



**LUT School of Business and Management**

Bachelor's thesis, Business Administration

International Marketing

**The risks in social media marketing from the Finnish sports clubs' point of view**

**Sosiaalisen median markkinoinnin riskit suomalaisten urheiluseurojen  
näkökulmasta**

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## TIIVISTELMÄ

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Tässä kandidaattitutkielmassa syvennytään tutkimaan sosiaalisen median kasvun luomia riskejä sekä sosiaalisen median markkinoinnin riskejä ylipäätään suomalaisten urheiluseurojen markkinoinnissa. Tavoitteena on tutkia, mitä sosiaalisen median markkinoinnin kasvun mukana tulleita riskejä on olemassa, miten riskit tulisi ottaa huomioon ja miten niihin voi varautua ja miten tulisi toimia, jos riski realisoituu. Tavoitteena on, että tämän tutkimuksen avulla niin pienet, kuin suuretkin urheiluseurat osaisivat tunnistaa mahdollisia riskejä, varautua riskeihin oikein sekä toimia oikealla tavalla riskin realisoituessa.

Tutkimus on toteutettu kvalitatiivisena eli laadullisena tutkimuksena. Aineisto on kerätty haastattelemalla eri urheiluseurojen viestinnässä ja markkinoinnissa työskenteleviä henkilöitä. Kaikki haastattelut on toteutettu puolistrukturoituina haastatteluina, eli haastattelussa kysymykset ovat valmiiksi mietittyjä ja kaikille haastateltaville samoja tai lähes samoja, mutta valmiit vastausvaihtoehdot puuttuvat.

Tutkimuksen pohjalta selvisi, että suomalaiset urheiluseurat ovat jokseenkin tietoisia olemassa olevista riskeistä ja miten niihin tulisi suhtautua. Riskien tunnistaminen ja niihin varautuminen on kuitenkin osittain puutteellista tai jopa olematonta. Riskit tunnistetaan melko hyvin, mutta mitään strategiaa ei ole luotu sosiaalisen median markkinointiin ylipäätään tai riskeihin varautumista ja käsittelyä varten.

## ABSTRACT

<b>Author:</b>	Anton Harju
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This bachelor's thesis studies the risks created by the growth and of social media and risks in general in social media marketing and the research is made from the Finnish sports club's point of view. The aim is to study what risks have formed because of the growth of social media marketing, how these risks should be taken into account and how to prepare for them, and how to act if the risk realizes. The aim is that with the help of this research, both small and large sports clubs would be able to identify potential risks, prepare for the risks correctly and act in the right way if the risk realizes.

The research has been carried out as a qualitative study. The material has been collected by interviewing people working in communication and marketing at various sports clubs. All interviews have been conducted as semi-structured interviews, i.e. the questions in the interview are formed beforehand and they are the same or almost the same for all interviewees, but there are no ready-made answer options.

Based on the research, it became clear that Finnish sports clubs are somewhat aware of the existing risks and how they should be prepared for. However, identifying and preparing for risks is partly deficient or even non-existent. Risks are identified fairly well, but no strategy has been created for social media marketing in general or for risk preparedness and management.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Marketing has been going through some enormous transformations during the last twenty-five years. Some scholars and marketing researchers think that some of the old marketing approaches have become less effective and at the same time, information and communication technologies, such as the internet, have been growing and developing at a fast pace. This has enabled the marketing context to change and the role of the internet and the social media has grown significantly. (Efthymios, 2014, pp. 40-41) As a result of this massive change, you can see that almost every company whose services you use or whose products you buy, is trying to use social media in some way to their advantage. Still a few years ago, companies were not sure about how or why to use social media but now you can say that social media is here, and it is going to stay as a crucial part of companies marketing strategy. (Sisira, 2011, pp. 1-2)

Social media has grown significantly in the last 15 years (Figure 3). Social media has changed the way how people interact and communicate with each other. Many social networking websites, such as Facebook or Instagram, have become very popular and many individuals use them on a daily basis. This has created great opportunity for companies to use social media as an important part of their marketing strategy. Social media platforms are still growing, and social networking is on a rise so you can not ignore the impact of social media in companies marketing. (Rugova & Prenaj, 2016, pp. 85)

Companies have been using social media as a marketing tool for quite a long time. Facebook has been the number one tool in social media marketing but in past years also, for example, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram have become very important social media marketing channels for companies. However, too many companies start using social media as a marketing tool without a proper strategy. That leads to unwanted results and disappointments. With a proper strategy and correctly approached, social media can increase brand awareness and influence consumers' buying decisions. (Husain, Ghufraan & Chaubey, 2016, pp. 1-3) Although social media marketing can have many positive impacts, it can just as easily have a lot of negative impacts. In social media, bad news and experiences get a lot of attention quickly. Also, there are many other risks and important

matters companies' need to notify when creating social media marketing strategy. (Assaad & Gómez, 2011, pp. 20-21)

Like normal businesses, social media has provided sports clubs with a whole new way to make themselves visible. Thus, sports clubs can reach more audiences through various social media channels and can, at best, gain more audience for their events and increase their general awareness. Sports clubs face the same opportunities and risks in social media marketing as normal companies. (Nisar, Prabhakar & Patil, 2018, pp. 8-10) Although that social media brings a lot of good to sports clubs in their marketing, there are several pitfalls that should be avoided when aiming to succeed in social media marketing and creating a positive brand image. Social media has changed the commitment and communication between the club supporters and the sports club, their athletes, and other supporters. Therefore, it is not easy to control the brand of the club and at the same time build an engaging presence with their fan community. (Vale & Fernandes, 2018, pp. 37-38)

It is even very important for companies to examine and consider the various risks in social media marketing. It is safe to say that if these various risks are not taken into account, it cannot be assumed that a company or a sports club could succeed in social media marketing. (Rugova & Prenaj, 2016, pp. 94-95) Even though marketers have realized the potential of social media marketing, a proper strategy for social media marketing has been less often formed. In addition to the fact that companies may not be able to market effectively on different social media platforms and therefore not get the most out of it, companies are also unable to prepare for and respond to various risks when a social media marketing strategy is not in place. (Li, Larimo & Leonidou, 2020, pp. 1-2)

The aim of this study is to examine how the massive changes in marketing have affected the risks companies face when creating their marketing strategy. More specifically, the study focuses on the risk's sports clubs face in their social media marketing and how to avoid them. With the help of this study sport clubs should be able to prepare for the various risks that arise in social media marketing and at best they can avoid them.

## 1.1 Research topic and background

The topic of this research is to examine the risks in social media marketing, how to prepare for them and what to do if the risk realizes. The research emphasizes observations made from the perspective of Finnish sports clubs. In order to be successful in marketing, the risks associated with marketing must also be considered when creating a marketing strategy (Slater, Hult & Olson, 2010, pp. 552). The same goes for social media marketing. To fully understand the risks and challenges in social media marketing, it is very important to understand the role of social media in the context of marketing. (Felix, Rauschnabel & Hinsch, 2017, pp. 118)

## 1.2 Research objectives and research questions

The purpose of this research is to help companies, and sports clubs in particular, prepare for the risks of social media marketing. The growth of social media has changed both the marketing itself and the risks that a company must be prepared for when creating a marketing strategy. The issues are aimed to be solved through these two research questions:

*Q1: What risks are there in social media marketing from the perspective of sports clubs?*

*Q2: How can sports clubs be prepared for the risks and how to operate if the risk realizes?*

These questions address the problem and research can therefore help to design a social media marketing strategy for sports clubs when the risks are known.

## 1.3 Theoretical framework and research limitations

The theoretical framework of the study is constructed according to Figure 1. To understand the topic of research and its origins, one must understand the key terms and changes that have taken place in marketing and the world in general and their consequences, to finally delve into the research itself. Companies can prepare for various risks in marketing by forming a marketing strategy.

In the case of social media marketing, a social media marketing strategy (SMMS) is created and integrated into the company's marketing strategy. In the social media marketing strategy, companies should define the possible risks that arise in social media marketing, how to prepare for them, and how to deal with them if the risks realize. (Li, Larimo & Leonidou, 2020, pp. 1-2) If these various risks are not taken into account, it cannot be assumed that a company could succeed in social media marketing. (Rugova & Prenaj, 2016, pp. 94-95). In addition to the fact that companies may not be able to market effectively on different social media platforms and therefore not get the most out of it, companies are also unable to prepare for and respond to various risks when a social media marketing strategy is not in place. (Li, Larimo & Leonidou, 2020, pp. 1-2)

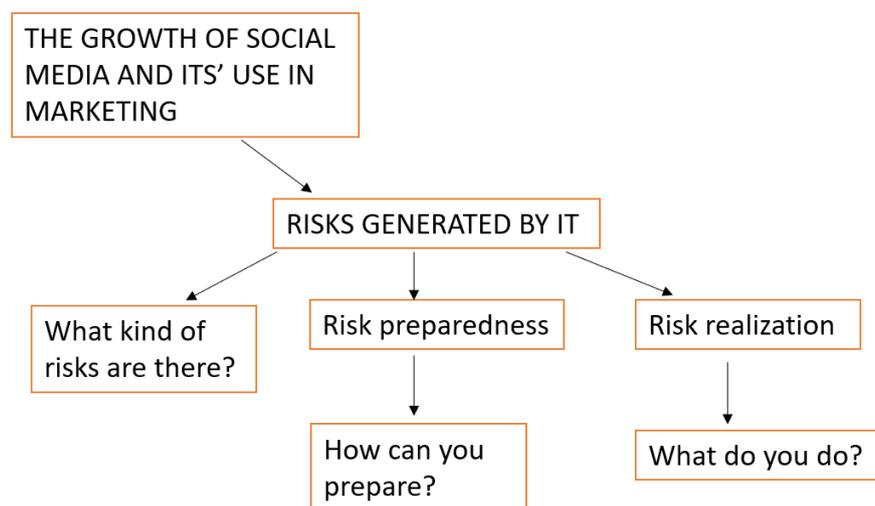


Figure 1. Theoretical framework

As can be seen from Figure 1, the starting point for the study is that the growth of social media has created changes in marketing and the growth as well as the changes brought by it, have created many different risks. The main focus of this research is on what risks exist in social media marketing, how to prepare for those risks, and what happens if risk realizes. These observations are made mainly from Finnish sports clubs' point of view. The research focuses on the perspective of Finnish sports clubs and their relationship with the risks of social media marketing. Because there is not much research available on the subject yet, it is interesting to know how well sports clubs are aware of the risks that social media growth brings to marketing. The research is limited to Finnish sports clubs because the main data

collection method is semi-structured interviews, which would be difficult if not impossible to organize with foreign sports clubs on this schedule.

## 1.4 Key concepts

The key concepts of this research are the following:

**Social media** refers to various sites where a user can create a profile for themselves and network with other users. Social media sites and the apps created from them provide functions that allow the user to, for example, share pictures and videos, users can chat with each other, and they can join various groups that they think are interesting. (Wolf, Sims & Yang, 2018, 3)

**Marketing** refers to the organization's various activities and processes, which are used to create added value for the customer and to communicate better with the customer. Marketing also helps maintain relationships with customers. **Marketing** various measures are also aimed at generating a profit for the company by satisfying the needs of the selected market segment. (Deepak & Jeyakumar, 2019, pp. 1) **Social media marketing** refers to marketing that takes place on social media platforms. The measures to be taken and their purposes are therefore the same as in traditional marketing. (Felix, Rauschnabel & Hinsch, 2015, pp. 2)

The word **risk** can have different meanings for different people and that is why it is good to go through what risk means in this study. (Šotić & Rajić, 2015, pp. 17) The risks addressed in this research have arisen either through the actions of individuals or clubs, or they have arisen through changes that have occurred due to the growth of social media. **Risks** can be defined as effects of uncertainty on objectives (Šotić & Rajić, 2015, pp. 19). That is also what is meant by a **risk** in this research.

## 1.5 Research method

This research is a qualitative research. The purpose of qualitative research is to study the object holistically and to describe real-life as it is (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara, 2009, pp.

161). The study has been carried out as a case study, which is characteristic of qualitative studies (Metsämuuronen, 2006, 92). Case studies have selected a case that has been intentionally selected, usually, the target is a company, organization, or part of an organization (Koskinen, Alasuutari & Peltonen, 2005, pp. 154).

In this study, the material collected about Finnish sports clubs is collected by multiple semi-structured interviews which means that the questions in the interview are formed beforehand and they are the same or almost the same for all interviewees, but there are no ready-made answer options. The flexibility of semi-constructed interviews gives an opportunity to take differences in opinion into consideration (Humphrey & Lee, 2004, pp. 340).

The size of the material collected in the form of interviews is relatively small. Therefore, the material for the study has been collected from various existing studies, literature, and publications. Also, participatory observation with a sports club included in the study can be counted as one of the data collection methods.

## 1.6 Research structure

The structure of the research project is formed as follows: At the beginning of the research report, there is an introduction that aims to provide a brief overview of the topic under study and the study itself. After the introduction, the research report proceeds to the theoretical part, where the key terms are reviewed, and the theoretical framework is formed. To understand what the risks mean in social media marketing, first we have to examine, what is social media and how does it work. The theoretical part thus creates a basis for the empirical part. Even before the empirical part, the report proceeds to the research methodological part. This section clarifies what steps were taken to find empirical as well as theoretical information. After the methodological part, the report proceeds to the results of the study and the analysis of the results. This section is called the empirical part. The empirical section sees how theories behave and function in real-life situations. In the final section of the report, there will be a summary and conclusions about the research. Also, possible further research on the subject is suggested.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the coming paragraphs, social media, its growth, and its role in companies' marketing will be discussed in more detail. In the first paragraph we look a little more closely at what social media really is. This is followed by a paragraph about the growth of social media, followed by a paragraph about social media marketing in general. These are very important steps to examine, because only after all this basic information can we examine social media marketing from the perspective of sports clubs. In the following sections, the information examined is also illustrated by a few different figures and tables.

Future paragraphs will also discuss in more detail about the various risks involved in social media marketing. However, the first step is to examine what really is the definition of risk and what different individuals can define as risks (Šotić & Rajić, 2015, pp. 17). This is important precisely because different individuals' perceptions of risk can vary greatly. This is followed by an examination of the potential risks that may arise in social media marketing. Once you know what risks exist in social media marketing, you can explore how to prepare for them and how you should react if the risk realizes. All the above will be studied both at a general level and from the perspective of Finnish sports clubs.

### 2.1 What is social media?

The term "social media" consists of two separate words "social" and "media". The word "social" refers to networking and interaction with another person, group, or community. The word "media" often refers to advertising or informing through different publications, on different platforms. When these words are put together, different platforms for communication and collaboration are formed. Social media revolves around content and information shared by people. (Hajli, 2015, pp. 343-344)

Social media is a really large and fast-growing network, which at its simplest can be defined as a collection of different websites and applications through which one can network with people as well as companies. In addition to this, information can be shared through social media channels and even very effectively. Some people think that interaction through social

media is not much different from normal interaction with people, except to the extent that interaction through social media takes place online. (Osborne-Gowey, 2014, pp. 55)

Social media comes in many different forms. These include a variety of different Internet forums, blogs, podcasts, pictures, or videos. Social media is also used by people, from a different age, gender, race, or any demographic background. This also helps explain why there are so many different platforms and forms of social media. (Hajli, 2015, pp. 344-347)

There are many different reasons for using social media, clearly the most important of which is, less surprisingly, communicating with family and friends. In addition to this reason, important reasons include seeing the news, watching entertainment, and sharing opinions. One reason we are particularly interested in this study is the interaction with brands, which sports clubs also are. (Figure 2)

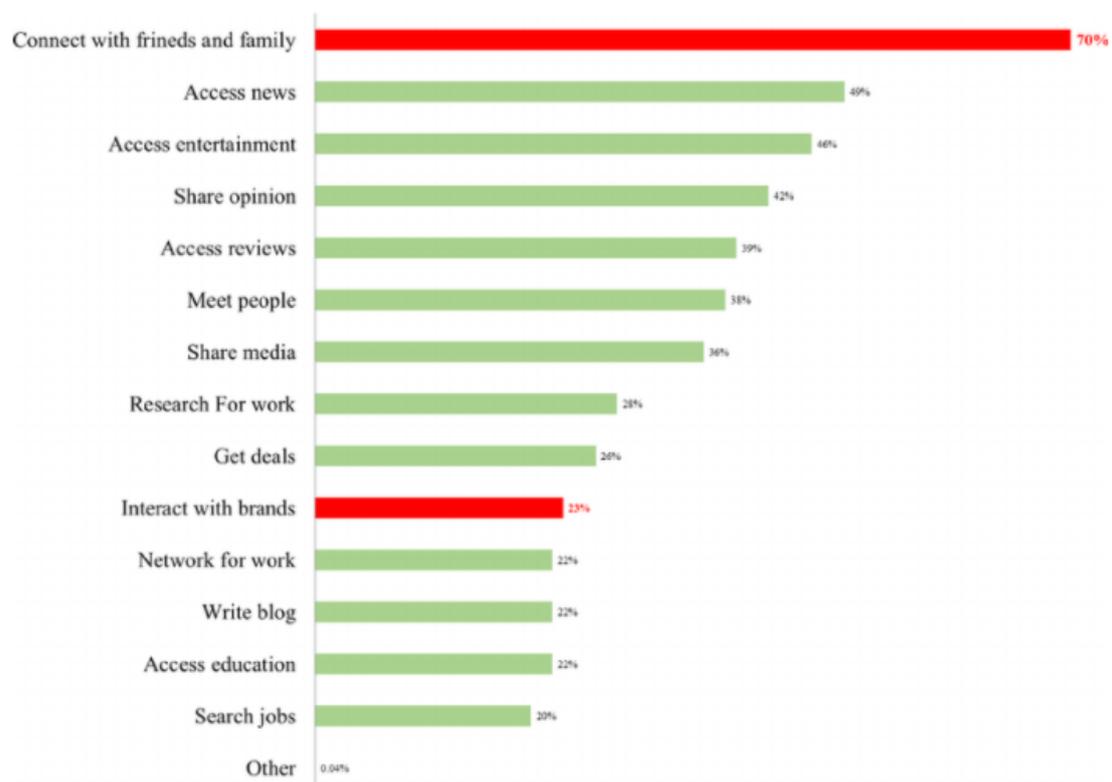


Figure 2. Reasons consumers go to social media or social networking sites.

The reason for the explosive growth of social media is believed to be that the purpose of technology today is more to connect and network people than to connect computers. Social media has also taken the means of marketing and advertising to a whole new level. In traditional media, such as newspapers or billboards, an ad is often created by a professional to have been checked several times and honed to perfection. This has also been an

expensive process. Social media offers everyone a chance to advertise, information is easier to disseminate and the price is a fraction compared to traditional media or at best advertising on social media is free. (Cross, 2014, pp. 1-2) Social media today is the best and most effective route for companies to connect with potential customers. This is because social media platforms allow companies to connect with users of those platforms without having to pay large sums of money. Social media marketing can be said to be a kind of motto for many brands. (Hajli, 2015, pp. 347-348)

Social media offers hundreds of different opportunities to network in different ways. Indeed, an individual must find a channel that matches his or her commitment and use, which is not necessarily easy. Many individuals use many different social media channels daily (Osborne-Gowey, 2014, pp. 55). The biggest social media channels are Facebook, Youtube and Whatsapp (Figure 3). The largest channels in corporate social media marketing are Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and LinkedIn (Figure 6).

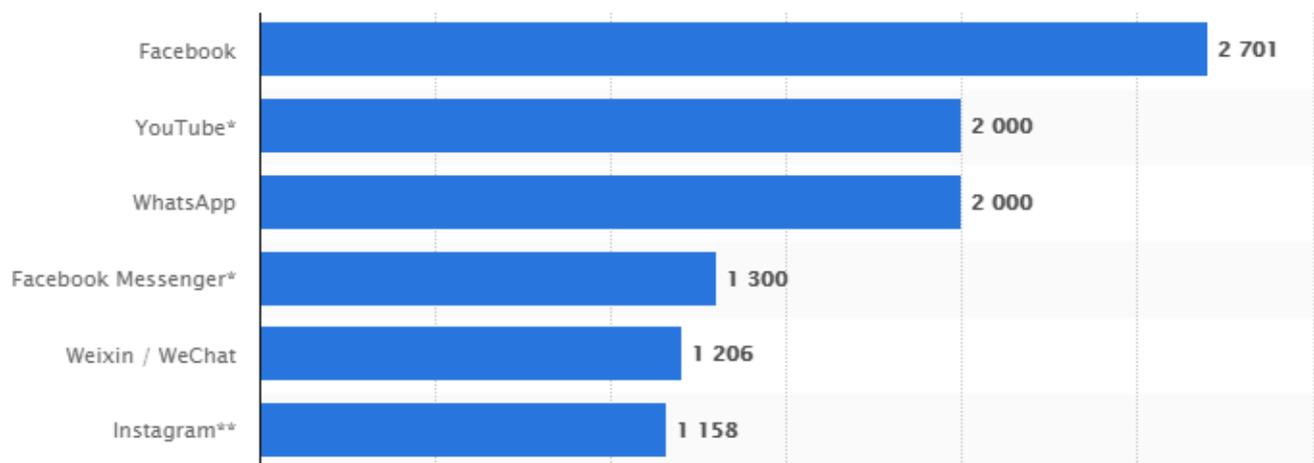


Figure 3. Most popular social networks worldwide as of October 2020 (Statista A, 2020)

One major difference between traditional and social media is that a traditional media ad tells an individual the information through the ad, but the individual does not have the opportunity to react or comment on that ad immediately, at least so that it is visible to anyone who saw that same ad. On social media, an individual can respond or comment in almost any way they want to an ad or information post, of course, following the rules of the site. In general, when exploring these features of social media, it can be defined as a platform where technology enables people to collaborate, share information, and interact with other users through a variety of web-based content. (Cross, 2014, pp.2)

## 2.2 The growth of social media

Social media has grown at an explosive pace over the last twenty years. For example, the number of Facebook users has increased since 2010 by approximately 1.5 billion users. (Figure 4) Nowadays, technology plays a very large part in everything we do and therefore social media networking platforms have also become really important platforms for companies. However, companies need to fully understand what social media means and what has led to the explosive growth of social media before a company can leverage social media in its marketing. One very central concept around the growth of social media is **Web 2.0**. Web 2.0 means a whole new way to share, access, and track information and ever-changing shared content. So, in practice, this means that in addition to retrieving information, people can effectively pass on information to other people. Indeed, Web 2.0 has changed the use of different Internet platforms from just information retrieval, to global networking, collaboration, and interaction with other people. (Paquette, 2013, pp. 1-3)

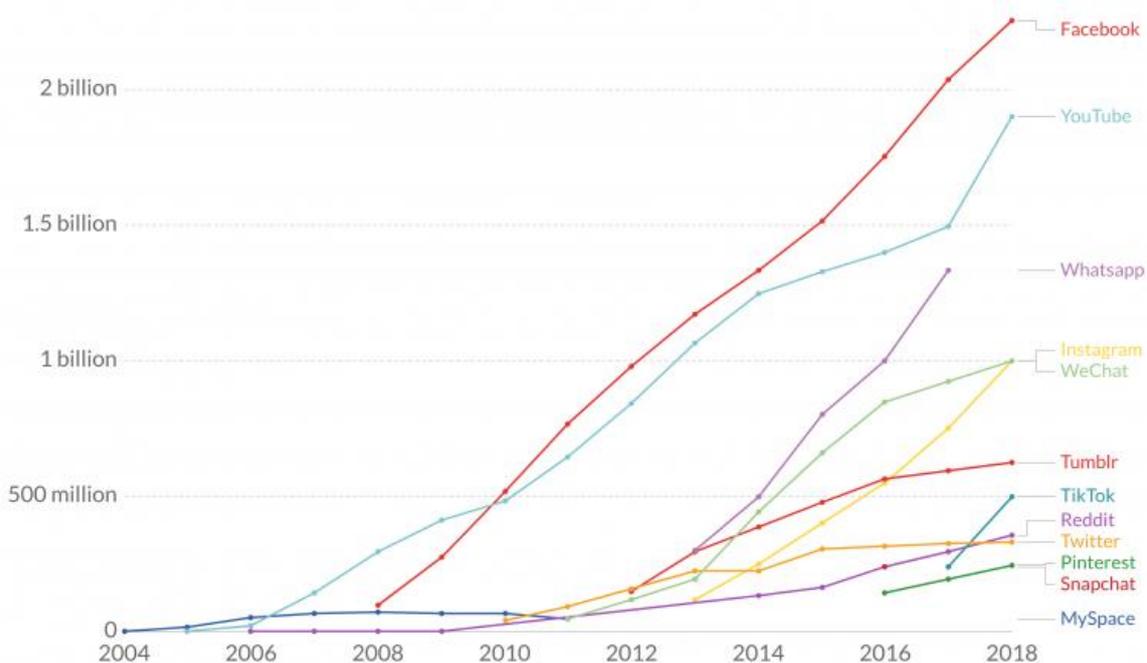


Figure 4. The growth of social media (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019)

The freedom to comment, share your own opinions, and network with like-minded people are big reasons behind the growth of social media. The growth of social media enables open communication and information sharing globally. The growth of social media and networking through it has also allowed companies to access a variety of resources that they would not otherwise have access to. The growth of social media can also make it possible to increase

the awareness of a company's brand and to reach various new contacts. In addition, the visibility brought about by the growth of social media can help a company find funding for its operations. (Jagongo & Kinyua, 2013, pp. 213-214)

### 2.3 Social media marketing in general

Through the growth and huge popularity of social media, companies have also started to leverage social media in their business. Through social media, companies can, for example, expand the visibility of their marketing campaigns to a larger number of potential customers. However, social media marketing cannot be implemented without a proper marketing plan, especially if the company seeks competitive advantage through social media marketing. The social media marketing strategy should also be equal to the company's goals and business plan. (Paquette, 2013, pp. 1-2)

Social media marketing has a few important goals that traditional marketing tools cannot achieve at all or as cost-effectively. Key challenges include increasing sales, increasing brand awareness, improving brand image, directing users to other online platforms, reducing marketing costs, and increasing user activity through shareable posts. Moreover, companies can monitor and analyze the conversation about their products or services and thus be able to react appropriately when they are better informed about consumer preferences and opinions. Many companies also protect their brand by creating rules and guidelines for their employees regarding the use of social media. The goals and tasks of social media marketing also depend on the industry and purpose. (Felix et al., 2017, pp. 119) Increasing brand visibility and awareness has been classified as the most important task of social media marketing out of all the above, and immediately after that, increasing the number of users on other platforms has been classified as the second most important task (Figure 5).

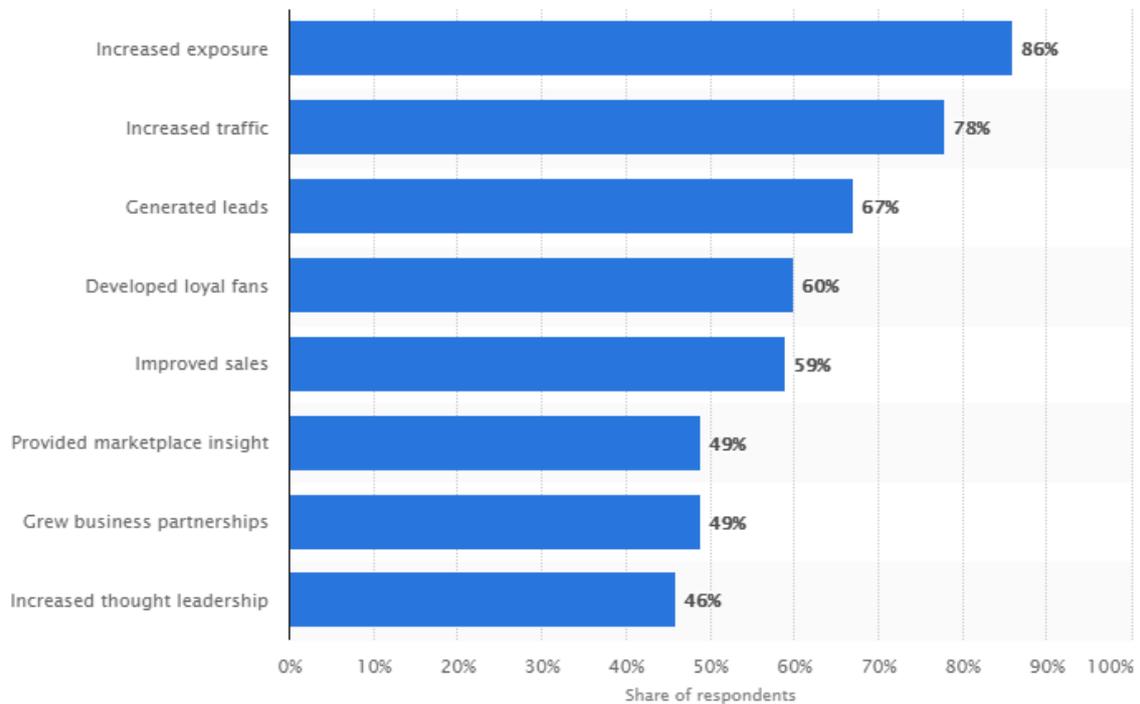


Figure 5. Leading benefits of using social media for marketing purposes (Statista C, 2020)

As mentioned earlier, these two important matters can be done more cost-effectively and more quickly than in the ways of traditional marketing (Felix et al., 2017, pp. 17). Generating leads, which basically means increasing sales is also considered to be one of the most important tasks of social media marketing. Followed by developing loyal fans and actually improving and increasing sales. (Figure 5) All of these social media marketing goals mentioned before can also be done in the methods of traditional marketing. The difference between these two is that in social media all of this can be done more cost-efficiently, and that is also why social media marketing has become a massive part of companies' marketing in every industry. When done correctly, social media marketing can also be more efficient, compared to traditional marketing methods. The marketing campaigns in social media versus in traditional media, for example print media, can gain attention quickly around the world and it is usually also cheaper to implement. (Fulgoni, 2015, pp. 235-236)

Now that we have gone through what social media marketing is and what its biggest benefits and opportunities are, one should explore what social media channels are used for marketing and how they should be used. This study focuses on the major social media marketing channels from the perspective of sports clubs and these channels include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram. The benefits and good qualities of social media are undeniable, it seems like an idiot-proof way to market and advertise in every way, but it

is not. Social media is not the perfect way to market that would provide a direct connection to potential customers. Social media marketing, like all other marketing, requires careful planning and thought work to make it work as desired. This planning also involves choosing the right channel and the right form of marketing. There are a lot of options. (Zimmerman & Ng, 2017, pp. 7-9)

As we can see from the Figure 6, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are the three most commonly used social media platforms in business-to-business (B2B) and in business-to-consumer (B2C) marketing. Instagram is also quite popular, but it is not that commonly used by marketers in B2B or in B2C marketing. All these four platforms are also important in sports club's social media marketing (Hajli, 2015, pp. 354-356). These platforms are quite different compared to each other, or in other words the content shared in them is.

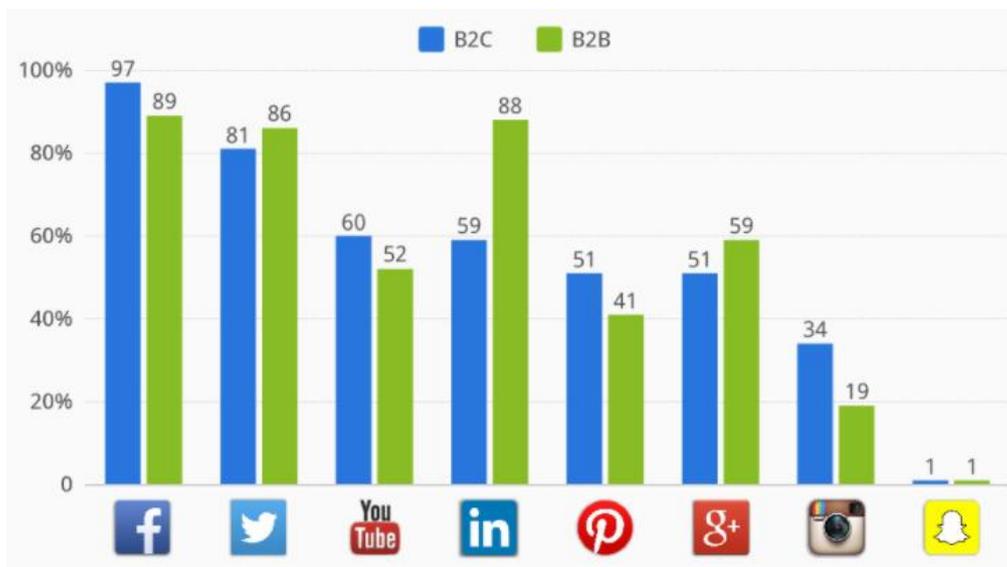


Figure 6. How marketers use social media (Statista B, 2014)

Social media marketing is currently used by really many companies worldwide, be it a huge company like Starbucks or a small local player. Social media marketing has also changed over the years. When social media began to grow and social media was first used in marketing, many professionals did not even realize its potential in marketing. Companies were slowly moving from the world of email advertising and mere websites, towards the next wave of marketing. Social media marketing is completely on its level in reaching out to potential customers and getting them to become customers in the end. (Hajli, 2015, pp. 348)

## 2.4 Social media marketing in sports clubs

Now that we have explored what social media is, how its growth has impacted the world, and what social media marketing is, we can next move on to exploring social media marketing in the world of sports.

To succeed in marketing, a company needs to understand consumer behavior. Without this understanding, marketing cannot succeed. Understanding consumer behavior can therefore be seen as the cornerstone of successful marketing. This same rule applies equally to sports marketing. The different aspects of individuals' lives affect their relationship with sport and sports clubs, and this can be used to conclude how a particular type of consumer behaves in the sport market. (Kahle & Riley, 2004, pp. 1-4)

As mentioned earlier in the study, marketing is defined as a company's efforts to meet customer wants and needs. Thus, sports marketing seeks to meet the needs and desires of the consumer of each sport. There are many ways to follow a sport. Some do it themselves, some watch the sport or listen to related news, some collect fan products, or search various websites for information about their favorite players, teams, or events. A sports consumer can therefore be defined as an individual who regularly spends money on products and services related to a sport or club. (Hajli, 2015, pp. 349)

Social media marketing has changed sports marketing a lot. Through social media, communication between clubs and its supporters has changed and deepened. Through social media, the club strives to create hype about game-day events, and this aims to get more people and a better atmosphere to the event itself. Many clubs have also made it possible, for example, to follow matches via social media, providing various statistics and information about match events to viewers who are not able to participate in the event itself. With the help of social media, clubs also seek to create an active debate that keeps them closer to the supporters, and the club can thus, for example, fulfill the wishes of the supporters or take the club's activities in the direction desired by the supporters, if possible. The players themselves and the people involved in the club's activities are also brought closer to the supporters through social media. For example, supporters can get closer to their favorite players through interviews and various competitions where fan merchandise can be distributed. With the help of social media, the sports clubs can also rectify rumors

related to the club quickly, and possibly various scandals can be handled very effectively through social media. (Hajli, 2015, pp. 346-348)

## 2.5 Risks

As previously stated in this research, the word risk can have different meanings for different people. The definition of risk may also differ between different business sectors. (Šotić & Rajić, 2015, pp. 17-18) As this research is limited to Finnish sports clubs, it can be assumed that they define the risk in the same way. In this research, the risks have been defined as effects of uncertainty on objectives. As also stated earlier in this research, the risks addressed in this research have arisen either through the actions of individuals or clubs, or they have arisen through changes that have occurred due to the growth of social media. The following three paragraphs examine the risks described in social media marketing, followed by an examination of how to prepare for them and how to act if the risk realizes, on a theoretical level.

The risks can be considered to be divided into three parts. These elements are preventable risks, strategy risks, and external risks. Preventable risks are risks that arise within an organization. These risks are controllable and possibly even avoidable. A good example of such a risk from the perspective of a sports club could be the inappropriate behavior of a club player or staff member on social media. Strategy risks are risks that companies face when pursuing, for example, development or profit in their operations. From the point of view of a sports club, such risk could be, for example, the financing of a social media marketing campaign, as there is no certainty that the campaign will be successful and profitable. These business risks cannot be completely avoided, but they can be managed, and the probability of the risk can be reduced. External risks, as the name implies, are risks caused by the external business environment. These can be, for example, issues related to nature or political catastrophes. Companies cannot really be prepared for external risks and the strategy for these risks should be focused on managing risks. From the point of view of the sports club, an external risk could be, for example, hacking into sports clubs' social media accounts. (Kaplan & Mikes, 2012)

## 2.6 Risks in social media marketing

As has become clear in previous paragraphs, the growth of social media has created a lot of new marketing opportunities. However, it is even more important for companies to consider the various risks that the growth of social media has brought to marketing. If these various risks are not taken into account, it cannot be assumed that a company could succeed in social media marketing. (Rugova & Prenaj, 2016, pp. 94-95)

Companies that use social media in their marketing must have an employee or employees who are constantly ready to respond to various discussions and publications on social media related to the company. Especially if negative messages, publications, or discussions are not addressed before they spread to hundreds, thousands, or even hundreds of thousands of people, the consequences for the brand can be devastating. In addition to the need for these employees to be prepared to respond to the things mentioned above, they should also frequently post relevant content to the company's social media channels. However, the use of social media must be carefully planned so that the interest of followers is maintained, and the content can also attract more followers. Risks in this regard are therefore too much activity, too little activity, or sharing the wrong kind of content. This is why a company needs to have a strategy for social media marketing. (Rugova & Prenaj, 2016, pp. 95)

Sharing the wrong kind of content on social media also involves risks to the companies' brand image. When sharing content on social media, one should always be sure that the post does not contain anything sensitive or unacceptable, such as bad language or other bad behavior. This applies to both the company's social media accounts as well as the company's employees' social media accounts. (Rugova & Prenaj, 2016, pp. 95) A good example of content harmful to the brand is a video shared by the Finnish hockey team Jukurit on their social media platforms, after a victory a few years ago. In the video, one of the team's players uses really inappropriate and racist language, which caused a great scandal in Finnish sports circles. The case had and still has a really big impact on the brand of Jukurit, as the news and the video uploaded to social media can still be found on the internet. (Iltalehti, 2017) It is therefore really important for companies to monitor and monitor what is being posted to social media accounts. In most cases, the negative effects undo all the positive effects that have been achieved through social media marketing. (Rugova & Prenaj, 2016, pp. 95)

In addition to these risks mentioned above, social media marketing involves a variety of legal risks that companies need to consider when distributing content on their social media channels. Various laws and regulations regulate, for example, the collection and use of personal information. The misuse of collection and use of personal information can cause serious problems for the company. There are a number of different laws and regulations related to privacy violations, violation in social media promotion and privacy of children's data and social media marketing that companies must consider when marketing social media. (Sarabdeen, 2014, pp. 219)

Protecting privacy in social media marketing is important. It has been said that privacy is something that consumers want to protect and businesses, in turn, want to make the most of it. Privacy is regulated in many ways. Without going any further behind the theoretical background of laws and various regulations, most importantly, companies should know at least the country-specific laws and regulations. In the EU area, companies must also take into account the EU Data Protection Directive, which applies not only to the EU but also to some of its trading partners. Failure to comply with these various laws and regulations, as well as breaking the law in general, leads to legal action and this, of course, does no good to the brand. (Sarabdeen, 2014, pp. 219)

It is also really important for companies to also instruct their own employees in the use of social media and to address various abuses if necessary. Social media is nowhere near as controlled and censored as traditional media, so individuals are free to say almost anything, negative or positive. The behavior of company employees and people associated with the company on social media is also a risk to the company itself. Sharing false or misunderstood content is always a risk for businesses, even if the user does not want to. (Assaad & Gómez, 2011, pp. 20-21)

In addition to the risks mentioned above, a company must also seek to protect its brand when it registers on various social media platforms. In social media, so-called brandjacking is quite common and that means that another user uses a company name, logo, or product for their own purposes on social media or writes misleading or negative news about the company. (Zimmerman & Ng, 2017, pp. 95-96)

Companies also need to pay attention to a variety of information security issues. The importance of information security is not emphasized unnecessarily today, but it is still not taken seriously enough. Companies need to investigate all vulnerabilities from which

company data can be accessed digitally. This also applies to social media. Employees of companies can also be subjected to this type of hacking, so it must be taken seriously enough. (Houghton, Keenan, Edmonds & Blix, 2020)

## 2.7 Risk preparedness

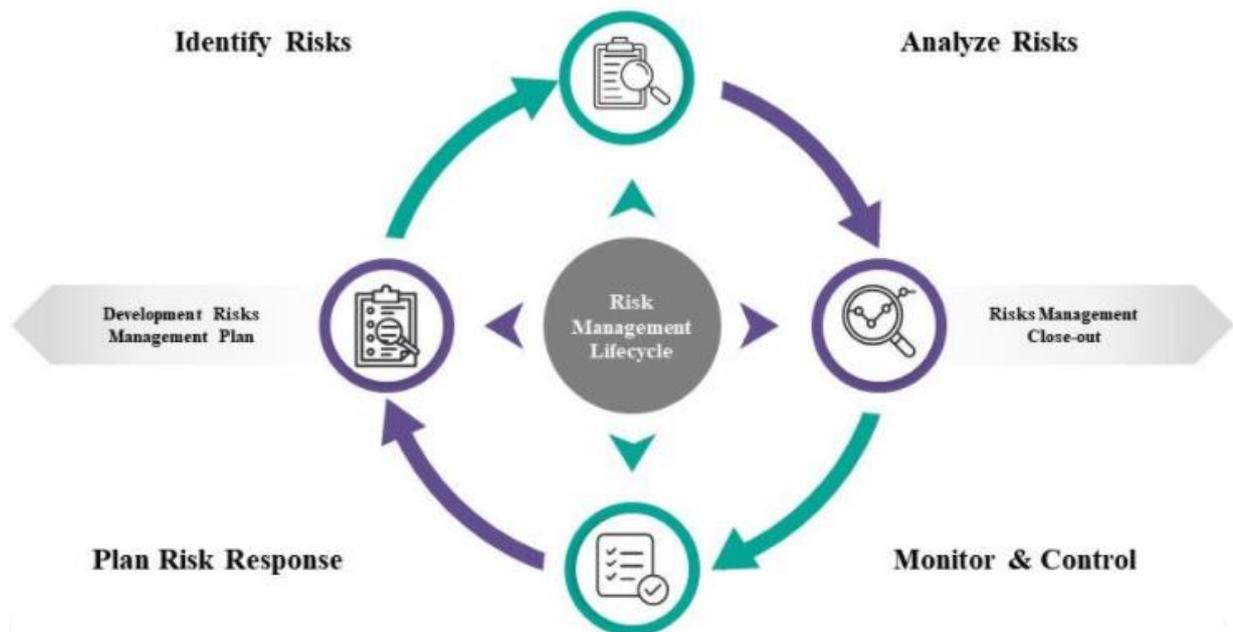
Marketers have realized the potential for growth in social media in social media marketing, but still, a proper strategy for social media marketing has been less often formed. In addition to the fact that companies may not be able to market effectively on different social media platforms and therefore not get the most out of it, companies are also unable to prepare for and respond to various risks when a social media marketing strategy is not in place. (Li, Larimo & Leonidou, 2020, pp. 1-2)

The reason why it is important to carefully plan what content companies share on social media and how companies behave on social media is, that it is impossible for companies to control what users share and write on social media. Sometimes even a carefully planned marketing campaign can also fail, for example, due to a misunderstanding. In the context of social media marketing, there is also often talk of viral marketing or "buzz marketing". These terms refer to the process by which interested people can market the matter themselves. At its best and when successful, viral marketing, or word-to-mouth (WOM), can bring positive visibility to a brand. When failed, viral marketing can damage the brand image, and this can have long-lasting effects on the business-to-consumer relationship. To succeed in viral marketing, a company needs to understand how information is shared through social media, how information recipients can respond through different social media channels, and how influential people on social media or "influencers", can be exploited. (Miller & Lammas, 2010, pp. 2-5)

The risks must therefore be prepared for in advance, before social media marketing begins, and the risks must always be reassessed from time to time. The risks of social media marketing are thus prepared for through the social media marketing strategy. Risks must first be identified, after which a plan is created for each risk, how to prepare for them, and how to act if the risk realizes. When creating the social media strategy, one should also take a stand on what employees are allowed and are not allowed to do on behalf of the company on social media. (Zimmerman & Ng, 2017, pp. 87-88)

Not all companies have the same resources at their disposal when creating a strategy for social media marketing. However, this should not be an obstacle to find and recognize potential risks, as a company cannot succeed in social media marketing without a proper marketing strategy in place. (Li, Larimo & Leonidou, 2020, pp. 3-7) The social media marketing strategy should also assess how likely the risk is, how much impact it will have on the company and what part of the company it will affect, and how often this risk may occur. These are vital matters to success in social media marketing. (Kaplan & Mikes, 2012)

## Risk Management Lifecycle



*Figure 7. Risk Management Lifecycle*

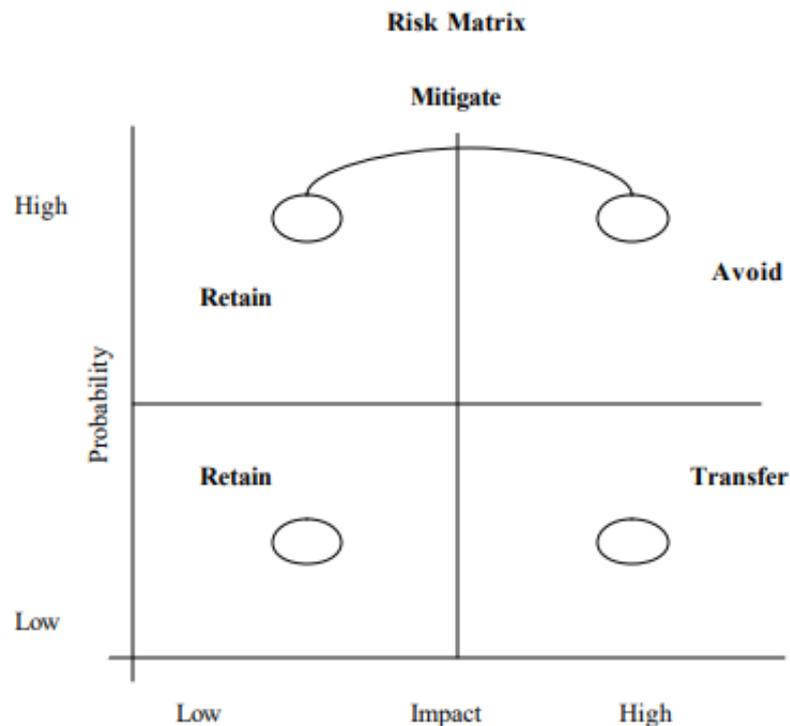
As can be seen from Figure seven, the company should first identify the risks, after which the risks should be analyzed. After this, companies have to monitor and control the risks. Finally, it is necessary to plan how to act when the risk realizes. All of these things should be included in companies' social media marketing plan.

## 2.8 Realization of risks

As stated in the previous paragraph, risks should be prepared for in advance. Risks must first be identified, after which they can be analyzed. After this, the risks can be managed and a plan for response must be made for the risks. This section examines in a little more detail about how a company should act if a risk realizes and also how one should be prepared for the realization of risks in advance.

According to research, people tend to overestimate their ability to influence events that are largely influenced by chance. Risks are usually handled somewhat arrogantly, and it is not understood that every risk is unique and cannot be prepared for well enough. Often, the rationale for risk preparation emphasizes the arguments in support of one's own argument and belittles those arguments that oppose one's own argument. This is called confirmation bias. Another explanation is, that often risks, and failures may not be dared to be talked about, especially in groups. If a group has an opinion, the opinion of the minority often remains only at the level of thought, even if the findings are valid. This is called organizational bias. Together, these two causes poor risk preparedness. Poor risk preparedness leads to a poor way of dealing with realized risks. As mentioned, there is no general rule on how risks should be managed or how different risks could be prepared for and that is because there are so many different risks and their causes. Therefore, the whole risk management process is really important, and it is not possible to create a plan to manage the risks if it is not known what has caused the risk. (Kaplan & Mikes, 2012)

The company should have a strategy on how to act when different risks realize. However, finding the right strategy for different risks is not easy. The Risk Matrix can be used to help when choosing a strategy for risk response (Figure 8).



*Figure 8. Risk Matrix*

The matrix includes four broader strategies for responding to risks. The first way is **risk avoidance**. This strategy must be used when there are several risk sources, and its impact is large. This strategy involves actively identifying risk factors and changing operations so that risk factors disappear. Another strategy is **risk transfer**. This strategy is used when the impact is large, but the probability of occurrence is small. In this strategy, the risk is transferred to a party that is better able to manage the risk. The third strategy is **risk mitigation**. Because not all risks can be completely avoided or transferred, an attempt can be made to mitigate the risk. The strategy is shaped by the risk factor. If the impact of the risk is large, the risk can be reduced by reducing the extent of the damage. If the impact of the risk is small but it occurs frequently, an attempt can be made to eliminate the risk factor. The fourth strategy is **risk acceptance**. When the impact is small and the occurrence of the risk is not frequent, the existence of the risk can be accepted. These risks can also be eliminated, but it is not a matter of urgency. (Panthi, Ahmed & Azhar, 2015, pp. 3-4)

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research concerns the growth of social media, the risks that are formed because of it, and the preparation for them from the perspective of the employees of Finnish sports clubs. I am aware that working in one of the sports clubs of my research has influenced the choice of the topic and the limitations of the research. In addition, it has formed a kind of starting point for research. My work in one of the sports clubs under research has made it possible to become partially acquainted with the research topic even before writing this research. Discussions with colleagues, familiarization with the work, and observations made in the work environment have helped to get acquainted with the research topic.

This research is conducted as a qualitative research. The purpose of qualitative research is to study the object holistically and also to describe real-life as it is (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009, pp. 161). The research has been carried out as a case study where the phenomenon is studied from the perspective of Finnish sports clubs. Like said, the research is a case study, as is often the case in qualitative studies. (Metsämuuronen, 2006, pp. 92) A case study is a deliberately selected case, often targeting a company or, for example, an individual department of a company, and the purpose is to increase understanding of the case under investigation (Koskinen et al. 2005, pp. 154).

The case study is somewhat well suited to this descriptive study, as the empirical subject of the research is a few Finnish sports clubs whose operating environments correspond almost completely to each other. The risks of social media marketing often vary by industry and country, but this research only examines Finnish sports clubs so the risks are same for all clubs interviewed. The research can be considered ethical because the participation of the interviewees in the research has been completely voluntary, their anonymity has been respected, and also, the research data is confidential. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009, pp. 131; Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2000, pp. 20) Due to the subjectivity of the topic as well as the features of qualitative research, the intention is not to generalize and verify already existing claims and facts (Hirsjärvi et al., 2009, pp. 161).

The material of the study has been collected by interviewing seven (7) employees of various sports clubs working in the same roles. Some interviewees work in the same sports club. The interviewees differ quite a lot in their work experience. Everyone has worked in their positions for more than three years, but not more than 12 years. In addition to the interview,

the research has utilized the author's participatory observation. The interview has been chosen as the data collection method because it avoids ambiguities in the interviewees' answers and also provides depth and accuracy in the answers received. (Hirsjärvi et.al., 2009, pp. 205)

All interviews used in the study were conducted as thematic interviews. A thematic interview, in other words, a semi-structured interview, differs from a structured interview in that the researcher chooses the questions and the interviewee is allowed to answer them in his or her own words. In a structured interview, there are pre-defined questions and pre-defined answer options. The questions have been formed in advance, and if necessary, the interviewer can ask more clarifying questions. In a thematic interview, the researcher directs the interview in the direction he or she wants but does not prescribe or control it completely. Indeed, a thematic interview can be seen as bringing the discussion closer together, and therefore the response is often freer and much more detailed. (Koskinen, Alasuutari & Peltonen, 2005, pp. 104-108)

The thematic interview has been used in the study because with it, it has been easier to form better perceptions of the research topic and the personal opinions and experiences of the interviewees than with using the structured interview. This is also really important, given the subject. All questions are designed to be clear enough and easy to understand. This is really important so that they motivate the interviewees to speak openly about their personal experiences as well as their feelings (Kvale, 1996, pp. 130-131). The interview structure has been the same or almost the same for all interviewees, but if the discussion is possible or if it is required, the interviewer may have asked more questions during the interview, to clarify the answer. (Appendix 1)

In the interviews, the interviewer, as well as the interviewee, sought to be as open as possible. Efforts have been made to create the situation and atmosphere in such a way that the interviewee is able and dares to respond as he or she thinks. It has been emphasized in the interviews that there are no wrong answers. In the interview, however, the researcher has defined the subject areas and has at least tried to control the situation, and the discussion cannot, therefore, be considered completely equal (Kvale, 1996, pp. 126). However, the openness and freedom of discussion in some of the interviews have been helped by the fact that the researcher and the respondents are former colleagues and therefore already familiar. The interviewees have been selected completely at random and prior to the interview, it has been emphasized that participation in the study has been entirely

voluntary. No demographic data have been collected in the study, for example, gender or age have not been presented in order to preserve the anonymity of the interviewees. Demographic data collection has also not been relevant in any way to the subject of the survey and has therefore not been considered necessary. In addition, anonymity has been taken into account when analyzing the research results, and the research results have only been used by the researcher himself. The interviews were conducted remotely due to the global pandemic. However, the interviews were not recorded, but the answers were of course written down. The interviews were conducted in November 2020.

The method of analysis has been content analysis, which has been used to find the most descriptive results possible, as well as the answers to the research questions and to the research topic as a whole. Content analysis refers to the analysis of written, heard, or seen material (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009, pp. 91-94). The aim of the analysis of the interviews has not been to find generalizable facts but the research has focused on a relatively small number of interviewees and their personal and organizational perceptions and experiences of the topic under study. Clear objectivity has been almost impossible to achieve in this research.

## 4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Future paragraphs will review and analyze the interviews conducted for this research. In the end, there were seven (7) interviewees, so the sample size is not very large. All in all, this number of interviews gave a pretty good idea of what risks exist in social media marketing and how they have been taken into account from the sports club's point of view. It is also noteworthy that some of the interviewees have worked in the same positions in various clubs for a long time, so they have seen the change in marketing caused by the growth of social media. Anyway, all the interviewees have solid experience in the industry, so the interviews conducted can be considered very reliable. From figure nine you can see the interviewees and the sport club they represent.

Club	Interviewee number
Kiekko-Espoo (Espoo)	Interviewee 1
HK Titaanit (Kotka)	Interviewee 2
Titaani-Juniorit ry (Kotka)	Interviewee 3
Titaani-Juniorit ry (Kotka)	Interviewee 4
KooKoo (Kouvolan KooKoo)	Interviewee 5
HPK (Hämeenlinnan Pallokerho)	Interviewee 6
KTP (Kotkan Työväen Palloilijat)	Interviewee 7

Figure 9. Interviewees

Based on the interviews, it became clear that sports clubs have three or four main channels used for social media marketing. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube are channels used by sports clubs. For YouTube, there were the biggest differences, some use it, and some do not, but it is clearly the channel that has been given the least weight.

*“YouTube acts as a video channel, but it is still looking for its shape” -Interviewee 5*

*“We post various videos on YouTube, such as highlight videos. However, it is not the main channel.” -Interviewee 7*

For the other three channels, Facebook and Instagram, we are definitely the most popular and used. Twitter supports these two channels. There was no clear line between Facebook and Instagram, which one is considered more important. A clearer boundary between these two channels is to draw through their target audience and published content. Facebook is considered a more official channel and its target group is a somewhat older age group, while Instagram is a bit freer and the target group is younger. Instagram focuses more on the look of the content and Facebook on the subject itself.

*“Facebook is a bit more official as a marketing channel, we use it for news coverage and event marketing. Instagram is a little lighter and more playful, and its target audience is different from Facebook.” -Interviewee 5*

*“Facebook is visible to a wider audience. Also, it targets older people, while Instagram is aimed at younger followers.” -Interviewee 3*

*“Facebook and Instagram have the highest reach and clearly have the largest number of followers” -Interviewee 6*

The reach of Facebook and Instagram is, without exception, the highest in all clubs. Consequently, they are also the most important channels from a financial point of view. Facebook is the most official of the channels. There will be all the official information, match event marketing, fan product information, and other more official matters. Instagram is freer in content. Different jokes and games belong on the Instagram side.

*“Facebook is the most official channel. In addition, it reaches the most people. The content in Instagram is freer, although it also reaches a lot of people” -Interviewee 2*

*“The Instagram is intended to produce behind-the-scenes material. Everyday content is published on Instagram.” -Interviewee 1*

Twitter is seen as a somewhat challenging channel with no clear target group or goal. Indeed, Twitter is considered more of a quick channel to respond to comments or news, or it is suitable for reporting game events during the game. However, as has been said, it does not have a more specific target group and the content shared does not follow any particular line. There were also some similarities in terms of published content.

*“In Twitter we respond to messages and share links. The aim is to react quickly.” -  
Interviewee 7*

*“Live coverage of match events is tied to Twitter. Also, news related to the club will be distributed there.” -Interviewee 5*

*“Twitter is intended to support Facebook and Instagram with its’ content” -Interviewee 6*

The researcher's participatory observation also supports the experiences of the interviewees. Facebook is a really "easy to use" tool where it is really easy to get started. Instagram is also really easy, but in order to add value, there must be content to publish, not only in text but also in the form of images and videos.

#### 4.1 Risks in social media marketing from the sports club point of view

The interviews revealed many different risks, which have also been addressed in the theoretical part of this research. What is worrying, however, is that many things have also gone unnoticed by the clubs. The biggest risk was a reputational risk, which may arise from, for example, the publication of sensitive or inappropriate content on social media channels. This came up without exception in every interview. Related to this is, according to the experiences of the interviewees, many protesters on social media intentionally misunderstand things or cling to one sentence or word and use it to change the purpose of the whole publication. This observation is also consistent with the theoretical findings of this research. In this context, how to produce a message that no one can misunderstand but still is understandable to everyone, and the post fulfills its' intentions, was also seen as a risk or a challenge.

*“Because people can comment anything about the published content, it is really easy to misunderstand or provoke others. Negative comments also create a negative atmosphere, and it can escalate.” -Interviewee 6*

*“It is really challenging to take all the target groups into account when publishing content on social media. Nowadays, if you ignore some group of people, it can make a fuss.” - Interviewee 5*

*“It is kind of challenging at times to find where is the line between good and bad humor. Especially on social media, published content reaches a lot of different people and you can't always know where someone might get offended.” -Interviewee 1*

One interview raised a really important issue related to social media marketing, especially from the perspective of sports clubs. Players and coaches are often the most visible thing

of a sports club to the outside world on social media. Team, which consists of the players and coaches, is the product customers pay for. Because anyone can post or comment on anything on social media, unfair and inappropriate commenting on a particular player or coach can be considered a risk. Going into personalities, in particular, is a really unpleasant thing, both for the player and the club. You can comment on the game performance because it is part of the product that customers pay for. However, these comments should remain within the bounds of good taste. What is worrying is that this particular matter came up in only one interview.

*“Separating the person inside a player or coach on social media is really challenging, as these roles are forcibly confused. Therefore, the aim is to avoid any negative comments regarding individual players or coaches and to maintain a constructive and positive discussion. This is challenging at times, as there are always emotions involved when looking at sports fans.” – Interviewee 6*

A few interviews also highlighted the fact that social media is full of stuff and people can only follow a limited number of channels effectively. Thus, the risk of drowning one's own content in the masses was seen as a risk. It is somewhat challenging to produce content that stands out from the masses, that is also relevant and adds value to followers. Also, all this should be done without damaging the reputation of the sports club.

*“We have discussed many times within the club, how we could produce content that is as useful to as many people as possible, to stay active but not to produce too much content. Also, it is important to always be identifiable as the sports club you represent, so published content should have the same style.” -Interviewee 5*

*“We have taken the line that if it is useless, it is useless when creating content for social media. So, we always think and discuss before we publish, whether this content will add value to followers. If not, then we will not publish.” -Interviewee 6*

*“We want to stand out from the crowd by publishing content that is a bit different and fits our style. Here, of course, there is a risk that someone will get offended, but we want to stand out from the crowd, and we want the published content to fit into the identity of our club.” -Interviewee 7*

Based on theoretical knowledge, what is worrying about the interviews is that none of the interviewees raised any risks related to security issues or risks related to different laws and regulations. The behavior of their own employees, for example players or coaches, on social media was also not seen as a risk. Mainly the risks were seen only around the published content, and nowhere else. Of course, this is not a bad thing, as that published content can be the most damaging to a sports club. A good example of this is the case of the Finnish sports club Jukurit, which was mentioned earlier in this research. Clubs should also take greater notice of the different sources from which this damaging content may come. Because there are a lot of them. Like mentioned, for example, the use of social media by club staff was not seen as a risk by any of the interviewees. Overall, the interviewees had a rather limited view of all the risks that marketing on social media can involve.

## 4.2 Risk preparedness in sports clubs

In terms of risk preparedness, the sports clubs that were interviewed, all had some kind of guidelines on how risks should be prepared for and how they are taken into account in social media marketing. However, not all potential risks had been identified, as we noticed in the previous paragraph. However, only one of the interviewed sports clubs had a comprehensive marketing strategy for social media marketing that also took into account potential risks. The perceived risks had been analyzed in terms of their own operations and many clubs are constantly monitoring the risks, as every time you publish content, there is a chance to fail.

*“We do not have a written marketing strategy for risks and risk control, but the guidelines have been planned and agreed together. We constantly monitor the risks, as there is an opportunity to stumble upon every time you publish something on social media.” -*

*Interviewee 7*

*“The risks were not discussed when I started working with the club, but I have discovered them through mistakes. We look at risks in the bigger picture, but not just in terms of social*

*media. However, it would be good to have some plan in mind for the risks of social media marketing.” -Interviewee 5*

*“Risks have been discussed with the Chief Operating Officer and the Chief Sports Officer. We go through really carefully what content we publish on social media. We also constantly reassess the risks.” -Interviewee 1*

Many interviewees revealed that they are extremely cautious when publishing content on social media. The content is reviewed by several people to make sure that there is nothing provocative or offensive in the content. However, there are cases where mistakes have been made and such content has gotten into social media. The question is, why are these situations not properly prepared for?

*“Before publishing the content, each member of the team checks it and we discuss and think together if, for example, someone can get offended.” -Interviewee 6*

*“Constant caution is always present in this work. Once you post something wrong then you can’t get it off social media. However, we do not have any more detailed plans for these situations.” -Interviewee 7*

The interviews also revealed that not all clubs have the same resources at their disposal, for example in social media marketing and communication. The team’s sizes were different and in some clubs the responsibility fell on the shoulders of only a few people. However, the starting point for successful social media marketing is an effective strategy that must also take into account existing risks. Thus, limited resources should not be a reason for not being properly prepared for risks. It is a small price to pay to prepare properly for the risks when compared to how much costs and work can be incurred if the risks realize. While it is impossible to prepare for exactly every risk because of the uniqueness of the risks, it would still be a good idea to create at least some plan for what to follow.

### 4.3 Realization of risks in sports clubs

As mentioned earlier in the study, all but one of the interviewees had not encountered risk situations at work themselves. This could also partly explain why risk preparedness was somewhat underestimated or not studied so carefully, even though the risks and their effects were known. However, one interview precisely highlighted this case with Jukurit, where the club accidentally posted a video containing a racist shout on social media, from where it then spread. No course of action had been agreed upon for such cases and the handling of the situation after the publication of the video went wrong time and time again.

*“The club posted a live broadcast on Facebook after the match they won, where one player used racist terms when celebrating the win. These comments were unnoticed by everyone and the video was saved to Facebook, from where it then started to spread. The biggest mistake was deleting the clip itself, which was also not commented on in any way for a moment. In the end, only the text ‘Sorry’ was posted on Twitter, on a different channel where this video was originally posted. This ultimately affected the club so badly that the matter was discussed in the city council, that can the city support the club and also one major sponsor stopped supporting the club after this incident.” -Interviewee 5*

This case perfectly illustrates exactly what is emphasized in this research. Sports clubs should have agreed policies for all similar situations, although these things will not happen so often. This situation might not have been avoided altogether, but it would certainly have been possible to control that the situation would not have swelled to such an extent. However, it is not a big investment in risk management, if you think about what the costs are if things really go wrong.

Many interviews emphasized that if something goes wrong, the actions they take depend on the situation. Essentially, these steps were, admitting the error, apologizing, and compensating for the error if possible. A few interviews also highlighted the fact that if the risk realizes, the first step is contacting higher authorities. After that, the response is being planned together with them.

## 5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The growth of social media has brought companies the opportunity to practice marketing in social media. At best, social media can be a very effective marketing channel for businesses. Sports clubs have also used social media in their marketing, and it has become the most important marketing channel for them. Effective use of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube brings added value to followers and increases the brand awareness of the sports club. Finnish sports clubs are really active on social media.

The study focused on the risks of social media marketing from the perspective of Finnish sports clubs. The issues examined included what different risks sports clubs may face on social media marketing, how to prepare for the risks, and how to act if the risk realizes. The study used theoretical data collected from various literary sources to analyze data collected through interviews.

The study revealed that Finnish sports clubs are not fully aware of what risks should be taken into account and how they should be taken into account when marketing on social media. All the clubs interviewed were aware that content published on social media could damage the reputation of the club, but the clubs were not fully aware of the different sources that that content could come from. In addition to publishing damaging content, other risks were, published content drowning in the huge mass of social media and keeping the content understandable and not offensive. Intimidation and slandering at club staff were also seen as a risk. Information security issues, different fake profiles, and restrictions imposed by many different laws and regulations were also largely ignored. As a new possible risk, compared to previous studies, the study revealed that unreasonable criticism of the players and the club staff can be a major risk in social media marketing. Otherwise, the findings followed the previous studies when looking at risks in social media marketing.

Based on previous studies, this study also emphasized that sports clubs should also have a social media marketing strategy that identifies different risks and plans measures to manage them. However, interviews revealed that many clubs operate on social media without a proper strategy. Risks were partially recognized, but no measures were planned for them. The study also highlighted the Jukurit case, which showed how harmful it can be when there is no strategy for risk situations.

All in all, it can be said that Finnish sports clubs know what risks exist in marketing on social media and how much harm they can do for the club. However, risk realization is a somewhat rare phenomenon, which certainly contributes to the fact that no strategy has been created for the risks and the measures to be taken always depend on the situation. However, based on theoretical knowledge from the previous studies, social media marketing cannot succeed fully effectively if not all factors, in this case, risks, have been taken into account well enough.

Key findings of the research
Finnish sports clubs are not fully aware about the risks in social media marketing and how to prepare for them
Sports clubs should have a social media marketing strategy that identifies different risks and plans measures to manage them
Interviews revealed that many Finnish sports clubs operate on social media without a proper strategy

*Figure 10. Key findings of the research*

## 5.1 Proposals for further research

Not much research has been done on sports marketing. It would be very interesting to study, for example, what the social media marketing strategy of sports clubs should look like and how it differs, or does it differ at all from the ordinary company. In the context of this research, it would be interesting to know if there are some risks that the ordinary company does not face but the Sports Club faces and how it is reflected in the marketing strategy. Further studies could also look more closely at ways in which sports clubs can avoid risk and whether it would be possible to create a model that would make the process of publishing content on social media more risk-free.

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## APPENDIXES

Appendix 1: Interview questions

## **Kandidaattitutkielman haastattelukysymykset:**

Työkokemus

Titteli

1. Miten seuranne käyttää sosiaalista mediaa – mitä kanavia käytätte ja miten kanavia käytetään?

V:

- Eroaako kanavien käyttö sisällöltään
- Tärkein/tärkeimmät kanavat

2. Mitä riskejä markkinointi sosiaalisessa mediassa sisältää?

V:

- Onko teidän organisaatiossanne sosiaalisen median markkinointistrategiaa?
- Käytiinkö riskejä läpi siinä vaiheessa, kun aloitit työn?
- Oletko yleisesti ottaen saanut perehdytystä/koulutusta sosiaalisen median riskeihin liittyen?
- Onko riskejä arvioitu uudestaan? Jos on niin milloin ja kuinka usein tätä tehdään?

3. Miten riskeihin on varauduttu (onko strategiaa niitä varten)?

V:

- Käytännön esimerkki riskitilanteesta (miten ilmeni, miten hoidettiin)
- Jos on ollut riskitilanteita, onko niihin ollut sovittuja toimintatapoja (markkinointistrategiassa)
- Seurataanko organisaatiosta vallitsevia keskusteluja sosiaalisessa mediassa, miten ja milloin kannattaa reagoida?
- Seurataanko organisaation toimihenkilöiden käyttäytymistä sosiaalisessa mediassa, onko toimihenkilöitä ohjeistettu toimimaan jollain tietyllä tavalla?
- Onko yrityksessänne yhtenäinen linjaus (tai linjausta ylipäätään) riskitilanteisiin liittyen?
- Onko riskitilanteet saatu hoidettua vai ovatko jääneet ”elämään” someen (case Jukurit)? |