

# **The Social Media and Online Marketing in Equestrian Business**

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## **The introduction**

As our world is changing all the time from old technology towards the digitalization, also every business form needs to change their behaviour at the same. Equestrian societies, the horse people in different countries, have been needed to take the step to the digital side too. All equestrian sports are somehow connected to money and at least by the visuality of this sports, it is required to show it as magnificent as possible. That is the way to attract more investors, new horse owners and breeders to the path of equestrian sport. In this essay, I will cover the use of social media and online marketing in equestrian business and how these channels are used to increase profits of all sport.

The world of equestrian sports can be divided into a few bigger parts as their own sports. In Europe, the biggest industry is harness racing, also known as trot racing. The most active countries are France, Italy and Sweden, after that comes Norway and Finland. The total of the given prize money is annually at around 485 million euros. (Suomen Hippos ry 2019) A bit similar to trot racing is gallop racing, which is more popular in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia. There is no question that the legendary Triple Crown would not be the most followed competition in the world and it has been raced since 1919. (CNN Library 2013) The third part of the equestrian sports is the Olympic genres: dressage, showjumping and eventing. These are usually thought of as the basic riding sports and obviously they also are the most popular as a hobby around the world. In Finland, we have every year 140 000 to 160 000 riders visiting stables and in the year 2018, 45 000 were also members of the Finnish Equestrian Federation. (Suomen Ratsastajainliitto 2019) It is no surprise that there is a lot of money flowing in the heart of the equestrian business. Horses are expensive and when entering the higher levels it will become a serious income for many people.

## **The equestrian business plan**

Like in any other industry the main thing in equestrian business is to gain profit. There is no point of running a company that will not give any economical flow back to the entrepreneur. Anyhow, it is said that the equestrians have bad accounting skills and very good belief. It is unfortunately common in Finland and other parts of Europe that people will start their stable business only to provide to themselves some possibilities to have a hobby. The business plan might seem parable on the paper, but later on, problems will come ahead. The European Union has been tightening regulations affiliating with horse stables. For example, in the year 2014 came new instructions about the facilities for the horses and customers. (Hevostietokeskus 2011) That made many entrepreneurs to re-value the investments for updating their stable buildings. Specialization has become the only way to survive in a highly competitive business. Entrepreneurs are forced to think more tricks to pop out from the others.

One of these visionaries is Rohan Stables which is located near to Turku, Finland. They are offering medieval horse shows that include knights and tournaments. The riders of Rohan are usually performing in certain fairs or shows, but it is also possible to visit their stable and have historical riding lessons or mounted fighting. The teachers are European champions of the historical riding, so these people know what they are doing. (Rohan Tallit 2019a) Rohan Stables are a good example of the values that are cherished in the equestrian business: do what you love and earn your living while doing it. They have a unique business plan which is taking them forward and giving to the consumers something that they definitely have not yet experienced. And when they have a show which is very visual, they are also exploiting it in films and TV productions. (Rohan Tallit 2019b)

## **The power of social media**

Nowadays marketing is capable to take advantage of social media. The same phenomenon has arrived also to the equestrian business. It is quite easy to use social media in any ways with horses because it is a visual animal and it will always make the advertisement look more luxurious. Horses are giving an image of money and wealthiness. That image is used also in the equestrian business for the same idea, but the main thing is to sale something for the equestrian people. Only on Instagram, there are over 9,6 million posts by hashtag #equestrian and 6,9 million posts by #riding. For comparison, there are just 1,8 million posts by hashtag #icehockey.

Social media channels are reaching and connecting millions of people daily. These social media applications are made for us to share content quickly and effectively to be seen for people who are interested in the same things than us. For retailers, social media is a way to do marketing that can have measurable. They need to post and talk about things that are important for the customers and involve them to become interactive. That means for example sharing, reposting and liking. Images are the most shared content in social media channels, so they are the new jungle drum. (The Balance Small Business 2019) Bloggers and social media influencers are a significant piece of the marketing puzzle. Research shows that 81 % of blog readers are interested in the products that the blogger is representing and 55 % will make the decision to buy gesturing to that blog. (PING Helsinki 2017) Of course, the volume of that purchasing is much smaller in the equestrian side that it is in the beauty or the fashion side.

## **The conclusion of online marketing**

What comes to online marketing in equestrian business, I have my own experience in it. In the year 2015, I established a new concept in Finland called Playsson.net, which combines social media and equestrian sports. It has developed into a brand which is very known by equestrians. Playsson.net reached via the portal and social media channels over 1,2 million unique visitors in 2017. I wanted to create something that has not been done yet here and I took an example from Swedish Hippson.se. It was worth it and now Playsson.net is the most active equestrian social media platform in Finland. The business plan of Playsson.net is to provide interesting content and collect visitors. After good visitor statistics, we have got several advertising deals and done content marketing with different companies - and mainly with those who are not involving horses. The common visitor at Playsson.net is a young woman so that engage attention, for example, makeup and wellness companies. The value of the sponsored articles or deals is huge because the more we get deals that are made with highly considered companies, the more Playsson.net

is also well-thought-of being a collaboration partner. It is possible to make a difference and influence by online marketing, especially on social media platforms.

All companies are slowly starting to realize that the future of marketing will be on social media. Social media influencers are making an impact on our choices even if we do not necessarily notice it at first. The same wave is already going through the equestrian world and it will be more and more important. The racehorse industry is married to the betting systems and as long as they will be seen on social media with their achievements, the more people will bet on their horses and using their breeding. Marketing to the right target group could not be easier than doing it by social media. Even when it is done for the betting people or only for the horse girls who are desiring to buy something new for their ponies.

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