was, at times, difficult, with the beginning of the year being a busy time for personal trainers. The subjects were chosen

according to existing connections and the personal trainers contacted, and available for the study. The interviewees, however, presented different social media followings and where from different regions in Finland improving this limitation aspect.

As the data collection was through semi-structured interviews executed in Finnish, the translation process of the quotes presented in the study was done to the best ability of the writers, however, as with any translation, some might interpret the quotations in a different manner. To limit the risk of miss interpretations, the quotes were also provided in their original language, above the translated versions.

8.4 Suggestions for Further Research

This study presented a need for more tools for entrepreneur to use in the profitability calculation of social media. All interviewees saw social media as necessary, and most having invested funds in social media marketing, none had concrete profitability calculations, or knowledge on how these calculations would be done. With further research, it would be possible to develop calculation tools for organizations utilizing social media and looking to justify the investments made.

A few interviewees saw a learning process to utilizing social media in their organization. It would be interesting to follow the learning of using social media, and how the practice develops over time and whether social media becomes an increasing part of the organization's strategy through learning.

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APPENDIX

Interview Questions: Original Finnish

- Kukaan muu kuin me ei tiedä, mitä kukin haastateltava on haastatteluissa sanonut. Vastaukset esitetään tutkimuksessa niin, ettei niistä voi tunnistaa haastateltavaa henkilöä.
- Haastattelut nauhoitetaan auttamaan datan analysoinnissa, mutta haastattelunauhut jäävät vain meille.
- Tutkimus on julkinen.
- Mikäli et halua tai et osaa vastata johonkin kysymykseen tai sen osaan, voit ohittaa sen.
- Vastaa mahdollisimman avoimesti omien kokemuksiesi perusteella ja käytä kaikki tarvitsemasi aika.

Taustatiedot

- Ikä?
- Kauanko olet ollut alalla?
- Missä olet kouluttautunut? Milloin?
- Nykyinen yritysmuotosi?
- Missä olet töissä?

Sosiaalisen median rooli yrittäjän strategiassa

- Millaisia tavoitteita olet asettanut liiketoiminnalle lyhyellä aikavälillä?
 - Entä pitkällä aikavälillä?
- Miten/millaisin keinoin pyrit tavoitteisiisi?
- Kuvaile sosiaalisen median käyttöä yritystoiminnassasi
 - Mitä sosiaalisen median kanavia käytät
 - Miksi?
 - Minkä miellät parhaimmaksi ja miksi?
- Kuvaile sosiaalisen median merkitystä tavoitteiden saavuttamisessa

Käytetäänkö sosiaalista mediaa kilpailuedun saavuttamiseksi?

- Kuvaile sosiaalisen median hyviä ja huonoja puolia
 - Haasteet, riskit, mahdollisuudet ja vahvuudet
- Pyritkö erottautumaan kilpailijoista sosiaalisen median avulla?
 - Miten?

Sosiaalinen media sijoituksena

- Seuraatko, kuinka suuri osa tulonlähteistä on tullut sosiaalisen median kautta?
 - Seuraatko esimerkiksi kuinka paljon Instagram postaus tuo asiakkaita?
- Miten mittaisit/mittaatko sosiaalisen median tuottavuutta?
 - Oletko pitänyt tarkempaa kirjaa/eritellyt sosiaalisen median tuloja?

- Miten?
- Miksi et?
- Miten yrität vaikuttaa sosiaalisen median tuottavuuteen?
- Kuinka paljon (rahaa) olet sijoittanut sosiaaliseen mediaan keskimäärin?
 - Minne kanaviin/mihin tarkoitukseen?
- Näetkö sosiaalisen median kannattavana sijoituksena?
 - Miksi?

Interview Questions: Translated Version

- No-one, besides us, knows what the interviewee said during the interview. The results will be expressed in a way, that the interviewee will not be recognizable from them.
- The interview will be recorded to help with the analyzation of the data, but the recordings will stay with us.
- This study is public.
- If you wish not to answer, or cannot answer, a question, or a part of a question, you can skip it.
- Answer as openly as possible based on your own experiences and use all the time you need.

Background Questions

- Age?
- How long have you worked in the industry?
- Where and when did you get your personal trainer licencing?
- What is your current legal company form?
- Where are you employed currently?

The Role of Social Media as a Part of the Business Strategy

- What short-term goals have you set for your business?
 - What long-term goals have you set?
- Describe the ways of reaching these set goals
- Describe the use of social media in your work
 - What social media platforms do you use?
 - Why have you chosen these platforms?
 - What do you consider to be the best platform and why?
- Describe the importance of social media in reaching your business goals

Using Social Media to Gain a Competitive Advantage

- Describe pros and cons of social media
 - Challenges, risks, strengths and weaknesses
- Do you aim to differentiate yourself from your competition through social media?
 - How?

Profitability of Social Media

- Do you follow what portion of your income is generated through social media?
 - For example, do your follow how many customers are gained through an Instagram post?
- Do you measure/how would you measure the profitability of social media?
 - Have you kept precise records of social media income?
 - How? / Why not?
- How do you aim to affect the profitability of social media?
- How much money have you invested in social media?
 - In which platforms?
 - For which purposes?
- Do you see social media as a profitable investment?

- Why?