

UTILIZING INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS TO  
ADVANCE PURCHASE INTENTION OF CUSTOMERS BY IMPROVING  
DIGITAL MARKETING CONTENT AND CHANNELS

Case Fortum HorsePower

Master's thesis  
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## Abstract

Modern customers and their widespread use of digital media offer new opportunities for companies to gather revenues. Companies have therefore started to invest increasingly in digital growth and visibility (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Trainor (2012) stated that customers are no longer satisfied with only being passive targets of marketing actions, but want instead to serve as co-creators of value, engage with the company and connect with other customers having valuable insights (Trainor, 2012; Garretson, 2008). To succeed in customer empowered world companies need a holistic and customer-centric communication strategy such as integrated marketing communications (IMC) to attract potential customers with a relevant and consistent message across channels. According to Wymbs (2011), digital marketing is actually the most effective when integrated with traditional channels such as face-to-face, the phone or direct mail.

The theoretical model in this thesis is based on a combination of the four pillars of integrated marketing communications by Kliathcko (2008) and the AIDAS-model, which can be used in planning customer-centric advertising activities as it refers to a generalized customer purchasing journey, including following stages: awareness, interest, desire, action and satisfaction (Rawal, 2013). The objective of this thesis is to provide understanding of how companies can trigger purchase intention of customers with integrated digital marketing by understanding the values and channel and content preferences of customers. The main focus is on channel and content pillars of IMC. According to the literature review, previous IMC and value research are mainly focused on retail or product context. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to bring insight into the service context.

This research is provided for the needs of Fortum HorsePower and collecting the data was implemented by interviewing existing customers of Fortum HorsePower-service, which is the main limitation in this study. As the IMC aims at providing customer-centric communications, it was a rational choice to collect data by interviewing customers. Altogether, ten in-depth interviews were carried out to obtain understanding of the research phenomena.

The findings suggested that channel choices and content may affect the purchase intention of customers. It seems that the information needs and preferred channels may vary depending on the stage of purchasing journey. The interviewees named content topics they find interesting and also values that guide their decision-making, and these topics and values should be utilized in content creation and customer value proposition to provide attractive and relevant advertising. Several interviewees stated that they look for user reviews on digital channels or call their acquaintances as pre-purchase investigation and actually more than half of the interviewees could make the purchase based on reviews. Websites, email and Facebook were the most preferred digital channels among the interviewees, but despite the digital context of the research, traditional phone calls and face-to-face meetings with sales representatives are wished for. The theoretical contribution of this research provides understanding of channel choices and content topics that may advance purchase intention towards action. Future research could deepen the understanding of IMC at different stages of the customer journey, which would help to customize advertising and to use attribution modeling to understand the effectiveness of different customer touch points.

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**Keywords** Integrated marketing communications, AIDAS-model, digital marketing

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## Tiivistelmä

Nykyajan asiakkaat ja heidän laajamittainen digitaalisen median kulutuksensa tarjoavat yrityksille uusia mahdollisuuksia liikevaihdon kasvattamiseen. Yritykset ovatkin alkaneet investoimaan yhä enemmän digitaaliseen kasvuun ja näkyvyyteen (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Trainorin (2012) mukaan asiakkaat eivät tyydy enää olemaan passiivisia markkinointitoimenpiteiden kohteita, vaan haluavat luoda arvoa yhteistyössä yrityksen kanssa, sitoutua yritykseen sekä verkostoitua muiden, arvokasta tietoa omaavien asiakkaiden kanssa (Trainor, 2012; Garretson, 2008). Menestyäkseen asiakaskeskeisessä, vaihtoehtojen ja tiedon täyteisessä maailmassa, yritykset tarvitsevat kokonaisvaltaista ja asiakaslähtöistä viestintästrategiaa, kuten integroitua markkinointiviestintää, joka houkuttelee potentiaalisia asiakkaita relevantilla ja johdonmukaisella viestillä eri kanavissa (Kitchen and Burgmann, 2015; Pickton and Broderick, 2005). Wymbsin (2011) mukaan digitaalinen markkinointi on tehokkainta yhdistettynä perinteisiin viestintäkanaviin, kuten puhelinmyyntiin, suoramainontaan tai henkilökohtaisiin tapaamisiin.

Tämän työn teoreettisessa mallissa yhdistyvät Kliatchkon (2008) määrittelemät integroidun markkinointiviestinnän neljä peruspilaria sekä asiakkaan ostopolkua suoraviivaisesti kuvaava AIDAS-malli, jota voidaan käyttää asiakaslähtöisen mainonnan suunnitteluun ostopolun eri vaiheissa: huomion herättäminen (awareness), kiinnostuksen herättäminen ja säilyttäminen (interest), ostohalukkuuden herättäminen (desire), ostotapahtuma (action) ja jälkiarvointi/tyytyväisyys (satisfaction) (Rawal, 2013). Tämä työ pyrkii kasvattamaan ymmärrystä, miten yritykset voivat herättää ostohalukkuuden potentiaalisten ja olemassa olevien asiakkaiden keskuudessa integroidun, digitaalisen markkinointiviestinnän keinoin. Työn pääpaino on integroidun markkinointiviestinnän sisältö- ja kanavapilareissa eli kohderyhmän kanava- ja sisältöpreferenssien ymmärtämisessä. Lisäksi, sisältöpilariin on liitetty kulutustottumuksiin ja päätöksentekoon liittyvät arvot. Kirjallisuuskatsaukseen perustuen vaikuttaisi siltä, että integroitua markkinointiviestintää ja arvoja on tutkittu pääasiassa vähittäiskaupan ja tuotemyynnin viitekehyksessä, jolloin tämä tutkimus edistää tutkimusta palveluiden viitekehyksessä.

Tämä maisterintutkielma on toteutettu Fortum HorsePowerille ja datankeruu on toteutettu haastatteleamalla kymmentä Fortum HorsePower-palvelun olemassa olevaa asiakasta, mikä on toisaalta myös tämän työn merkittävin rajoite, kohderyhmän ollessa pieni ja mahdollisesti homogeeninen.

Tutkimuslöydösten mukaan sisällöt ja kanavavalinnat voivat vaikuttaa asiakkaiden ostohalukkuuteen, kuitenkin tiedon tarve ja kanavavalinnat näyttäisi vaihtelevan asiakkaan ostopolun vaiheesta riippuen. Haastatteluiden avulla selvisi haastateltavien kanava- ja sisältöpreferenssien lisäksi myös arvot, jotka ohjaavat päätöksentekoa. Lisäksi useat haastateltavat kertoivat soittavansa tuttavilleen tai etsivänsä käyttäjäkokemuksia digitaalisista kanavista ennen ostopäätöksen tekemistä. Yli puolet haastatelluista voisi ostaa tuotteen positiivisten käyttäjäkokemusten perusteella. Yritysten kannattaisi hyödyntää näitä tutkimuslöydöksiä olennaisen ja houkuttelevan arvolupauksen ja mainonnan luomisessa sekä kanavavalinnoissa tämän kohderyhmän tavoittamiseksi. Haastateltavien mukaan verkkosivut, sähköposti ja Facebook ovat tärkeimmät digitaaliset kanavat, mutta myös mahdollisuutta hoitaa asioita puhelimitse ja tavata myyntiedustajia kasvotusten pidetään tärkeänä. Tutkimuksen teoreettinen hyöty on kasvattaa ymmärrystä hevostallin omistajista ilmiönä, heidän arvoistaan, kanava- ja sisältöpreferensseistä sekä miten näitä tietoja voidaan hyödyntää ostohalukkuuden edistämisessä. Tulevaisuuden tutkimus voisi syventää ymmärrystä integroidun markkinointiviestinnän hyödyntämisestä asiakkaan ostopolun eri vaiheissa, mikä auttaisi personoidumman mainonnan luomisessa ja tutkia asiakkaan kosketuspisteiden tehokkuutta eri kanavissa attribuutiomallinnuksen avulla.

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**Avainsanat** integroitua markkinointiviestintää, AIDAS-malli, digitaalinen markkinointi

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A big thank you also belongs to my family and friends for being very supportive during my studies and especially during this thesis writing process. Finally, I also want to thank my fellow students and professors for sharing instructive thoughts during and outside the lectures during the five academic years, and naturally my thesis supervisors, professor of practice Lasse Mitronen and professor Arto Lindblom for your guidance with this thesis work.

Primarily this thesis work is provided for the needs of Fortum HorsePower. However, to keep the confidential information safe and meet the academic requirements some of the information is provided only for Fortum in excluded documents, and this thesis work is written on a general level and therefore aims to provide useful information for marketers targeting products or services for people who have a horse stable of their own or who are responsible for a horse stable.

Enjoy your reading moments!

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDAS – awareness, interest, desire, action, satisfaction

B-to-B – business-to-business

B-to-C – business-to-customer

CVP – customer value proposition

F-to-F – face-to-face

IMC – integrated marketing communications

UGC – user-generated-content

WOM – word-of-mouth

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Marketing in general and especially marketing communications have faced significant changes over the years, which have forced marketers to change the practices of marketing communications (Kliatchko, 2005; Lane Keller, 2001). Digitalization has shifted the balance of market power from sellers to customers, which has led to customer empowerment, because the internet provides more product and service options, simpler transactions and ubiquitous access to unlimited information available on the internet. (Berthon, et al., 2012; Crittenden, Peterson and Albaum, 2010; Urban, 2004). Therefore, companies should be able to provide marketing communications that the target audience finds relevant and attractive, which demands a customer-oriented approach instead of product-orientation. Additionally, channel choices should be based on customer preferences to be able to deliver the message for the target audience. According to Wymbs (2011) online channels can be used to support the entire purchasing process of the customer from presale to postsale stage and the digital marketing is actually the most effective when it is integrated with other communication channels such as face-to-face, direct mail or phone (Wymbs, 2011).

The consumption of digital channels and devices is increasing continuously, since an average consumer spends approximately six hours per day on digital channels, and the consumption of social media itself is approximately two hours per day. On average 51% of the global digital media consumption in its totality takes place on a mobile device. (StatCounter Global Stats, 2018; Mediakix, 2016; Mander, 2015) In fact, Millennials and younger generation are called as the “mobile generation” (Spero and Stone, 2004), “digital natives” (Prensky, 2011) or “screeners” (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010) based on their consumption behavior. They have got used to mobile communications, ubiquitous Internet access and immediate, interactive communication from a very young age. (Spero and Stone, 2004) Consequently, modern customers and their widespread use of digital channels and devices offers marketers new opportunities to gather revenues, and companies have noticed the potential of digital marketing as well and started to invest more in digital visibility and growth (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Especially social media has become a high priority for many business managers, company decision-makers and consultants who are trying to find out how different social media platforms can be harnessed to increase profits (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). The study carried out by Fonecta in 2017 also supports previous research

by indicating that companies were investing the most in search engine optimization (SEO), websites and social media during the year 2017 and the trends for the future investments are predicted to be social media, content marketing and SEO. (Fonecta, 2017)

According to CEB (2017) business-to-business customer passes 57% of the decision-making journey before contacting the sales person. In the business-to-customer markets a sales person may only interact with the customer at the purchase action stage or not at all, for example, on the e-commerce. Hence, it is crucial to provide attractive content that triggers the purchase intention of the customer and also content that engages the existing customers to the company. However, modern customers are not satisfied with only being passive targets for marketing actions, they want to interact with the company and serve as active co-creators of value (Trainor, 2012) and engage with companies and connect with other users (Garretson, 2008). To succeed in a customer-empowered world, companies need a holistic and customer-centric communication strategy such as integrated marketing communications (IMC) to be able to provide an attractive content and deliver the message to customers in a successful manner. IMC helps companies to integrate promotional tools and deliver a solid and consistent message across channels to a company's stakeholders in a customer-oriented way by ensuring a seamless experience across channels. Integrated marketing communications aims at providing solutions, value and benefits for target audiences by providing communications that are based on their needs and wants that premise on database understanding of customers and customer interactions. (Berthon, et al., 2012; Taylor, 2009; Kliatchko, 2008; Wymbs, 2011; Urban, 2004).

One of the best-known IMC campaigns is Coca-Cola's Share a Coke-campaign, which capitalized sharing and self-expression in an emotional way. The objectives of the campaign were increasing sales and engaging with customers by talking to them. The campaign was implemented through various traditional and digital channels such as newspapers, TV commercials, social media, SMS and out-of-home advertising such as street and bus advertising and of course the physical product, which was personalized by replacing the brand name with a thousand different names and the most popular jargon used by millennials such as "bro", "better half" and "bestie" on the label. The campaign capitalized sharing, self-expression and individual storytelling and caused tremendous hype on social media. On social media people shared virtual Coke cans and also their own experiences of sharing a

Coke with their loved ones and having their own names on the Coke bottle with a #ShareaCoke hashtag. The campaign succeeded because the brand managed to connect with customers on a personal level, the slogan was a direct and powerful call-to-action reflecting sharing a physical coke with friends and to share Coke experiences on online channels, which led to an enormous amount of user generated visibility and advertising (Heble, 2016; Tarver, 2015). This successful integrated marketing communication campaign was firstly launched in Australia and within the first six-month period the campaign resulted in a seven-percent increase in Coca-Cola consumption among young adults, a five-percent increase of people drinking Coca-Cola and a three-percent increase in sales transactions. Later the campaign was launched in over 70 different countries around the world and it has been repeated several times. (Storybox, 2017; Heble, 2016; Hepburn, 2015; Tarver, 2015; Incitrio, 2014)

### **1.1 Research objectives**

Based on the literature review, it seems that value-based decision-making criteria and integrated marketing communication (IMC) elements are lacking in theoretical conceptualization in a business-to-customer (B-to-C), service-marketing context. Both topics seem to be more researched in a business-to-business (B-to-B) and especially in product or retail context. The research phenomenon in this thesis work is to understand how these above-mentioned factors can advance purchase intention among horse people, meaning people who utilize horses as a hobby or as a livelihood. Despite the fact that some of the interviewees are entrepreneurs, who have their own companies, the interviews revealed that the decision-making is more similar to B-to-C than B-to-B, therefore the context of the work is in its entirety B-to-C.

This thesis work is provided for the needs of Fortum HorsePower business unit. The purpose of this thesis work is to improve digital marketing by understanding the values that drive decision-making among interviewees and topics that are meaningful for them, which helps to create an attractive content and target it at the different information needs of customers as well as to understand the channel preferences of the interviewees so the message can reach the target segment. The aim of an improved content and channel strategy is to advance the

service awareness and purchase intention among potential customers, which may lead to business growth in national and international markets.

The research question is:

*How to increase purchase intention of customers through integrated marketing communications on digital media?*

The sub-questions are:

*Which are the key dimensions of customer value that could be utilized in customer value proposition to advance purchase intention?*

*Which are the most preferred digital channels?*

*Does user-generated content affect purchase intention?*

*What kind of content is the most attractive?*

Since digitalization has empowered customers, it is reasonable to approach the research problem on a customer-centric basis by interviewing customers. The research findings may offer companies valuable insight into the values that are related to horse stable owners' decision-making criteria that could advance the purchase intention when used in digital marketing. Information may also provide insight for companies to be able to choose the right channels to reach customers.

## **1.2 Structure of the thesis**

The background information of this thesis is based on value and integrated marketing communications (IMC) literature. According to Kliatchko (2008) IMC consists of four pillars that are content, channels, stakeholders and results. Due to the extensive extent of IMC, this thesis work is focused on increasing purchase intention of customers through content and channel pillars of IMC, and focuses only on digital marketing channels to limit the scope of this work. Additionally, stakeholders are covered concisely regarding to customers, and the results part is delivered to Fortum HorsePower but excluded from this work.

The introduction presented in chapter 1 is followed by a literature review that covers the key themes related to integrated marketing communications, customer value theory and purchasing journey. The literature review is followed by methodology in chapter 3, which introduces the case company and the research and analysis method. Chapter 4 presents the key results of empirical findings. Chapter 5 covers the discussion, including the evaluation of the results in light of previous research as well as managerial implications, suggestions for further research and the limitations of this research. The conclusions are presented in the chapter 6, which is the last chapter of this thesis work.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Digital marketing is a marketing practice that utilizes technologies and online distribution channels to reach consumers for product and service promotion purposes and to build relationships by interacting with customers through their preferred channels (Nagarathinam, 2017; Taken Smith, 2012; Simmons, 2008). Digital Marketing Institute defines digital marketing as a creation of integrated, measurable and targeted communication by utilizing digital technologies. Digital marketing aims at acquiring and retaining customers and building deep, meaningful relationships with them within a multi-channel buying process and customer lifecycle. (Chaffey, 2010; Smith, 2007) According to Wymbs (2011) digital marketing builds the critical link between customer digital touchpoints such as social networks, search engine, email, mobile and ecommerce, and a company's digital conversation interfaces such as digital advertising, email, channel integration and search engine optimization (SEO).

New media, such as social media, blogs, forums and other forms of medias relying on computers, have become a critical form of marketing, because consumers are spending increasing amounts of time browsing different digital channels on digital devices. The widespread use of digital channels and devices offers new opportunities for marketers to gather revenues from the marketing function, for example Dell's presence in Twitter has generated them \$ 1 million additional revenue due to sales alerts (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Other companies have noticed the potential of digital marketing as well and started to invest more in digital visibility and growth. For example, industrial companies have expanded the role of digital marketing in their marketing strategies and increased digital marketing investments to equate with a one-quarter amount of their total marketing budgets (Gartner, 2013). In addition to that, social media has become a high priority for many business managers, company decision makers and consults that are trying to find out how different social media platforms can be harnessed to increase profits (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

Technology can enable more effective selling practices, but simultaneously changes in the marketplace channel structure are increasing the difficulty and complexity of selling to consumers. Changes are being partly driven by technological revolution incorporating with

interactive digital media which is empowering consumers and decreasing the control the sales people have. (Crittenden, Peterson and Albaum, 2010) Garretson (2008) outlines that consumers are increasingly using digital media for engaging to companies and brands and connecting with other consumers who may have valuable insights. Customers are no longer satisfied with being only passive targets for marketing actions, but are instead expecting to be a part of a company's processes, interact with the company and serve as active co-creators of value. Companies should take advantage of technologies and develop capabilities to be able to meet these changing relationship expectations. (Trainor, 2012) According to Wymbs (2011) digital marketing is the most effective when it is integrated with other communication channels such as face-to-face, direct mail or phone. In fact, online channels can be used to support the entire purchasing process from presale to postsale stage (Wymbs, 2011). Therefore, companies could benefit from utilizing an integrated marketing communication strategy and consequently ensure the spread of a solid and consistent message as well as provide a seamless experience for customers across different channels (Kitchen and Burgmann, 2015; Pickton and Broderick, 2005). According to Nagarathinam (2017), digital marketing can be considered generally as an umbrella term for all technology-based marketing.

## **2.1 AIDAS-model**

AIDA-model is one of the oldest models in marketing and it was developed by Lewis in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1911, "satisfaction" was added to the model by Sheldon and the original model became AIDAS. (Barry and Howard, 1990) AIDAS-model has been used in advertising and marketing to understand the effect of advertising media and therefore in creating a marketing communication strategy based on customers' purchasing journey. Ashcroft and Hoey (2001) suggested that the concept of AIDA-model could be used in online marketing and later Wood and Burkhalter (2013) specified that the concepts of AIDA model could be applied to Twitter and other social media business promotion. Rehman et al. (2014) researched the utilization potential of AIDA model in email and mobile marketing. The findings of the study by Rehman et al. (2014) suggested that mobile marketing has a significant effect on awareness, interest and action stages.

The AIDAS model stands for Awareness-Interest-Desire-Action-Satisfaction and describes the stages occurring during the customer's purchasing journey. (Rawal, 2013) AIDAS-model helps to explain how a marketing communication message shall involve and engage customers in brand choice and therefore move consumers from brand awareness towards purchase action. Awareness, the first stage of the model, refers to arising attention of customers with eye-catching product advertising. Interest is the second stage of the model. It signifies arising and maintaining the customer's interest towards the product for instance with detailed product information on a company website. The third stage is creating a wish for the consumer to own the product. According to Rossiter and Percy (1980) visual and verbal advertisements can trigger the feeling of actually using the product through the imagery of the customer, which can create the desire for purchase. Action stage signifies the real purchasing action, where purchases occur and satisfaction is the stage where the customer evaluates the purchase and may become a loyal customer. Awareness, interest and desire belong to the pre-purchase stage of customers, action stage equates with the purchase and satisfaction belongs to the post-purchase stage.

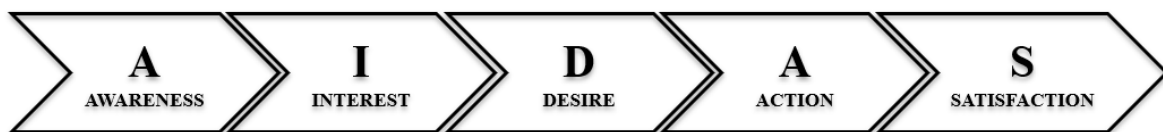


Figure 1 AIDAS-model

## 2.2 Integrated marketing communications

Marketing communication refers to the promotion, which is one element of the 4Ps in a marketing mix (product, price, place, promotion). It can be also considered as the voice of the brand. Companies utilize marketing communications to persuade, inform, inspire and remind customers directly or indirectly about the brands, products and services they sell (Kotler et al., 2012; Lane Keller, 2001) and the benefits customers can obtain by consuming the products or services (Clow, 2010). Companies also aim at establishing interactive dialogue and relationships with consumers with the means of marketing communications. (Kotler et al., 2012; Lane Keller, 2001). According to Kotler et al. (2012) the promotion mix or marketing communication mix consists of eight tactical elements that companies use to pursue their objectives. The elements are advertising, sales promotion, events and

experiences, public relations and publicity, direct marketing, word-of-mouth marketing, interactive marketing and personal selling. In a nutshell, integrated marketing communication creates synergy among those different communication mix elements to deliver a solid and consistent message to stakeholders across different channels by conforming, optimizing and coordinating the marketing communications (Kitchen and Burgmann, 2015; Pitta, Weisgal and Lynagh, 2006; Pickton and Broderick, 2005).

Kliatchko (2005) suggests that integrated marketing communication (IMC) is rather a natural evolution of marketing communications than a revolution of marketing. Evolution is a consequence of customer empowerment and changes in the market place, media and communications. Also Schultz (2003) argued that those drastic changes are primarily driven by the evolution of information technology and have caused the shift from the product-oriented, mass-marketing theories to the customer-oriented, data-driven, measurable, interactive and customized approaches of IMC (Wymbs, 2011; Crittenden, Peterson and Albaum, 2010; Kliatchko, 2005; Urban, 2004). Mihart (2012) suggests that integrated marketing communication nowadays is a major way to achieve the objectives of the company and it works specifically through all the 4P elements of marketing mix: product, price, place and promotion (Mihart, 2012). IMC utilizes different marketing strategies such as improving sales or increasing brand awareness, and it allows coupling different methods together, which combines the benefits of each channel and therefore leads to a greater and clearer impact compared to using each channel individually. IMC can lead to cost savings, a better use of communication mix elements and media, eased working relations between different departments and enhanced returns and greater efficiencies. For consumers IMC creates a unified and seamless brand experience across channels, a perception that they are valued and understood by communication that is clearly targeted at their needs. (Kitchen and Burgmann, 2015)

According to Kliatchko (2008) IMC consists of four pillars, which are stakeholders, content, channels and results. Stakeholders refers to all important external or internal audiences to whom communications are directed. The second pillar is content, which can be divided into two parts: messages and incentives. Messages signifies brand concepts; ideas and all perceptions marketers are delivering to company's stakeholders. Incentives are short-term offers or rewards to stakeholders for having done something valuable for the consumer and

the firm. (Kliatchko, 2008 originally Schultz & Schultz, 2004). The third pillar is about channel choices, which is an important part of marketing communications and building brand awareness. In order to choose the right channels, it is critical to understand consumer behavior and channel preferences. The results, the last pillar of IMC emphasizes measuring effectiveness of communications with consumers' behavioral responses (eg. purchases made) and outcomes (financial returns). IMC drives for accountability, behavioral-based measures, customer valuation, wealth contribution, financial measurements and ROCI income flows and returns. (Kliatchko, 2008; 2005).

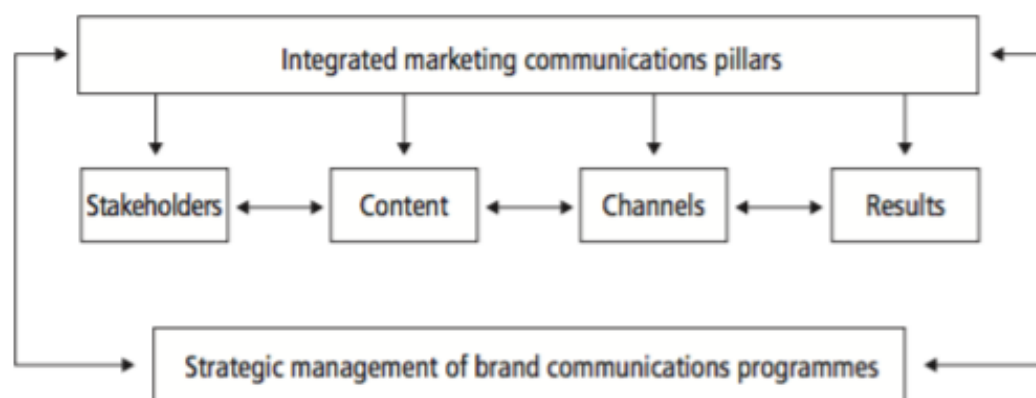


Figure 2 Four pillars of IMC by Kliatchko (2008)

### 2.2.1 Content

Repeated purchases or customer loyalty are critical for company success and survival. According to a study by Mainspring and Bain & Company (2000) the average customer must buy four times from an e-commerce before the company can profit from that customer. Therefore, it is crucial to understand why customers are willing to make repurchases through their online stores. (Chiu et al., 2012) Understanding the motives of the customers is important also in creation of advertising content that attracts the target segment. However, it is important to remember that nowadays customers expect interactive communications instead of being passive targets of marketing communications (Trainor, 2012). In the digital environment, customers can move quickly from awareness to action: first the customers become aware of a product and visit a website, then they take their time to learn about the product, orientate themselves with the product and then they may initiate a purchase. (Chiagouris and Wansley, 2000). Therefore, marketing tactics should be customized at each

stage of customer journey where the potential customer is, to maintain his engagement (Chiagouris and Wansley, 2000). The marketing content can aim at different objectives such as creating brand or product awareness, increasing sales, building relationships and engaging, generating leads or more website visits (Dodson, 2016).

#### *2.2.1.1 Different content types according to previous research*

Marketers are working hard to select and create context-appropriate and attractive content to present products effectively (Rossiter and Percy, 1980). The objective of advertising is to persuade consumer behaviour towards a purchase by creating and maintaining attitudes towards products (Rossiter and Percy, 1980). Earlier advertising favored highly informational content, but nowadays the main purpose of advertising is to build relationships with existing and potential consumers, because the digitalization has shifted the requirements of advertising into more consumer-centric and relationship-building-oriented (Berthon, et al., 2012; Wymbs, 2011; Urban, 2004).

Digital environment is challenging the advertising even further, because digital channels offer a low-threshold marketing platform for companies and the popularity of channels has led to a myriad amount of advertisements, leading to an information overflow among consumers which may even cause avoidance of advertising (Melville and Plice, 2008). On the other hand, digital technology allows marketers to attract consumers with various innovative selling actions. Instead of providing only traditional television advertisements or phone calls, which consumers may consider disturbing or interruptive, marketers are aiming at triggering a pull-effect among consumers. A pull-effect implies consumers becoming volunteer participants of the selling process, which often leads to a more positive attitude and approval towards the brand. (Chiagouris and Wansley, 2000) Traditional pull tactics are sales promotions and discounts and word-of-mouth referrals. To arise the attention of customers, advertisements need to be attractive, but also relevant for the customers and differentiate from the advertisements of other companies (Taylor, 2009; Smith and Yang, 2004; Rossiter and Percy, 1980). Advertising is often presented in visual and/or verbal form in different types of advertisements (Rossiter and Percy, 1980). Especially pictures and videos are effective forms of presenting the product, because they will help customers to internalize the message based on their personal imagery. Visual advertisements aim at

triggering the imagery of the customer in a way that people can “see” themselves using the product (Rossiter and Percy, 1980; Shepard, 1978). In fact, advertisements can be as effective as actual experience of using the product; if the advertisement succeeds in activating the visual imagery of a customer and increasing attitude toward the product, it may guide the customer towards a purchase (Rossiter and Percy, 1980). Ramsay (2010) highlights the importance of engaging with audience in a right manner: the tone of voice, language and content should be tailored for the audience. Companies should think social media conversations as small business meetings, where no one goes with “one fits all” solution or without personalized content that fits to the audience (Ramsay, 2010). Despite the right audience, if the tone of voice is wrong and the company fails to humanize the contact through targeting and personalization, the campaign may remain with low or no engagement.

Taylor (2009) suggests that campaigns combining interactivity and entertaining elements tend to be successful and effective. McMillan, Hwang and Lee (2003) stated that interactivity is also the key driver of website success, because it is engaging customers for a longer period of time and in a greater depth than traditional marketing activities. Entertaining and interactive content such as quizzes, chats, mini-movies and voting engage consumers effectively and arise their interest to stay on a website (McMillan, Hwang and Lee, 2003). In general, entertaining elements in the advertisements generate positive attitudes towards the ad and increase the purchase intention of consumers (Choi, Hwang and McMillan, 2008). Therefore, digital marketing communication should utilize the brand building characteristics of a digital media brand to be effective, as well as take advantage of relationship building and consumer engaging possibilities offered by digital environment. (Chiagouris and Wansley, 2000) For instance brief registration forms, games and intelligent components that can identify customers and greet them by name are effective website elements advancing relationship-building continuum. An example of an engaging, interactive campaign was Amazon’s book packaging contest where a novelist started the first sentences of the book and then visitors continued writing the story. (Chiagouris and Wansley, 2000) Nowadays many companies are building relationship with customers by using customer data from registered users to create personal recommendations and customized news.

User-generated content (UGC) is one of the main topics in the digital marketing content literature (eg. Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Hennig-Thurau et al, 2010; Taken Smith, 2012; Berthon, et al., 2012). UGC means content that is produced by the customers or users instead of companies. The most general type of UGC are product reviews by the customers and informal conversations on social media or forums. Additionally, self-created advertising films and customer panels on product development teams are defined as user-generated content. Customers can benefit from UGC by improving their skills to use the product and also by learning more about the product and product related topics. (Rowley, 2004)

### *2.2.1.2 Customer value proposition*

According to Webster (1994), customer value proposition is a communication device, which aims at attracting a carefully defined group of potential customers with a verbal statement that combines the needs and preferences of the target group and the core competences of the company. To simplify, customer value proposition creates customer expectation by presenting the set of benefits or experience a product or a service promises to deliver for the customer (Kotler et al., 2012). According to Kotler et al. (2012), value proposition is delivered through all customer experiences that occur on the way acquiring the product or service or when using it, which then leads to a perceived value. According to Peter and Olson (1990), the word “value” signifies usefulness, desirability or importance. “Consumer values” or “personal values” signify important personal goals that individuals pursue (Wilkie, 1990) and beliefs that individuals have about important aspects of themselves. Personal values are the ultimate outcomes of individual behavior, such as feelings of belonging, self-esteem or other value orientations (Rokeach, 1973). Some of the goals can be achieved through possession or consumption of products (Huber, Herrmann and Morgan, 2001).

Many marketing strategists and industrial-organization economists propose that the creation of a superior customer value is the cornerstone behind the success of the companies (Huber, Herrmann and Morgan, 2001). Rintamäki, Kuusela and Mitronen (2007) suggest that the competitive advantage of successful retailers and service providers can be explained with a logic where service quality advances customer value, leading to increased customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions, eventually creating loyalty that manifests itself in enhanced profitability. (eg. Wang et al., 2004; Cronin, Brady and Hult, 2000) American

Marketing Association (AMA) defines value as “the central goal and output of marketing”, meaning that the marketing is a device for creating customer value, but it also enables the formation of value in other stakeholder groups as well (Rintamäki, 2016). Sheth et al. (1991) proposed five dimensions of customer value, which are functional, social, emotional, epistemic and conditional. Later, Sweeney and Soutar (2001) separated the functional value into quality and price aspects and developed “PERVAL”-model, which stands for perceived value. Conditional (value perception in a specific situation) and epistemic (surprise or novelty aspect of a product) values proposed by Sheth et al. (1991) are excluded from PERVAL-model, because they are considered as not applicable or less important dimensions in case of considering the purchase of a durable good. Therefore, PERVAL-model consists of following values. The emotional value stands for utility resulting from the affective condition derived from a service or product. The social value refers to social utility that the service or product generates. The functional value is divided into quality and price aspects and it signifies the utility that derives from the expected performance and perceived quality of the service or product. (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001; Sheth et al., 1991) Rintamäki, Kuusela and Mitronen (2007) modified previous classifications and identified four key dimensions of customer value, which are economic, emotional, functional and symbolic. Economic value refers to a product’s financial value. The customer adjusts the economic value to other substitutes in the market and defines the value as the lowest price or the best tradeoff between price and quality (Rintamäki, Kuusela and Mitronen, 2007; Gale 1994; Zeithaml, 1988). Emotional value is defined as the capability of the product or service to arise feelings or affective states (Sheth et al., 1991). Functional value is for customers seeking a convenient solution. Functional value refers to the perceived utility that the customer receives from the functional, utilitarian or physical performance of the product or service performance. (Sheth et al., 1991) Symbolic value refers to something other than the obvious function of the product, customers are motivated by the self-expressive aspects of consumption and the symbolic value can be defined as positive consumption meanings, which are communicated to others or attached to self and hence enable self-expression (Rintamäki, Kuusela, Mitronen, 2007).

Consumer value should be captured to the value proposition that will be communicated to customers. The proposition should be customer-oriented but also capture the essentials of the company’s offering (Rintamäki, Kuusela and Mitronen, 2007) Rintamäki, Kuusela and

Mitronen (2007) suggest that a good value proposition should be precise enough to express the unique nature of interactive and subjective consumption experiences, but also general enough to attract appropriate customer segments with similar value needs within the segment. Consumer researchers are arguing that consumers buy products not for the sake of transactional value but because of product benefits that will satisfy their personal needs or values (Huber, Herrmann and Morgan, 2001). However, product benefits alone do not completely explain the consumer's product choice. Even if the consumer may opine a product desirable, assuming that the consumer has the financial capacity to purchase the product, it is not obvious that a purchase will follow. From a financial perspective the customer may evaluate the purchase with cost-benefit ratio, especially when the customer considers costs as "significant" (Olshavsky and Granbois, 1979). Both, descriptive (personal values) and normative (buyer's evaluation, cost-benefit) aspects are essential in guiding the purchase intention (Saren and Tzokas, 1998).

Batra and Ahtola (1990) state that the customers are purchasing goods and services for two basic reasons: hedonic and utilitarian. Hedonic reasons are related to emotional consumption and utilitarian reasons are based on necessity and satisfaction of needs. Utilitarian purchases are made in an efficient and deliberate manner and the shopper may feel satisfied and perceive value only if the purchase is successfully conducted. For instance, Christmas purchases done with shopping lists are considered as successfully conducted only when all the items on the list have been purchased (Babin, Darden and Griffin, 1994). Hedonic value is perceived based on emotional and entertaining worth of shopping (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). Additionally, the customer may have fantasies that they expect the product to fulfill or arouse. Hedonic value is evaluated in a subjective and personal manner. (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982) Babin, Darden and Griffin (1994) suggest that hedonic value can be perceived for example from bargains. According to Rintamäki (2016) understanding the drivers of shopping and consumers channel usage (offline, online, mobile) across the stages of purchase journey (pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase stages) offers the opportunity for retailers to create customer value and therefore achieve a competitive advantage (Rintamäki, 2016).

### *2.2.1.3 Value vs. Sacrifice in content creation*

According to Zeithaml (1998), for one customer, a low price refers value and for another “what I get versus what I give” defines the value, referring to the equation and the difference between positive and negative consequences. Salem Khalifa (2004) suggests that consumer values reflect the personal values of individual customers. Customers base their judgement of value on trade-off in benefits (positive consequences) and costs or sacrifice (negative consequences) (Woodruff and Gardial, 1996; Mazumdar, 1993). “Sacrifice” signifies all the non-monetary factors that the consumer needs to give up to consume or acquire a service or a product, such as energy, time or effort (Heskett et al., 1997; Zeithaml, 1988). These positive or negative consequences may occur directly from consuming or the action of consumption, from reactions of others towards consumption behavior or indirectly at a later point of time. Consumers aim to choose actions that produce positive consequences and minimize undesired negative consequences (Peter and Olson, 1990). When the benefits are greater than sacrifices, the value is created. (Woodruff and Gardial, 1996; Normann and Ramirez, 1993; Day, 1990) Salem Khalifa (2004) presents Day’s (1990) original suggestion that the concept of customer value can be expressed as an equation, in which the perceived customer value is the difference between the customer’s perceived benefits and costs, or the level of return in the product benefits for payment (Normann and Ramirez, 1993). Carothers and Adams (1991) suggested that many consumers may value their time over dollar costs. Their suggestion was supported by Mazumdar (1993) who proposed that customers are not simply influenced by a lower price or high quality, but are instead becoming more value-oriented and tend to make a reasonable trade-off between the perceived benefits and costs/sacrifices in the process of consuming and obtaining services or products.

### **2.2.2 Channels**

Digital marketing channels vary slightly depending on the definition, but digital marketing can be generally considered as an umbrella term for all technology-based marketing (Nagarathinam, 2017). Companies should choose digital channels suitable for their business and that support the company’s business goals (Kiang, Raghu and Shang, 2000). However, it is also critical to ensure the target audience’s presence in the chosen channels to be able to reach them. Additionally, the medium where the ad is presented can also influence the

interpretation of the advertisement (Puntoni, Schroeder and Ritson, 2010). The channels should be suitable for the devices consumers are using. As Mediakix (2016) points out, mobile devices are the most used devices as 60% of the digital marketing consumption takes place on a mobile device. According to literature email marketing is a cost-effective tool for delivering relevant marketing information to targeted subscribers (Dodson, 2016). Its features enable the creation of personalized messages and targeting emails for selected consumer segments and other stakeholder groups. Email is a widely used business tool among marketers, because it is user-friendly and simple to implement due to its highly structured and process-driven characteristics. (Dodson, 2016; Pavlov, Melville and Plice, 2008). However, low production costs and other benefits of email marketing increase the volume of emails sent by the marketers, which leads to an information overflow among consumers. Additionally, some companies buy email lists and then send consumers completely irrelevant and unsolicited messages, also known as spam. Therefore, customers may form a negative attitude towards all commercial emails. (Pavlov, Melville and Plice, 2008)

Company website is the global marketplace for the company (Ryan and Jones, 2009), where consumers can find information about the product or service, contacts, company information, current news and other important information. The potential of websites as a marketing and information medium was noticed already in the mid-1990s (Ryan and Jones, 2009). According to Dahlén, Rasch and Rosengren (2003) websites are an important advertising tool for high-involvement products such as cars, optics, spa services and fashion, which are high capital value investments and purchased after careful consideration. When customers are planning high-value investments, they are prepared to spend a longer time and put more effort on seeking and proceeding advertisements and information compared to low-value investments such as groceries. Therefore, a website is a better channel compared to traditional medias such as TV advertising because the customer is in control of the time s/he spends on familiarizing with the information on the website and also what kind of information s/he wants to find. (Dahlén, Rasch and Rosengren, 2003). To make visitors stay as long as possible on the websites, it is critical that the website is filled with information that the consumer finds relevant (Dahlén, Rasch and Rosengren, 2003). Additionally, websites should be structured well and the information should be easy to find. Dahlén, Rasch and Rosengren (2003) found out in their study that first-time visitors stay longer in a high-

involvement product websites and repeating visitors only for a moment. The findings were opposite in low-involvement product websites such as chocolate bar websites. In low-involvement product sites customers are more likely stay longer on a website when they repeat their visit, especially when websites engage visitors with games, videos, competitions, et cetera. (Dahlén, Rasch and Rosengren, 2003) The idea is to generate traffic to the website so the customer can then satisfy their information needs and learn more about the product. Dahlén, Rasch and Rosengren (2003) found out that a visit on the website of a high-involvement product can increase brand attitude.

Social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Youtube are getting more and more popular. At the moment, Facebook is the most popular social media networking site with over 2 billion active users monthly, based on 2017 statistics (Facebook 2018). The second most popular social sharing site is the video-sharing platform Youtube with around 1.5 billion active users monthly. The third most popular social media site is a Facebook-owned photo-sharing application Instagram with 800 million users. (Youtube, 2018; Instagram, 2017) Facebook is a free online social networking site where registered users can connect and share information with their friends and family. Facebook allows users to create profiles, upload videos and photos, update stories on news feed, send messages and connect with brands and people they know. For companies and marketers Facebook has become an attractive channel to showcase products, generate leads, enhance brand awareness and create relationships with customers, which is not surprising because of the huge amount of its active users (Facebook., 2018.; Zephoria, 2018). For companies Facebook offers myriad marketing features, which help to reach clients, create a Facebook retargeting campaigns or campaigns to show marketing messages on customers` or potential customers` Facebook feed (Ascierto, 2017). Companies can manage and organize their business on Facebook with Facebook Business Manager, which is a free platform provided by Facebook. Business Manager helps marketers to integrate outsourced and inhouse marketing efforts in Facebook such as manage the company site and create and track advertisements. (Facebook, 2018) However, while companies are increasing their investments on social media, algorithms of social media platforms are changed simultaneously. The latest significant change took place in January 2018, when Facebook changed its algorithms towards a better user-centricity by decreasing organic reach of the commercial posts significantly, meaning that companies need to work harder than ever to

get customers' attention. (Tien, 2018). With the new changes, Facebook is aiming at ensuring "the time is well spent in the platform." Companies will be rewarded with an increased reach if they are able to provide "meaningful interactions" with their followers. (Tien, 2018) The very much used engagement baits such as posts that encourage tagging a friend, voting with reaction et cetera, are no longer effective for acquiring a better reach, instead they may actually reduce the reach level significantly in a long run (Silverman and Huang, 2017).

Youtube is a video-sharing service, owned by Google. It allows users to create a personal channel to upload videos and like, comment and share other users' videos. Companies can utilize Youtube for promoting their products, demonstrating their experience, creating community and showing their brand personality (Business Queensland, n.d.). Additionally, Youtube is the most important audio-visual search engine, which offers content optimization possibilities to boost company rankings online, dynamic video retargeting implementation possibilities, remarketing and pre-roll advertising options along with video-sharing and advertising possibilities. (Ascierto, 2017; Youtube, 2018). Instagram is a platform for sharing photos and short videos, along with live stories made of photos and short videos that disappear in the end of each day (Campbell, 2015). It is an all-in-one app, including the necessary features for taking, editing and uploading the photos. In addition, Instagram allows users to record their photos geographically on "Photo Map", send personal photo messages for other users on "Direct" page and it also recommends new pages for users to follow on "Explore" page (Lee, et al., 2015). Instagram has over 800 million active users monthly and over 500 million active users daily. 59% of all Instagram users worldwide are 18-29 years old (York, 2017) Instagram is owned by Facebook and it is marketed as a social medium that allows users to transform an image into a forever lasting memory. (Instagram, 2017; Lee, et al., 2015) The main idiosyncrasy of Instagram is the usage of hashtags. The original purpose for hashtags is to label the content (Campbell, 2015) and serve as a search engine (Moss, 2014) so other people sharing the interest in the same topic can find interesting content quickly from the hashtag corresponding page (Instagram Help Center, 2017; Campbell, 2015). Hashtags are very popular especially among younger demographic. Their photos are usually uploaded with 15 to 20 hashtags at a time to be more searchable and visible to pick-up new followers in Instagram. (Moss, 2014) According to study by Lee et al. (2015) Instagram usage is based on five motives; social interaction, archiving, peeking,

self-expression and escapism. Companies can utilize Instagram to engage with consumers, inspire and connect with them, advertise, increase sales and brand awareness by telling the story of the company in a visual, creative way. (Lee et al., 2015; Instagram, 2017).

Other important digital marketing channels are search engine optimization and search engine marketing. A website is not beneficial if it cannot be found. Search engine optimization (SEO) is a long-term process of maximizing website visitors by improving the website ranking in search engines such as Google, Yahoo and Bing (Search Engine Land, 2017). Search engines are based on sophisticated algorithms that collect information from all websites and measure the quality of a website (Zilincan, 2015) to help people find exactly what they are looking for. (Search Engine Land, 2017) The use of SEO should raise the website to the first positions in organic search results (Zilincan, 2015). SEO is divided into two groups, on-page and off-page. On-page SEO means that the publisher can modify the structure of the website. Elements that can be affected by the publisher are for instance content, titles, domain name, headings, internal links, URL structure, meta tags and site map. Off-page SEO meaning technique-independent website structure elements that cannot be affected by the publisher, but readers, visitors and other publishers can influence those elements such as social networks, blogs, forums, audio-visual media sharing and personal settings. Even though these elements are not under control of a publisher, they can affect the search ranking positively and boost traffic to the website (Zilincan, 2015). Improving the ranking of a website on search engines requires at least creating a unique and interesting website content, a user-friendly URL structure, a clear domain name, context relevant titles and keywords, descriptive headings and a structured source code with a quickly loading interface (Zilincan, 2015). When a search engine starts to recognize the content, the page will be ranked higher in the results, so the reputation matters as well (Search Engine Land, 2017).

Search Engine Marketing (SEM) is a chargeable version of SEO, where an advertiser buys visibility from the search engine provider and pays a fee every time when someone clicks the search engine ad. The most popular advertising system is Google Adwords, which enables advertisers to create ads appearing on Google's search engine and other Google properties. When audience is searching with certain keywords, Google chooses the best matching sites within AdWords advertisers to show pages in the top of the search result

page. (Baadsgaard, 2017; Dodson, 2016) When customer types “luxury hotels in Bahamas” in Google and the first shown hotel happens to be an unknown brand due to a paid advertisement, which is followed by more popular brands without search engine advertisements, the customer probably considers the first hotel option being the most luxury one, despite its unknown brand (Dou et., al, 2010). This is how the search engine ranking can impact the customer’s evaluation of the brand, when the user is not such an advanced Internet user that he would know that the first option is the brand who is making the best use out of search engine marketing. (Dou et., al, 2010) Dou et., al. (2010A), presenting findings of Internet Advertising Bureau’s (2004) report, indicate that search engine rankings are increasing brand awareness, and for sustainable, long-term brand awareness, companies should put effort into organic search rankings (Dou et., al, 2010).

### **2.2.3 Stakeholders**

Stakeholders in integrated marketing communication refers to all relevant internal and external audiences. Internal audiences refer to the public inside the organization such as employees and managers. External audiences refer to customers, prospects and other audiences outside the organization. (Kliatchko, 2008) Identifying customers and prospects accurately is crucial for the success of any integrated marketing communications strategy. As a customer-oriented model, IMC is based on a deep understanding of the target customer segment, and business issues and competitive environment of the brand are analyzed from a viewpoint of the target audience. (Kliatchko, 2008) Integrated marketing communication aims at accomplishing a meaningful dialogue with customers to address their needs and wants and at establishing profitable and long-term relationships with customers over time (Kliatchko, 2005). Instead of being in control of prospects and customers, IMC aims at providing solutions to the problems of the customers, deepening the relationship with the brand and customers and creating value for them. It aims at being responsive and sensitive to the aspirations, needs, wants and expectations of the customers and prospects (Kliatchko, 2008).

## 2.3 Theoretical model

Theoretical model in this thesis is built based on four pillars of integrated marketing communications by Kliatchko (2008) and the AIDAS-model referring to the stages of a customer's purchasing journey.

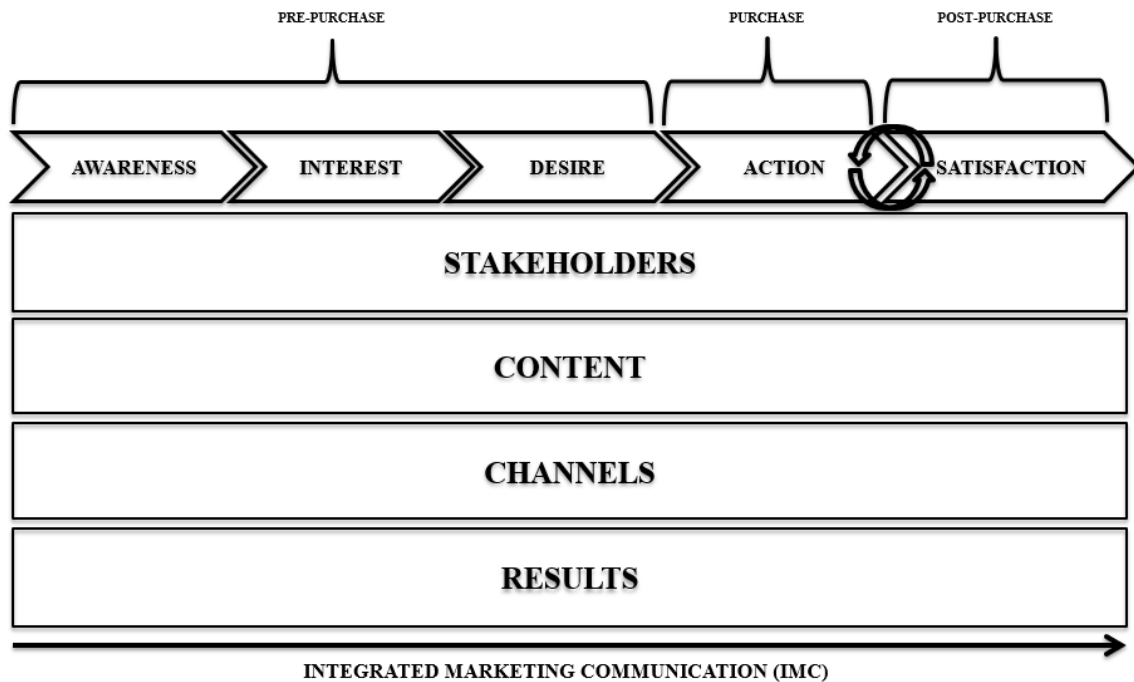


Figure 3 Theoretical model (adapted from Kliatchko, 2008, Sheldon, 1911 and Lewis, 1900)

A customer's purchasing journey starts with awareness of the company, a product or a service. Interest stage refers to arising and maintaining customer's interest towards the product or a service. The third stage is customer's desire to own a product or "become a member of the service." These three stages are included in the pre-purchase stage, where the customer evaluates the purchase. In case of success, the pre-purchase stage is followed by the purchase stage that refers to the purchase action. The last stage "satisfaction" refers to the evaluation of the purchase, where the customer considers if the purchase and consumption of customer value proposition were desirable. Satisfaction may also accomplish customer loyalty and repurchases, which are critical for the success of the company. Additionally, a satisfied customer may become a promoter who provides positive word-of-mouth.

Integrated marketing communication is an important part of the model in terms of successful marketing actions, especially content and channel choices. The content should be attractive and relevant for the target audience, which requires deep understanding of the target audience (stakeholders), and channel choices should be based on preferences of the target audience to be able to deliver the message successfully. The purpose of IMC is to deliver a solid and consistent image of the brand across channels. However, information needs of customers vary depending of the stage in the purchasing journey. The customer may be satisfied with general information of the company, service or product at the awareness stage, but probably different, more personalized content is required to arise purchase intention, a desire to buy.

The model provides a framework for planning integrated marketing communications for different information needs of customers. Despite the stage of the customer journey, the communications should be consistent (Kitchen and Burgmann, 2015; Pickton and Broderick, 2005). The model helps to understand how the customers can be moved from brand awareness towards purchase action by utilizing IMC strategy. Additionally, this model can be used as a framework when planning IMC strategy for the company.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This chapter focuses on research methodology. First the concept of the case business Fortum HorsePower is introduced to clarify the background for this research. After that, the research philosophy and design are presented. The data collection and analysis process are covered in the end of this chapter.

#### **3.1 Case Fortum HorsePower**

Fortum is one of the leading clean energy companies in the Nordics, which focuses on developing and offering electricity, cooling and heating solutions for its customers. Fortum provides also smart energy solutions for consumers and services for power generation industry. In addition to the energy solutions, Fortum is focusing on recycling and waste solutions that aim to improve resource efficiency and provide hassle-free waste management. Fortum's vision is "for a cleaner world." (Fortum, 2018) Fortum Corporation founded an internal startup in 2015, called Fortum HorsePower to advance resource efficiency and circular economy by using horse manure as a solid biofuel. The internal startup became a part of the recycling and waste solutions line business in the beginning of the year 2018. (Fortum, 2018) Fortum HorsePower is based on recycling of materials and the reduction and utilization of generated waste. Fortum HorsePower offers bedding and manure management service for horse stables by delivering wood-based beddings, which are initially by-products of forest industry and later collecting the mixture of bedding and manure to transport it to the power plant to utilize it as a source of energy production. (Fortum HorsePower, 2018) Therefore, HorsePower-service offers an opportunity also for horse stables to advance a sustainable way of acting and to contribute to a more sustainable future simultaneously when enjoying a convenient and easy way of getting rid of the manure.

The utilization of horse manure is a controversial topic among horse people and farmers – some people strongly opine that horse manure should be utilized as a fertilizer in the arable land. However, the usage of manure as a fertilizer is not so simple: manure must be clean to avoid salmonella and other diseases ending up to the field and some parasites may live up to 10 years in the field. Even if the manure is buried in a five-meter depth to avoid parasite problems, the parasites may resurface when the field is being ploughed. Additionally, using

manure as a fertilizer may cause spread of common wild oat (Evira, 2011) and the nitrates regulation (1250/2014) has significantly limited the usage of manure as a fertilizer and set new requirements for manure storages and reporting of the manure usage (Finlex, 2014; Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2018; Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, 2017). The nitrates regulation (1250/2014) in Finland executes the nitrates directive (91/676/ EC) set by the Council of the European Union (Finlex, 2014), which is applied in its entirety across the EU. Other challenge is that the manure-bedding-mixture cannot be wood-based if it will be spread on field, because wood decomposing is a very slow process and decomposing wood consumes nitrogen. Hence, the bedding should be for instance peat, which causes more environmental effects than wood-based beddings, especially when wood-based beddings provided by Fortum are by-products of the forest industry and therefore advance the circular economy. Additionally, fresh manure may be too strong to be used as such, so Asko Laapas, the professional of industrial crops recommends composting of the manure at least a year before using it in the garden (Toijonen, 2016). Organic plant farmers can only take certain amount of manure at a time and often they require that the manure has been composted for 1-2 years before spreading it on the field. Anyhow, composting increases the environmental effects such as formation of greenhouse gases and ammonia emissions (Manninen, et al., 2016). Furthermore, not all stables have a farmer nearby willing to accept manure on field. Earlier, some stables delivered manure to the landfills, but it is no longer possible. According to the waste decree of Finnish Council of State (VNA 331/2013), organic waste such as horse manure is banned to be taken to landfills from 1.1.2016 onwards (Oksala, 2016). The waste decree (VNA 331/2013) is part of the Landfill Directive (1999/31/EC) of the European Union. The directive has led to banning of biodegradable municipal waste from landfills in some of the member countries of EU (European commission, 2016).

Fortum HorsePower-service is a manure management solution for horse stables who want to have an easy solution to get rid of the manure, and especially for those stables that want to harness horses to develop sustainability and generate “greener hoof prints” as Fortum HorsePower calls the positive environmental impacts of the service. The service is available for horse stables around the biggest cities in southern and western parts of Finland at the moment, as well as around Stockholm area in Sweden. The requirements for pertaining the service are at least four horses in the stable in Finland and five horses in the stable in Sweden,

use of wood-based beddings and a stable location no further than 80 kilometers away from the power or heat plant, because transporting manure is quite expensive and therefore many cooperative power plants are needed to burn manure efficiently. (Fortum HorsePower, 2018) Earlier, it was difficult to expand the service to new areas, because of the waste legislation (VNA 151/2013) of the time set strict requirements for incinerating organic matter of animal origin (Oksala, 2016). Because of the requirements it was possible to burn manure only in co-incineration and waste incinerator facilities, making it financially unprofitable. After the new EU regulation, which came into force during the spring 2017, it is now possible to burn manure in a wider variety of facilities and the co-incineration permission is no longer needed (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2017).

Fortum HorsePower service has two types of customers; those who have horses at home as a hobby (business-to-customer, B-to-C) and those to whom horses are a livelihood, for example boarding stables, riding schools and training stables (business-to-business, b-to-b) (Rastas, 2016). Despite the fact that horses provide a livelihood for some of the customers, the type of business and the decision-making differs from b-to-b context. According to Kotler et al. (2012) business-to-business market consists of organizations that acquire products and services used to produce other goods or services that will be rented, sold or supplied to their customers. B-to-B markets also have fewer and larger buyers and its eight-phased buying process is more complex and involves more people compared to consumer purchasing. (Kotler et al., 2012, p.17, 292-325) Most of the horse stables are led by individuals or small companies such as sole traders or limited companies, involving only a few people, so the customer types correspond more to the business-to-consumer definition: there is often an individual decision maker, or a decision-making unit is behind purchases (Kotler et al., 2012, p.17). However, there are also a few bigger companies in the equine industry, such as horse hospitals and equine colleges, which might require a more business-to-business type of sales and marketing approach. Power plants could also be considered as business-to-business customers of HorsePower (Rastas, 2016). Anyway, this thesis work only focuses on horse stable customers.

One horse generates approximately 8000-10000 kilograms bedding-manure mixture annually and computationally can be thought that two horses can heat one detached house. Horse manure-bedding mixture may become a globally used energy source in the future and

there is a lot of growing potential for HorsePower-service – merely in Finland the amount of horses is 75 000 and the amount is expected to grow to 90 000 by year 2030 (Hippolis, n.d.). At the moment, approximately 4000 horses are involved in the service in Finland and 1600 horses in Sweden (Fortum HorsePower, 2018). The total amount of horses in Sweden is even bigger, there were approximately 355 500 horses already in 2016 (Enhäll, 2017). Based on above-mentioned reasons Fortum HorsePower service has a lot of growth potential in national and international markets. The service will possibly become a worldwide solution for manure management as well as a globally used energy source in the future. An interest towards the manure-based energy has already arisen abroad; HorsePower service was noticed by many international media when Fortum electrified the Helsinki International Horse Show with horse manure-based energy in mid-October 2017 (eg. New York Post, 2017; Bioenergy International, 2017; Cavallo Magazine, 2017).

Fortum HorsePower is facing direct competition in Finland, because the Finnish state-owned company Vapo Oy provides a similar service for horse stables. Both services seem to be quite similar from the customer's point of view – first beddings are delivered and later the bedding-manure mixture is collected. However, there are differences between the services. The main differences are bedding selection and the end use of manure. Vapo's recycling service is utilizing the manure as a soil product and their bedding offering consists of peat and sawdust pellets (Vapo, 2018). On the contrary, Fortum HorsePower is utilizing manure as propellant for energy production and their wood-based beddings, wood shavings, sawdust, wood pellets and sawdust pellets, are by-products of forest industry. Humuspehtoori Oy accept the horse manure but the manure producer will handle the transportation costs, HSY Metsäpirtti also accepts horse manure but the cost is 10€ per 1000 kilos of manure plus the transportation cost. (HSY, 2018; Humuspehtoori Oy, n.d.). There are quite many bedding and manure handling service providers in Europe, for example Swedish company YesBox and Dutch companies AMCO and Walkro Grondstoffen BV, but none of the competitors are utilizing manure for energy use (Yesbox, 2018; Walkro International BV., 2018; Amco, n.d.). Even though there are not so many direct competitors for Fortum HorsePower in Finland, the substitutional competition is high – all horse bedding suppliers can be considered as competitors, as well as local farmers and other actors who supply horse beddings such as sawdust to the stables and/or collect the horse manure to use it as a fertilizer in the field. However, it is very rare that farmers would deliver beddings for horse stables.

Additionally, sellers of private manure burning boilers could be considered as competitors, for instance Swebo Bioenergy (Piccola Oy, 2017).

A well-optimized and planned digital marketing strategy can help Fortum HorsePower to increase the brand and service awareness as well as interest among customers, which can lead to growth in national and international markets. This thesis work aims to help Fortum HorsePower to understand the preferred channels of customers, the topics that appear interesting to them and the values that customers connect with the service, which can be used in content creation to attract new customers and engage existing ones. Being able to provide attractive content is very important especially for Fortum HorsePower business, because the sales cycle can be relatively long. Occasionally, it can take even up to one year after the first contact to get the customership. In the sales and marketing activities, Fortum HorsePower combines new media and traditional channels. In Finland the service has websites, a Facebook account and also emails are sent to the customers. An Instagram account has also been activated earlier, but it has been very inactive. The main channel to contact customers is over phone, and a sales representative usually visits a horse stable before making a deal to find out what kind of manure storage the stable has and how the manure collection is feasible, so if the purchasing process starts in digital media channels, it will be finalized in traditional channels. As the purchase cannot be entirely conducted on digital channels, the usage of AIDAS-model is more suitable instead of a digital customer purchasing journey. In Sweden the service is still strongly based on traditional channels such as events and telephone communication, but this thesis work aims at providing help with choosing the right digital channels for the Swedish markets as well.

### **3.2 Research methods**

According to the literature review it seems that integrated marketing communications (IMC) and value thinking are very much-researched topics. However, most of the studies are conducted in product, retail or business-to-business context. This thesis work advances the research in service context by increasing insight into the channel preferences of customers, and values that should guide the marketing content creation in business-to-customer environment to be able to create engaging digital media contents and steer customers towards purchase intention. The research phenomenon in this thesis work is horse stable

owners, meaning people who utilize horses as a hobby or as a livelihood. Despite the fact that some of the interviewees are doing business with horses, the interviews revealed that the decision-making reminds more business-to-customer context, therefore it is the context for this work. However, to sort interviewees, stables are divided into “business” and “hobby” stables as main categorization, despite the B-to-C context.

The research is conducted with qualitative research methods, which are the most suitable methods in case the phenomenon is quite unknown or when detailed insights are required from the interviewees (Gill et al., 2008). Qualitative research methods such as interviews or ethnography provide a deeper understanding of the phenomena studied compared to quantitative methods such as surveys or experiments (Boeije, 2009). The chosen data collection method is semi-structured interviews, which consists of several key questions that help to define the themes to be explored. However, semi-structured interviews allow new ideas to be brought up as a result of interviewee’s responses. Semi-structured questions provide guidance for the participants on what to talk about, but still the open-ended questions are flexible for interviewees to bring up information that they find important related to topic. (Gill et al., 2008) Qualitative interviews are like guided conversations, less structured and less standardized.

### **3.2.1 Qualitative research**

The primary purpose of qualitative research is to find out the meaning that “people award to their social worlds and to understand the meaning of their social behavior.” To find out the viewpoint of research participants, the researcher needs to collect data, which captures this view and then sense and focus on relevant information when analyzing the data. (Boeije, 2009) According to Boeije (2009) qualitative data analysis exists over the lifecycle of research project as an ongoing process. Qualitative research question is often encompassing and broad but also usually divided into multiple sub questions. (Boeije, 2009)

This thesis research is conducted through qualitative methods to understand the customers’ subjective view towards advertising content and the reasons behind their channel choices. The qualitative method was chosen because in this case quantitative methods would have not offered similar depth of understanding of the phenomena. According to Boeije (2009)

the purpose of qualitative research is to understand and describe the social phenomena regarding to the meaning people bring to them. The research phenomenon is studied through flexible methods, enabling contact with people as much as needed to gain understanding of what is going on in the field of research. Those methods provide descriptive and rich data that needs to be processed and interpreted further through the coding and identification of categories and themes that will lead to findings which can be contributed to practical use and theoretical knowledge. (Boeije, 2009). Boeije (2009) summarized the definition by stating that three elements form the definition: seeking meaning for phenomena, using flexible methods enabling needed contact with people and providing qualitative findings. The research process follows three steps suggested by Turner (2010), which are steps for success in interviews: the first step is preparing for the interview, which is the stage to tackle potential problematic circumstances and ensure that the interviews will provide full benefits for the study (McNamara, 2009). According to McNamara (2009) the eight principles of successful interviews are 1) choosing interview setting to avoid distraction, 2) explaining the purpose of the interview, 3) agreeing terms of confidentiality, 4) explaining the interview format, 5) addressing the estimated length of interview, 6) telling the interviewee how to contact interviewer later if needed, 7) asking if the interviewee has questions before starting the interview and 8) recording the interview. (McNamara, 2009) Selecting appropriate participants is also critical, since obtaining qualified candidates willing to be honest and open will provide the most credible information (Turner 2010). Turner (2010) highlights that interviewing in a comfortable environment leads to the best outcomes, when the interviewee does not feel uncomfortable to share information. Pilot testing is one important part of the interviewing process; it ensures that there are no limitations or other weaknesses in the study (Kvale, 2007, p.46). The creation of a questionnaire is one of the most crucial parts of the research process. The questions should be in an open-ended form so the interviewees can choose their own terms to answer. The questions should also be asked one at a time, neutrally and clearly worded. (McNamara, 2009) The second step is the implementation of the interview, for which McNamara (2009) suggests following tips: ensure occasionally that the recorder is working, ask one question at a time, remain neutral reactions, encourage responses with nods of the head etc., avoid jumping to the notes, because it may appear as a surprising answer, provide clear transition between topics and do not lose control of the interview - lead the discussion and manage time. The final step is interpreting the data, where

the interviewer is making “sense” of the interview by using techniques such as themes or codes.

### **3.2.2 In-depth interviews**

Qualitative interviews provide in-depth information about interviewees’ motivations, beliefs (Gill et al., 2008) views and experiences of a certain topic. Therefore, the chosen research method is in-depth interviews. (Turner, 2010) The interviews in this research are conducted by interviewing existing customers of Fortum HorsePower in Finland and Sweden. The participants were chosen by random sampling and they were assumed to act as decision-makers in the purchasing process.

The interviews were conducted with semi-structured questions to enable all the important topics to be covered, still providing flexibility for the interviewee to bring up information s/he finds important related to topic (Gill et al., 2008). Semi-structured interviews include several predetermined questions, but the interviewer can modify the order of the questions based upon what seems the most appropriate in the interview and change the question wording and give explanations if needed, as well as bypass inappropriate questions and include additional questions (van Teijlingen, 2014). An open-ended interview is actually the most popular interviewing technique, because the interviewees can fully express their experiences and viewpoints, but it also allows the interviewer to ask probing questions. (Turner, 2010) Individual interviews ensure that other participants will not put pressure on a participant to share the preferred interpretation of others interviewed, which could reduce the probability of different emerging interpretations. (Puntoni, Schroeder and Ritson, 2010). Fortum HorsePower related interview questions varied slightly, since the service is newer in Sweden and there are not as many digital channels in use as in Finland, so the questions were modified so the Swedes were able to answer properly (Appendix 3 – Interview questions). The Finnish interviews were conducted face-to-face in the horse stables of the interviewees to allow a comfortable atmosphere for them, which according to Turner (2010) is important. Due to schedule issues, the interviews in Sweden were carried out over telephone. All interviews were recorded for later transcription and the interviewees knew about recording. After transcribing the recordings into written form the data was analyzed. The field notes

were used to capture the behavior of the interviewees and in Swedish interviews the focus was on the tone of the voice of the interviewees.

The interviewees could be divided into two groups based on their activity type – hobby or business. The categorization is based on the form of activity; the interviewees whose earnings seem to be dependent on their activity on the stable in the shape of a riding school, a boarding stable or a trot training stable, were defined as “business stables” and other interviewees who were retired, whose horses were not doing most of the earnings and the income could be earned somewhere else were defined as “hobby stables”. Other groupings could be based on the size of the stable – small stable (< 10 horses), midsize stable (10-19 horses), large stables (20-35 horses) and very large stables (>35 horses) or based on age distribution of 30-39, 40-49, 50-59 and 60-69 years. The country could also be one segmentation criteria, three out of ten interviewees are Swedish and the seven other interviewees are Finnish.

Code	Country	Age	Stable size	Number of horses	Form of activity	Form of activity	Gender
Interviewee_S3	Sweden	50-59	Very large	42	Boarding stable	Business	Male
Interviewee_S2	Sweden	50-59	Very large	50	Boarding stable	Business	Female
Interviewee_S1	Sweden	40-49	Very large	43	Riding school	Business	Female
Interviewee_F7	Finland	40-49	Small	9	Hobby stable	Hobby	Female
Interviewee_F6	Finland	40-49	Small	4	Hobby stable	Hobby	Female
Interviewee_F5	Finland	50-59	Midsize	16	Trotting stable	Business	Male
Interviewee_F4	Finland	60-64	Small	6	Hobby stable	Hobby	Female
Interviewee_F3	Finland	30-39	Large	22	Riding school	Business	Female
Interviewee_F2	Finland	30-39	Large	24	Boarding stable	Business	Female
Interviewee_F1	Finland	50-59	Midsize	19	Riding school	Business	Female

*Table 1 Interviewees*

### 3.3 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis aims to determine the assumptions, categories and relationships that inform the interviewees’ view of the topic on particular and of the world in general and (McCracken, 1988) by making sense of relevant data collected from sources such as interviews and observations (Caudle, 2004). Raw data itself does not provide understanding

of the social phenomena and the way participants experience it. Therefore, the data needs to be analyzed and interpreted systematically (Basit, 2003). Almost 40 years ago, Miles (1979) argued that analyzing the qualitative data is the perhaps the most demanding and the least examined part of the qualitative research process, which is still accurate to a large extent (Basit, 2003). There are certain methods for a quantitative analysis, but there are no standardized or internationally used methods for qualitative analysis (Hänninen, 2015). Also, Basit (2003) endorsed the argument by stating that the data analysis is the most crucial but also the most difficult aspect of qualitative research. The analysis of qualitative data is often considered as arduous, because of its characteristics. It is an intuitive, dynamic and creative process of inductive thinking, theorizing and reasoning (Basit, 2003).

The chosen method for data analysis in this thesis work is content analysis. Content analysis is a research method for making replicable and valid interpretations from textual data to their context, with the purpose of providing new insights, knowledge, presentation of facts and a practical guide to action (Krippendorff, 1980), classifying textual data by reducing it into more manageable and relevant bits of data (Lewis-Beck, 1990) or research analysis method that uses a set of procedures to make valid and replicable inferences from text by classifying the words of the text into fewer content categories (Terry College of Business, n.d; Weber, 1990). Categories may consist of one, several or many words. The words, phrases and other units of the text categorized are presumed to have similar meanings. Depending of the researcher's purposes, the similarity may be based on the similar connotations of the words (grouping together words implying concern with a concept) or precise meaning of the words (grouping synonyms). (Weber, 1990) According to Elo and Kyngäs (2008), a content analysis process includes three stages, which are preparation, organization and reporting of results. The preparation stage consists of collecting data, making sense of data and selecting the unit of analysis. A qualitative content analysis can be used in a deductive or inductive way, but in this work the inductive approach is used. (Elo et al., 2014) Therefore, the organization stage consists of open coding, creating categories and abstraction (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). The organization stage or inferential process depends on the substantial or theoretical interests of the researcher. Inference can be made about the message itself, the sender of the message or the audience of the message. (Weber, 1990).

A content analysis can be used for many purposes, such as disclosing international differences in a communication content, coding open-ended questions in surveys, describing attitudinal and behavioral responses to communications, reflecting cultural patterns of groups, institutions, or societies and describing trends in communication content (Weber, 1990). The analysis allows the researcher to recover and examine the nuances of societal trends, stakeholders' perceptions and organizational behaviors (Terry College of Business, n.d.). In this thesis work, the data analysis started during the interviews by recognizing certain themes that were brought up in several interviews. After each interview, the recorded interview data was transcribed into written form and the main points were written down to be used as categories or codes in the final data analysis. The data collection was carried out during two weeks so the data was analyzed as a whole. Field notes were used to capture the behavior of the interviewee, because the audio recording can only capture verbal behavior. Theoretical contribution, managerial implications and suggestions for further research are based on the empirical data and research findings the interviews provided.

### **3.3.1 Validity of research**

A good qualitative study can generate understanding by explaining the issue that would otherwise be confusing or enigmatic (Stenbacka, 2001; Eisner, 1991). The quality and trustworthiness of qualitative research can be evaluated through three concepts: generalizability, reliability and validity (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2015). Generalizability evaluates the extent that the results can be generalized to the larger audience (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2015). However, according to Leung (2015), generalizability is not a requirement in a qualitative study as qualitative studies often study some specific phenomenon or issue in a certain population. The researched phenomenon in this thesis work is a certain population, horse stable owners and more specifically, customers of Fortum HorsePower.

Reliability is used in quantitative research to verify the replicability of the research process and the results. The reliability is challenging to define in qualitative research, which is exploratory in nature and the findings are based on subjective interpretation. A reliable research can be replicated by other researchers ending up with similar findings, so the reliability is related to the level of established degree of consistency. (Eriksson and

Kovalainen, 2015; Carcary, 2009). An interviewer having experience of horses and having a horse stable of her own may have helped with understanding and interpreting the responses, a non-horse person as an interviewer may have needed to ask more clarifying questions to understand the phenomena. Also the point of time may have impacted responses as especially channel preferences may change over time. Otherwise, the research should be replicable.

Validity signifies the appropriateness of methods, data and processes of the research (Leung, 2015), which affects the accuracy of explanation of the phenomenon (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2015) and the accuracy of the conclusions made (Stenbacka, 2001). In this thesis work I strived for high validity by creating the questionnaire as understandable as possible to avoid misunderstandings between the interviewee and the interviewer. Due to difficulty of evaluating these criteria previously mentioned, the main focus is on the quality and trustworthiness of the findings. Individual interviews ensured that each participant shared their own opinions and interpretations, without pressure from other participants to share the preferred interpretation (Puntoni, Schroeder and Ritson, 2010). As integrated marketing communications aim to provide solutions, value and benefits for target audiences through customer-centric communications, based on needs and wants of customers (Berthon, et al., 2012; Taylor, 2009; Kliatchko, 2008; Wymbs, 2011; Urban, 2004), the data collection carried out by interviewing customers is valid. Additionally, the equine background of the interviewer helps to understand the researched phenomena and may therefore increase the validity of the research findings. However, it is possible that the Swedish interviews conducted over phone may reduce the validity of the research as the behavior could not be captured, on the other hand the tone of voice played a critical role and they clearly demonstrated different emotions during the interview as the tone of voice of all the interviewees varied during the interviews.

## 4. FINDINGS

This section covers the empirical findings of the study based on in-depth interviews with the customers of Fortum HorsePower. The findings are related to channel, content and stakeholder pillars of integrated marketing communications. Additionally, the interviews provided insight into information needs and digital channel preferences at different stages of a purchasing journey. Most of the interviewees were small entrepreneurs themselves and they approached the research questions by telling how they themselves do marketing, but it came out during the interviews that the interviewees were marketing their own services based on what they prefer themselves. The results of the study are structured based on the model presented in chapter 2.3 Theoretical model (Figure 3 - Theoretical model).

Understanding the life of horse stable owners is useful to understand the findings. Based on my own experiences as a horse owner and my previous work experience as a stable manager, the workday of a horse entrepreneur is approximately 10-12 hours a day, seven days a week. An exception are the stables that can afford workers, which can enable sharing the workload and improving leisure possibilities, or for example feeding machines, which give freedom to the daily schedule when there is no need to be present when feeding the horses. Feeding machines are particularly useful for horse stable owners who have horses as a hobby and therefore work away from home. Based on my experiences horses are often hay-fed approximately 3-5 times daily, early in the morning, around the midday, in the evening and some extra hay may be given in the afternoon or during the night. Some horses may have free-feeding hay meaning a 24/7 access to round bale for uncontrolled eating. Horses are routine-oriented and it is important to be accurate with feeding the horses, since a long or irregular feeding frequency can drop the gastric pH rapidly, which can expose a horse's stomach to acid environment and advance the development of gastric ulcer. (Reese and Andrews, 2009) Researchers have suggested that a too large single amount of food, quick changes in feeding or intermittent feeding may lead to colic, which can be fatal for a horse without treatment. (eg. Rosenlew, 2009; Hudson et al., 2001)

“It would be very lovely if someone could come outside of the industry and say” hey idiot, why?”  
You know, when someone comes from outside and sees things differently, that there is no rhyme or reason in your business. Of course, there are many things with horses that people who do not work

with horses cannot comprise and there are certain things that need to be taken care of, that ties the stable worker to the stable for the entire day and a remote work day is not possible.”

- Interviewee\_F2, Finland, age of 30-39, large, boarding stable, female

#### 4.1 Stakeholders

When the interviewees were asked about effective advertisement types, many Finnish interviewees mentioned themselves or horse people in general being rational or deliberate buyers. There seems to be no differences within different age or types of activity categories among the Finnish interviewees.

“I’m not easily affected by advertising. I might make an impulse purchase, but I see myself as a rational consumer who buys what is needed rather than what is offered. But advertisements do have an effect on my purchase decision by giving me information on what products are available, if there are similar products by different manufacturers or such like, so I will possibly be able to find the information through adverts, like what kind of features each producer’s products have. I don’t think I’d make a purchase decision or run to buy something just because of seeing an advertisement of a product I haven’t earlier been interested in.”

- Interviewee\_F5, Finland, age of 50-59, midsize, trotting stable, male

“I am probably at that age already that I have lived different times and therefore I am not caught up in digital world like younger people, and another thing that age has brought is probably the fact that I will consider what I need and the purchasing decision starts from that.”

- Interviewee\_F1, Finland, age of 50-59, midsize, riding school, female

“I am a bit that kind of person that I only buy what I need, I am not an eager shopper:”

- Interviewee\_F2, Finland, age of 30-39, large, boarding stable, female

“If I want to buy something, I may Google it and then I look at it and then decide if I need it or not.”

- Interviewee\_F4, Finland, age of 60-64, small, hobby stable, female

On the other hand, advertisements showed frequently may be very effective to increase awareness and ensure a spot on the customer’s top of mind.

“They do stay in your subconsciousness, so that is perhaps the biggest effect, that somewhere it comes to your mind that just a moment, I’ve seen something about this. You do however also notice that when you try to find information on some other stuff and all you find is the wrong sort of advertisements, so that’s annoying. But well, it’s that annoying ad too that sticks to your subconsciousness, so if you at some point of life will need something you have seen in an ad, I’d say

you sort of easily identify that certain product with the most visible advertiser, so you may not think in a certain way when trying to find some information that there might be others as well.”

- Interviewee\_F7, Finland, age of 40-49, small, hobby stable, female

Most of the interviewed customers of Fortum HorsePower’s consider Fortum as their collaborative partner instead of a service provider, especially the business interviewees expect two-way visibility on digital media channels. Additionally, they may also have other partners to collaborate with. Correspondingly, the interviewees share content published by Fortum HorsePower and recommend the service for others. More than a half of the interviewees stated that they have promoted Fortum HorsePower service on their digital channels or by using word-of-mouth.

“A lot of my friends who also have a stable, they contact me and ask how you do with this [manure management] and how does it work and they are interested, so yes. And I did actually inform all my friends when I joined, that I said, hey all my friends, check this out, here is a solution to get rid of manure and they said oh my god, this is crazy and where should I call to reach them.”

- Interviewee\_S2, Sweden, age of 50-59, very large, boarding stable, female

“For example, if Fortum HorsePower or one of our other collaboration partners has posted something where we are also mentioned, then we of course share that post on our own channels.”

- Interviewee\_F5, Finland, age of 50-59, midsize, trotting stable, male

” I just received an email from [company name], because I use their product in my business use. They will have some article on a horse magazine, so the reseller sends an email to all business users of their product if someone wants their own contact information to the article, it costs around 20 euros. This kind of collaboration is very useful for a small entrepreneur.”

- Interviewee\_F7, Finland, age of 40-49, small, hobby stable, female

Despite the fact that this thesis research focused on digital marketing channels and content, many interviewees thanked for the opportunity to communicate with Fortum over the phone. One Swedish interviewee mentioned that she became aware of the service because of a sales call and she thinks that it is a very good way to contact customers with a new service.

“I got the information of the service from [name of the sales representative], so she gave me information and also we had a meeting, so that was the way. [Was that the most convenient way to get the information of the service?] Well, I think that at that time, when you want to sell a new product and I think that is the way to do it. I also, if I, because I was not thinking for, seeking anything, I wasn’t looking for it, like, from the websites or anything. So it was thanks to her [sales representative]

calling me. But if I want to by myself change something, then I would start looking for information on the website.”

- Interviewee\_S1, Sweden, age of 40-4, very large, riding school, female

The interviewees stated that they often run errands while driving so that makes the telephone a convenient device to communicate. Another reason is that when something comes to mind, hands are often dirty from cleaning the stable or brushing a horse, therefore it is considered more convenient to call instead of texting. The interviewees also stated that they prefer to handle things in face-to-face meetings, especially if the service or product needs to be tailored, therefore it is easier to conduct business with a sales representative.

”Like recently at an insurance company, I talked face-to-face with people and I found it nice. I don’t always like taking care of everything on the Net, not meeting anyone or being able to discuss things. Like for example with this insurance, there are so many things you need to take into consideration, and for instance insuring all these activities would be difficult to do on the Net.”

- Interviewee\_F1, Finland, age of 50-59, midsize, riding school, female

”if I have something to ask I will call, or in some case send an email. I like it more to communicate with people. I also feel that if there’s a need for an answer right now, it’s easier to grab the phone than write a message.”

- F2, Finland, age of 30-39, large, boarding stable, female

”I’m more of a phone person (demonstrates dialling a number on a landline phone), we had a rotary dial landline phone at home. I can use a tablet quite well, and also email and smart phones a little, so I’m very pleased with the fact they can be called.”

- Interviewee\_F5, Finland, age of 50-59, midsize, trotting stable, male

”I sort of like face-to-face service anyhow, so it annoys me sometimes that everything is digitalized, and then I just happened to be so lucky that one of my customers works for the HorsePower so I always call [name of the sales representative]”

- Interviewee\_F7, Finland, age of 40-49, small, hobby stable, female

”And surprisingly, even though electric communication is easy, I use the phone more and more. So if there’s somewhere I can call, I found it wonderful to be able to call Fortum like in the beginning when making the contract, so it was one call and 10 minutes and it was done, so I didn’t need to google more than that and spend time, so that it has somehow become that kind for me, I know many are using the phone less and less to make actual calls, but I notice I use it more and more for that. And I think it might be like that among horse keepers, at least the ones I know call a lot, they take care of

their business exactly that way and they often have a phone cord hanging from their ear [handsfree] when doing some stable chores.”

- Interviewee\_F6, Finland, age of 40-49, small, hobby stable, female

## 4.2 Content

The Finnish interviewees in the business-category stated that the most interesting content themes are efficiency, cost-savings and ergonomics-related insights of the best practices from other entrepreneurs.

“Ideas from other entrepreneurs – how they work or do things in general, ideas that we could use here as well, stories and lives of other entrepreneurs are also interesting because I am an entrepreneur myself as well”

- Interviewee\_F2, Finland, age of 30-39, large, boarding stable, female

“I think it would be good if Fortum could do short stories or videos of their customers to show how things are done in different places.”

- Interviewee\_F5, Finland, age of 50-59, midsize, trotting stable, male

“Ergonomics, I clean the stable myself too, therefore I am continuously asking for ideas from riding teachers, customers and my workers, what we could do differently”

- Interviewee\_F3, Finland, age of 30-39, large, riding school, female

“Well-being of horses, efficiency, saving money”

- Interviewee\_F3, Finland, age of 30-39, large, riding school, female

The Swedish “business” interviewees wish for information on the well-being of horses, efficiency and an environmental way of working from other entrepreneurs as well as from academic research.

“Researches regarding the well-being of horses, when there are new researches published. I know Hippson is quite good at being on top of that”

- Interviewee\_S1, Sweden, age of 40-4, very large, riding school, female

“Be on top of researches and also how to be more efficient in the way we work in the stable and how we can think in a more environmentally friendly way, maybe there is a lot to be done there. I mean, you do not have much information regarding that, I think. Also, maybe we could do something else with the bedding so it would be more environmentally friendly and even lead to financial savings.”

- Interviewee\_S1, Sweden, age of 40-4, very large, riding school, female

“You always need to, when you have a business, to look at what is done in the academic research, otherwise you stop developing. I am interested in anything that could be a change for the better, for my horses and my clients.”

- Interviewee\_S2, Sweden, age of 50-59, very large, boarding stable, female

The Finnish interviewees in the “hobby” category stated that they wish for discounts, information about academic research and reminders of the current issues.

“In autumn, Fortum noted via email that the containers will be heavy due to rainy autumn, I think that kind of reminders are really nice, could be also ‘take into account that the service is crowded’ or ‘we have delay in bedding delivery’-type of reminders.”

- Interviewee\_F6, Finland, age of 40-49, small, hobby stable, female

“My interest can be triggered with targeted advertising, if for example Fortum emails me that they have -20% discount of the beddings”

- Interviewee\_F6, Finland, age of 40-49, small, hobby stable, female

“If Fortum would have commercial collaboration. What could it be, well let’s imagine that they could sell fodder at Fortum and there would be -10% discount of fodders for the customers of Fortum. That kind of commercial collaboration would be ok.”

- Interviewee\_F6, Finland, age of 40-49, small, hobby stable, female

“Collaboration campaigns and cross-advertising with wheelbarrow or digging fork sellers, that could give us new ideas of the products or tips how to move heavy pellet sacks or reuse them”

- Interviewee\_F7, Finland, age of 40-49, small, hobby stable, female

The interviewees stated that they don’t have time for playing games, solving math problems or doing tests on social media, only one interviewee from “hobby”-category mentioned that she sometimes spends time with those activities. This finding was very surprising, since the math problem published on Fortum HorsePower’s Facebook site (Appendix 1 – math problem post) was very popular. The post got almost 19 000 organic reach, 480 comments, 7 shares and 127 likes. It is possible that this kind of posts resonates better among potential customers, in the hobby category or within younger demographics. This post included Helsinki Horse Fair-ticket contest, which may affect the popularity of the post and participate people who normally avoid this kind of posts. On the other hand, people got very different results for the problem, which may have inspired people to try and post their own solution. Despite the lack of interest among the interviewees, this kind of post seems to be very effective to improve brand awareness, which is the first stage of the AIDAS-model and

may improve the possibility to get new customers if the company succeeds to deliver resonating message in other stages of AIDAS-model as well.

“Those are annoying if there are lotteries on the internet that you have to start following the page. I find it very artificial, of course they provide visibility for the company and so on. But, yeah, I could participate, but I don’t want to have all the posts from the page. Naturally, I could unfollow the site later, but normally I don’t participate in that kind of lotteries. I can participate if I only need to comment a picture and that’s it!”

- Interviewee\_F2, Finland, age of 30-39, large, boarding stable, female

“I never play games, I don’t have the time. I prefer to put my time on more ambitious subjects doing changes for animals. That is my way of relaxing.”

- Interviewee\_S2, Sweden, age of 50-59, very large, boarding stable, female

“Sometimes I take tests on Facebook and those, you know if there is a list that 8+12 is 10 and the next answer is 16 so you have to figure out the logic behind the calculation and solve it as entertainment.”

- Interviewee\_F4, Finland, age of 60-64, small, hobby stable, female

#### **4.2.1 Preferred content types**

The most preferred digital content type is an attractive image combined with a short and concise text, because it gives quick information to the reader. Images should be descriptive and show what the content is all about.

“Well, a picture does its job better, after all it is a modern thing, advertising a product, it is a bit difficult to explain without showing the product on the picture. Of course, it is not a good thing if the picture is misleading with the actual characteristics when you go on the premises, but sometimes it is the other way around.”

- Interviewee\_F2, Finland, age of 30-39, large, boarding stable, female

“If I’m selling a jumping course, I won’t use a picture of a riding helmet, instead I’ll use a picture of our riding school horses jumping obstacles in a competition in our own riding hall. And for the beginners’ course advertisement, we won’t put a picture of the master rider Kyra Kyrklund [Finnish dressage rider and trainer, one of the world’s most successful riders], instead we use a picture of kids brushing horses in the stable and riding in a riding hall in hand. Pictures should create an image that “this must be a jumping lesson” and “this is probably a children’s course.”

- Interviewee\_F3, Finland, age of 30-39, large, riding school, female

Most of the interviewees emphasized today’s hasty lifestyle, meaning that people don’t have time to read long texts, especially when the information flow is enormous and people are

often using social media in their leisure time. Therefore the content can't be too difficult to go through.

“I try to publish humorous posts and less factual texts. I think that people are using social media in their free time, if they look for factual texts, they probably look for them more from publications or blogs.”

- Interviewee\_F7, Finland, age of 40-49, small, hobby stable, female

“People don't have time, if I go to Facebook and I need to click “show more”, I am not interested anymore. I want to see the entire text immediately. Ok, if there comes this much [shows three rows using hands] more text then it is fine, but if there is this much [shows 20 cm using hands] additional text. I don't care, I don't care so much about it that I would read it.”

- Interviewee\_F3, Finland, age of 30-39, large, riding school, female

However, two of the Finnish interviewees stated that they prefer text the most, it is the easiest format for them to understand and go through. The title and the first sentences are the most critical and define if the text is worth reading through or not.

“For me text is the most effective advertising format, I am quick at reading and skimming text, so the picture would take my attention away in a bad, negative way. A good text, where the topic becomes clear from the title and the first sentences, is the easiest way for me, despite the channel.”

- Interviewee\_F6, Finland, age of 40-49, small, hobby stable, female

Videos are considered as a good content type among interviewees, especially both interviewees in the group of 30-39 years old and both male interviewees in the group of 50-59 –year-old reported watching videos. Videos are considered useful particularly in advertisements where service or product characteristics are presented. In fact, one interviewee stated that she got aware of the Fortum HorsePower-service after seeing a video advertisement on Facebook.

“If I am willing to buy a riding arena drag. I was looking for one drag and there was no video, like what?!? Only a picture, like wow, how cool. It would be really nice to see a video, how the drag works behind a four-wheeler, instead of a picture.”

- Interviewee\_F3, Finland, age of 30-39, large, riding school, female

“I want to see the product in use doing what is promised. For example, if Avant [a loader manufacturer] promises its loaders to raise an apartment building from its place without breaking, I want to see that on video (laughs).”

- Interviewee\_F3, Finland, age of 30-39, large, riding school, female

“Mostly, I watch videos. Especially if I want to buy something, I watch the video reviews. So, I would check the video first.”

- Interviewee\_S3, Sweden, age of 50-59, very large stable, boarding stable, male

“Well pictures arise attention and if there is a video behind the picture, I will open the video if it seems interesting.”

- Interviewee\_F5, Finland, age of 50-59, midsize, trotting stable, male

“I found this Fortum HorsePower-service on Facebook. There was a video advertisement and I clicked it and it started to play. And then [the interviewee ended up to the price calculator on Fortum HorsePower website] there were questions about the number of horses and I could calculate the costs of the service.”

- Interviewee\_F4, Finland, age of 60-64, small, hobby stable, female

Videos should be brief and include subtitles, because videos are often watched on mute, or the sound is put on after watching the video for a while if the video seems interesting. However, it is important that the video loads quickly and it should be short and concise.

“I also watch videos without sound. I am very often in a situation that it’s good to have subtitles on the video. You don’t start listening to a loud video when you are on a bus or a train.”

- Interviewee\_F3, Finland, age of 30-39, large, riding school, female

“Well, yes. I watch videos, but I don’t feel like watching very long videos. If the videos, well, on this phone and on my previous phone videos work but when I had an older phone, the videos didn’t load properly and I don’t want to wait for a long time.”

- Interviewee\_F2, Finland, age of 30-39, large, boarding stable, female

It seems that videos are less effective among the interviewees who stated that they prefer textual format the most. Additionally, some interviewees mentioned that they don’t feel like watching long videos and videos including unnecessary things.

“If I seek information for example on some product from Google and end up on some site where there is a video, I will leave the website and look for another site where I can find the same information in a text format.”

- Interviewee\_F6, Finland, age of 40-49, small, hobby stable, female

“I don’t watch videos a lot, it is quite little that I watch, but I do read texts. For instance, I read Helsingin Sanomat [a newspaper] on my device, I don’t subscribe to a paper version, but I have this digital version.”

- Interviewee\_F1, Finland, age of 50-59, midsize, riding school, female

“Videos may include a lot of something unnecessary and you need to immerse yourself in the video. We pretend to be so busy that we don’t have time for anything else but to look at the picture and read a short text.”

- Interviewee\_F7, Finland, age of 40-49, small, hobby stable, female

#### **4.2.2 Content affecting the purchase intention of customers and image of the company**

Interviews indicated that the purchasing process may proceed very differently depending on whether the product or service is a high- or low-involvement purchase, as Dahlén, Rasch and Rosengren (2003) categorized the purchases. Also the preconception of the product or service can affect the information needs of customers. It seems that the need can arise from user reviews et cetera.

“It depends on what kind of a preconception I have of the thing I will acquire. Sometimes I have to find out what it is about, like if I want running shoes it may take two days to find out what I should take into account when acquiring running shoes. Then I get into the comparison stage and after that price comparison. But if I have already decided that I need a manure container and bedding delivery then I am at the stage where I need concrete information on the solution, such as price and service process.”

- Interviewee\_F6, Finland, age of 40-49, small, hobby stable, female

” If I find some tips on the discussion forums, that something is very useful and then I realize that it actually is very useful and would ease life, so that kind of user experiences [may arise purchase intention].”

- Interviewee\_F6, Finland, age of 40-49, small, hobby stable, female

Several interviewees stated that they call colleagues or look for product/service reviews on the internet as a part of their pre-purchase research. Seven interviewees would consider purchasing the product based on reviews. However, these customers were also skeptical about over-positive and over-negative reviews. If possible, the interviewees prefer asking for reviews from their acquaintances. There seem to be no big differences between Finnish and Swedish interviewees.

“Mostly, I watch videos. Especially if I want to buy something, I watch the video reviews. So, I would check the video first.”

- Interviewee\_S3, Sweden, age of 50-59, very large stable, boarding stable, male

“Yes, user experiences do affect my purchase intention. And I also call my colleagues and ask what they use and therefore I avoid purchase mistakes, when I ask my colleagues and they often say that don’t buy the one that I have been looking at (laughs).”

- Interviewee\_F3, Finland, age of 30-39, large, riding school, female

”They do still have an effect on [the purchase decision], they do, I admit that, and in a way it is an advantage of this social media nowadays as a CONSUMER, that you are able to gather user experiences more easily than earlier when you had to look at an opinion column and just rely on what the adverts state. So now, of course there can be trolls of many sorts voicing their opinions and stuff, but still...”

- Interviewee\_F7, Finland, age of 40-49, small, hobby stable, female

“If there are a lot of good reviews of the product, of course I would give it a shot. [What kind of impact does user generated content have on you, when someone has been writing a review of their own experiences?] Not so much, I am not blue-eyed. I know that a lot of information on the internet is not true, so I am also skeptical (laughs). Because I know that there are also fake reviews, so I try to ensure that the information is correct. So I am not buying just because someone has been writing a review.”

- Interviewee\_S3, Sweden, age of 50-59, very large stable, boarding stable, male

On the other hand, some interviewees mentioned that companies have gone too far with storytelling.

“[Does it affect your purchase intention if the customers have written user experiences or companies have interviewed customers and written a story?] Definitely not, especially the latter raises the critical reader in me. One example comes to my mind immediately, the pension insurance company [company name] I pay for my pension insurance as an entrepreneur, they do story telling on their customer communications and I could preach about storytelling how companies have gone too far with storytelling. Research information and facts such as pricing information appeals much better to me. “

- Interviewee\_F6, Finland, age of 40-49, small, hobby stable, female

“If a company wants to tell the customer stories, instead of telling success stories such as “we became users of Fortum’s service and after that our horse became Trotting King only because of the service”, this kind of stories do not go through (laughs). But stories like, “this is how we clean boxes or keep the stable surroundings clean or save in the beddings or this kind of bedding mixture works well” type of stories are good.”

- Interviewee\_F6, Finland, age of 40-49, small, hobby stable, female

The interviewees stated that they are primarily looking for availability information, prices and doing price comparison on digital channels during the pre-purchase stage and investigation. The lack of price information is perceived irritating. Customers do not want to call and find out the prices separately. Additionally, availability and delivery information are important.

“I do not usually buy anything from online stores. It is very irritating when I look for some product and there are the products but no price information so how can I know. And then there is an email address or a number and a text “contact”, but I want to know the figures first when I start the price comparison. I don’t want to make a call for every single price. Especially the products that we need here on our farm.”

- Interviewee\_F4, Finland, age of 60-64, small, hobby stable, female

“I think it would be the comparison of prices, I think that is primarily what I would look for. And also, maybe how it would be delivered, I mean, do you need to order it many days before or not.”

- Interviewee\_S1, Sweden, age of 40-4, very large, riding school, female

“Well, of course price and availability are the first. And also, if I need something I also look for user experiences of the product before I do the purchase decision. And if there are for instance three different fodders, the same stuff in different sacks so then I’ll find out which is the most popular one and has the best user reviews and then I start looking for the price. If I notice that the price is completely horrible, then I switch to the next option and find out the availability. The decision is certainly made based on the intended use, but the chosen product is an equation of availability, user experiences and price. “

- Interviewee\_F7, Finland, age of 40-49, small, hobby stable, female

Things that many interviewees listed as irritating and that may cause a negative image of the company are lack of information such as current prices on the websites, the company advertising a service but the websites and the link not working, bad quality websites, and pictures that are either misleading or unrealistic. Additionally, contact information should be easily found and it would be even better if the employees were presented with a picture and even a short description to present the humanity behind the big companies.

”if the home pages are bad or "not found", like you advertise some product of yours on Facebook and the link to the home page is not working. So you try to find your way to the home page via Google and still don’t get there, so that sort of thing makes me lose my interest.”

- Interviewee\_F3, Finland, age of 30-39, large, riding school, female

”What irritates me is when I can’t find the price information. There are of course sometimes things that have to be ordered or such like where you can’t really know, if there is no clear and fixed price, but I wish there was at least something. I easily let it be if there isn’t, or if the contact information is hard to find. So pretty basic things, they have to be there. I don’t order much stuff online, but of course I sometimes do, so the whole online shopping system has to be very functional. [What do you mean by ‘functional’?] (laughs) That even a bit stupid computer user can use them, which is the way they pretty much are. What I find important is that when operating in Finland, the sites must be in Finnish. I find it annoying if the language suddenly changes into English or some other language. Of course if I go on a site which is in a foreign language, so that’s a different issue, but I think in Finland you must get service in Finnish.”

- Interviewee\_F2, Finland, age of 30-39, large, boarding stable, female

”I get a really negative image if animals or children or people in general are for some reason mistreated. Or some thoughtless destruction of nature or such like, that makes me even angry.”

- Interviewee\_F5, Finland, age of 50-59, midsize, trotting stable, male

One interviewee also complained that companies don’t even bother to answer the customers’ bids or enquiries.

”So I sent a bid for horse jumping obstacles, if someone would be willing to deliver the obstacles for us, so one of them answered, ONE! To this day no one else has as much as sent me a thank-you-for-your-message or anything! So one answered, and his obstacles are there. I don’t even want to cooperate with people who don’t answer anything. You know I market the product to others and they get in touch and say that hey, [the name of the interviewee’s company] uses them, so let’s contact them, and then they answer nothing. So this is what I continuously face in this field of business, that there is no answer, no return call.”

- Interviewee\_F3, Finland, age of 30-39, large, riding school, female

#### **4.2.3 Values in content creation**

The customers were asked about the values in the center of the Fortum HorsePower service and they also told about their preferred values in general. Values were also interpreted from their responses in general by observing what kind of things they emphasized and what values seemed to be important for them. The following values could be recognized from the interviews.

Symbolic values such as environmental friendliness seem to be very important for both Finnish and Swedish interviewees. Especially Swedish customers emphasized

environmental values as important decision-making criteria. In Finland environmental values were considered during the purchasing process but they did not have an impact on decision-making. The lack of manure management solution or willingness to substitute a difficult manure handling solution were the main decision-making criteria for Finnish interviewees. The interviewees seem to be determined to make sure their chosen bedding doesn't harm the environment. One Swedish customer even stated that profiling as an environmentally friendly company is a bonus resulting from being part of Fortum HorsePower service that creates renewable energy from manure. One Finnish interviewee also mentioned that merits such as an environmental certificate is a sign of passing certain criteria.

"For example peat. I don't like it anyway, which I think is a reasonable argument in itself for not wanting to use it, but, well, peat is one of the most slowly renewing natural resources, and I don't know whether it works in the long run, that how reasonable it is to use it. I haven't given much thought to how it benefits the earth if we save it, but I have thought and imagined that it is so slowly renewable, and there is something it exists for."

- Interviewee\_F5, Finland, age of 50-59, midsize, trotting stable, male

"Having a stable is difficult for me because of ecological reasons, since I'm not willing to destroy peat, or bogland, but I don't want to support logging either, and ecologically thinking straw bedding is the only one making any sense, but I think using straw bedding makes the stable always smell of ammonia."

- Interviewee\_F6, Finland, age of 40-49, small, hobby stable, female

"First of all, everything costs, for me it is the most important thing because we already have a good reputation, we can also profile as an environmentally friendly company, that is a bonus."

- Interviewee\_S2, Sweden, age of 50-59, very large, boarding stable, female

"People are very environmentally friendly, people try to do their share to help the environment so this [Fortum HorsePower service] is just a great idea. They feel that they are helping out by having their horse at my place."

- Interviewee\_S2, Sweden, age of 50-59, very large, boarding stable, female

"I guess it's the image, and of course the fact that our manure is dealt with and turned into energy that really benefits people living in Järvenpää, like you can run your washing machine with it, so that I think is pretty concrete service."

- Interviewee\_F3, Finland, age of 30-39, large, riding school, female

”The merits, for instance someone is given a quality prize or such like, or it is noticed that someone has an environmental certificate or something similar, so it can be stated that this someone has passed some sort of test [a positive image]”

- Interviewee\_F6, Finland, age of 40-49, small, hobby stable, female

The Finnish interviewees seem to be aware of the environmental issues and especially concerned about the amount of plastic floating in the Atlantic Ocean. Additionally, the interviewees stated that they are recycling at home and interested in other environmental services and products by Fortum, as well as plastic recycling service and Circo-plastics, produced from recycled plastic.

”I recycle myself, and try to think what’s good for the whole world, but when I see what’s happening around me I get the feeling I’m just a drop in the ocean in this organization.”

- Interviewee\_F3, Finland, age of 30-39, large, riding school, female

”I’d like to put those bale wraps and plastic sacks in which pellets are delivered somewhere else but into the trash can.”

- Interviewee\_F2, Finland, age of 30-39, large, boarding stable, female

”And just the fact that it’s totally senseless how much one-way plastic packing there is, it makes no sense. But then there is a plastic patch three times the size of Europe floating somewhere in the Atlantic, so it does really feel foolish.”

- Interviewee\_F5, Finland, age of 50-59, midsize, trotting stable, male

”even more we should think about the patch the size of Finland in the Atlantic, like those plastic bottles”

- Interviewee\_F4, Finland, age of 60-64, small, hobby stable, female

”I think that processing manure if possible is definitely a good thing. The most foolish thing is to drag it to a landfill”

- Interviewee\_F2, Finland, age of 30-39, large, boarding stable, female

Symbolic values also include the feeling of belonging, which became visible in several interviews when the “business” interviewees told that they consider Fortum HorsePower as their collaborative partner. Additionally, it seems to be important for the interviewees that they know the sales representatives and that they greet the customers by name when calling the sales representative. Most of the customers appreciate the fact that they have a low

threshold to contact sales representatives, for example if they want to suggest some improvement ideas.

”Fortum is a big, high-class operator, so it’s nice to be in collaboration with it, since it also gives me prestige, that when we cooperate and they have chosen me to be a part of them, so there must be some quality criteria to be allowed in, I don’t suppose they accept any random stable, so I feel I have some value for having been allowed in, that we give each other prestige.”

- Interviewee\_F3, Finland, age of 30-39, large, riding school, female

“They are always very obliging, they are very happy you know, talk to you and they know me by name when I call them like "Hi, [name of the interviewee]!" You know, I feel like an important customer and that is a good feeling”

- Interviewee\_S2, Sweden, age of 50-59, very large, boarding stable, female

”I can’t figure out this suddenly how I would develop [the service] and I will tell them if I get some ideas, I have a good connection [to the sales representatives of Fortum HorsePower]. ”

- Interviewee\_F5, Finland, age of 50-59, midsize, trotting stable, male

Additionally, purchasing domestic products seems to be an important thing for the Finnish interviewees.

”I’m the sort of person who likes to use domestic products if possible, of course it always isn’t, either because of availability or sometimes they are also a bit hard to find. Of course the more you learn, search and google, you do find, and of course sometimes it depends on the price, that some imported goods are much cheaper, that you can’t afford (laughs) but I’d like to use, but I usually buy domestic food and such like.”

- Interviewee\_F2, Finland, age of 30-39, large, boarding stable, female

Functional values were also recognized from the interviews as the interviewees stated that they seek a lighter workload, a better cost-time/effort ratio, practicality, convenience and everyday ease, especially from the Fortum HorsePower service, and especially the manure handling service is perceived as “everyday ease” saving time and effort.

”Earlier we took the manure to an organic farm about fifteen kilometers away, but we have no transport equipment so we had to get two lorries twice a year for it, plus a bigger tractor since our own tractor is so small that it’s really ineffective with bigger loadings like that. So we had to get three extra people to do it so the whole thing was a lot of work, so we thought this would be a better system for us”

- Interviewee\_F2, Finland, age of 30-39, large, boarding stable, female

“And it’s just that ergonomics, since I work at the stable myself too, I keep asking the teachers, customers and my workers if there are alternative ways to do things.”

- Interviewee\_F3, Finland, age of 30-39, large, riding school, female

“That you get the [manure] container and they switch it right away. So they don't take away the container, ship it off and then come back so you have to be without a container for several hours. Like it was before, because we had our own container and we only had one and we needed to get it back so this is really great that they [Fortum] just switch the container and it's done in a couple of minutes.”

- Interviewee\_S2, Sweden, age of 50-59, very large, boarding stable, female

“I appreciate the most the fact that working at the stable gets easier.”

- Interviewee\_F2, Finland, age of 30-39, large, boarding stable, female

“Life has become considerably easier. You don’t have to stress about where to empty the manure storage and where it will go and so on, and the service also brings the bedding to you, you don’t have to go and get anything from anywhere.”

- Interviewee\_F1, Finland, age of 50-59, midsize, riding school, female

“The need [for manure handling service] was enormous, something had to be done, because I felt that it was more difficult to get rid of manure than nuclear waste, it was a huge problem. I thought that I could not do this business and then this service came as a gift from heaven, beddings are brought to your stable and then someone collects the manure”

- Interviewee\_F1, Finland, age of 50-59, midsize, riding school, female

The interviewees reflected emotional values by stating the importance of well-being of horses and animals in general. Additionally, safety and quality seem to be important emotional values in the center of a Finnish riding school. One Finnish interviewee also stated that she is paying more and more attention to and searching information about her own well-being such as mindfulness and relaxing.

“The loose boxes stay in good shape, there’s no dust, at least when using wooden pellets. So the stable stays tidy, the horses have no airway problems, and we have had no problems with hooves. Of course we take good care of the horses anyway, so if the conditions are not good, a good bedding doesn’t help much, but we take good care of everything. But I also claim that our horses are so well thanks to this bedding.”

- Interviewee\_F3, Finland, age of 30-39, large, riding school, female

“I prefer to spend my time on more ambitious subjects, doing changes for animals. That is my way of relaxing. I want to support like organizations, you know, helping elephants and pass forward, spread the word, you know.”

- Interviewee\_S2, Sweden, age of 50-59, very large, boarding stable, female

“at the moment you think of yourself, so like unwinding and mindfulness and things like that, when now you notice you are looking for that sort of things, that perhaps there could be something else too besides work fourteen hours a day, so there are many good and wise writings and thoughts, and the kind of self-compassion there should perhaps be more of, so maybe things connected with that are it”

- Interviewee\_F1, Finland, age of 50-59, midsize, riding school, female

“We emphasize the safety, we have safe horses, educated teachers, we don't have any, you know a certain percentage of lessons could be given by some amateur instructors, but we don't have that. We all have a real education because it has to do with safety. So when accidents happen it's less work for me and I don't want any accidents to happen, because it's a stressful experience for a horse as well when a rider falls down”

- Interviewee\_F3, Finland, age of 30-39, large, riding school, female

”my customers choose my stable based on my criteria, we have high-class teaching, high-class horses, high-class equipment for the horses, high-class fodders, they get water in the paddocks round the year, we drag it out there by hand.”

- Interviewee\_F3, Finland, age of 30-39, large, riding school, female

The interviewees related economic values to their business and also to the Fortum HorsePower service. Economic values include direct cost-savings but also indirect cost-savings such as compact beddings that can decrease the consumption of beddings, as well as the horses not eating the beddings, which can also prevent colic that can be caused by gluttony and block in the digestion of the horse. Curing a bad colic at the horse hospital can cost thousands of euros. Additionally, saving time and effort can be considered as economic values when time can be used for earning money.

“it cut my expenses like in half to use Fortum. Plus it is something good too, recycling [burning manure]”

- Interviewee\_S2, Sweden, age of 50-59, very large, boarding stable, female

” earlier we used straw pellets, but wooden pellets are kind of a lot more compact, so there is more stuff in one wooden pellet than in one straw pellet, so in a way it's more lasting.”

- Interviewee\_F2, Finland, age of 30-39, large, boarding stable, female

”Surely, with a few greedy horses there’s the thing they don’t eat the wooden pellets, but we didn’t have that problem with straw pellets either, so we have had no horse colic.”

- Interviewee\_F2, Finland, age of 30-39, large, boarding stable, female

”Let’s say I appreciate my own time and work so much that they were in balance, the price and then again my work and time.”

- Interviewee\_F6, Finland, age of 40-49, small, hobby stable, female

”I’m the sort of person that I don’t buy anything but what I need to buy, so I’m no eager shopper.”

- Interviewee\_F2, Finland, age of 30-39, large, boarding stable, female

The table shows the values that the interviewees consider important. These values can be utilized especially in advertising to attract customers and arise their attention. Values recognized in the literature are based on the classification by Rintamäki, Kuusela and Mitronen (2007).

Values by the literature	Corresponding values by the interviewees
Economic values	Cost-savings, cost-time/effort ratio, saving beddings
Emotional values	Well-being of horses, quality, safety, mindfulness, own well-being
Functional values	Lighter workload, punctuality, convenience, practicality, ergonomics, cost-time/effort ratio
Symbolic values	Environmental friendliness, saving the planet, recycling, clean surroundings, saving the environment, saving energy, reputation of the service provider, domesticity, feeling of belonging

Table 2 Values

### 4.3 Channels

In addition to telling about their leisure time channel usage, most of the business stable interviewees having a riding school, a trotting stable or a boarding stable also told about how they utilize different channels to promote their own services. The manner of using the chosen channel for promotion purposes seems to reflect the preferences of the interviewee. Additionally, the entrepreneurs do not seem to have clearly separable leisure time, because promotional efforts seem to be conducted after leaving the stable in the evening. On the other hand, some of the interviewees, especially the riding school and boarding stable owners

stated that they are using certain channels, especially social media channels throughout the day. All of the interviewees stated that they use email and websites, either their own website or websites in general, daily or almost daily.

“Well, I email my customers every day and send invoices through mail and I use Facebook, through the day, maybe too much (laughs). At breakfast, lunch and dinner.”

- Interviewee\_S2, Sweden, age of 50-59, very large, boarding stable, female

“I use [Facebook and Instagram], daily, many times a day. Throughout the day! From morning to night, around the clock. I have had to change the settings and turn off notifications, those notifications make me mad.”

- Interviewee\_F3, Finland, age of 30-39, large, riding school, female

Based on the interviews, Facebook is the most commonly used digital channel, the usage includes Facebook Messenger. All of the Swedish interviewees use Facebook and only one Finnish interviewee does not use Facebook due to the fact that the interviewee does not have any social media account at all. Most of the interviewees stated that they use Facebook daily or even several times a day. Facebook is mainly used for communicating with friends, family and clients. It is considered as an easy, low-threshold channel for promoting your own services. However, a few interviewees mentioned that Facebook is already last season among younger generations. The second most commonly used social media channel seems to be Instagram, which is used by seven interviewees in total, two hobby stable interviewees and five interviewees from the business stable category. A few interviewees brought up having a Twitter account, but it seems that Twitter is no important channel within this customer group, because those who have the account are not very active. In addition to Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, the interviewees also mentioned messaging apps such as WhatsApp, Slack and Facebook Messenger when asked about their digital media channel usage.

“Facebook is quite a good channel, I don't know, I suppose young people don't use Facebook anymore, so I've heard.”

- F2, Finland, age of 30-39, large, boarding stable, female

“I myself use basic websites, email and Slack as a communication channel, which Finns seem to use less in general. I use it to communicate with my friends and with my clients, if they want so. I am so old-fashioned that I also use RSS, which is a web feed with which I follow news and many horse

industry websites. Maybe it is easier to say what I don't use, I don't use social media. The only thing that I use that is closest to social media is Slack.”

- Interviewee\_F6, Finland, age of 40-49, small, hobby stable, female

”I guess it's Facebook where you can find really lots of everything.”

- Interviewee\_F1, Finland, age of 50-59, midsize, riding school, female

Mobile is the most commonly used device, the second one is computer. Laptops and tablets were also mentioned. All of the interviewees seem to be using the mobile as the main device, but the interviewees from the “business” category and entrepreneurs working in other areas in “hobby” category seem to use a computer or a laptop to conduct business and market their own services.

“Mainly on my mobile phone, if I have time, then I will use the computer. I prefer the computer, because then I can get a clearer overall picture and it is easier to go from site to site and change the tab if I have to check something, but I have never time, or if I have time, I don't have time to sit down. Sometimes I use a tablet, but my tablet is so bad that I throw it to the wall, because it is so annoying to use, but it's just about the device.”

- Interviewee\_F6, Finland, age of 40-49, small, hobby stable, female

“For example, when we went to Estonia [on a holiday where the interviewee came back home one day before the interview], we bought the trip here [browsing her mobile phone simultaneously] this is the medium that we use for everything. I just said to my husband that it is unbelievable that the phone has become the most important document, that you cannot even travel without it, because you have the tickets on the phone and all the information about the trip.”

- Interviewee\_F4, Finland, age of 60-64, small, hobby stable, female

Three Finnish interviewees at the age of over 50 years seem to prefer making purchases in a traditional brick and mortar store, especially in case of buying clothes. On the contrary, younger interviewees seems to make online purchases more often. It should be considered when doing online marketing that some customers still prefer traditional brick and mortar stores, and all of the interviewees prefer communication with a human and most of the interviewees stated that they prefer face-to-face service. The Swedish customers seem to be more active with using digital channels.

“I'm no good at buying online, like add to the basket and then you buy there, I'm a bit more like, somehow so old-fashioned that I have to get to see it. I bought some clothes at Zalando, they were really terrible. Like of course when you look there [online] they're pretty, and oh my goodness the

colour and so on. [Would it be better if there was a video on the site?] Well I don't know, at least when shopping for clothes I have to get into the store to make my purchase.”

- Interviewee\_F4, Finland, age of 60-64, small, hobby stable, female

”It's not much that I buy online, it's more like me to walk into a store and try things on. It's very occasionally that I might order some book, but not for instance any clothes or shoes, I want to feel in my hands how they look and feel.”

- Interviewee\_F1, Finland, age of 50-59, midsize, riding school, female

### 4.3.1 Channel purposes

In addition to advertising their own services, stable entrepreneurs seem to utilize Facebook as a communication channel. Different Facebook groups are used in order to seek information to solve a problem or to provide useful tips. Private groups are used in order to communicate with clients.

“Well, I use email to take care of things in general, but Facebook is for, it is quite lonely to work here at the stable, so I use Facebook as a contacting tool, I mean [Facebook] Messenger that I use to messaging and such.”

- Interviewee\_F2, Finland, age of 30-39, large, boarding stable, female

“Advertising, building a brand name, communicating with customers. In my free-time it's for my hobbies and communication with my friends.”

- Interviewee\_S3, Sweden, age of 50-59, very large stable, boarding stable, male

“Facebook is a good channel to reach all my clients so I send out all the information about what is going on at the stable, if we have planned anything for the future and also Messenger is just great! We can see that a person has read my message. I prefer that to texting and sending text messages to someone, because you know, you never know if it has reached the person.”

- Interviewee\_S2, Sweden, age of 50-59, very large, boarding stable, female

Facebook groups such as “Talliniksit” (Stable hacks), “Hevosyrittäjät ympäri Suomen” (horse entrepreneurs all around Finland) or “Naisyrittäjät” (women entrepreneurs) are considered as useful information sources where new ideas can be found to run the business. Also websites such as Suomen Ratsastajainliitto ry (the Equestrian Federation of Finland), The National Horse Breeding and Trotting Association Suomen Hippos ry, Ravinetti, Hevosurheilu -magazine, Veikkaus (a Finnish gaming company) and Hippolis (the National

Equine Competence Association of Finland) were mentioned as important information sources.

“For example, on Facebook, I belong to “Hevosyrittäjät” group and such, where I get ideas and then I follow when someone asks “hello, how have you done this and that” -type of questions. [Do you find these groups useful?] Well, yes, in their own way. I see my colleagues quite rarely so there are tips available in the group or I can ask what kind of water buckets are used in winter [to keep the water unfrozen], and experiences from others.”

- Interviewee\_F2, Finland, age of 30-39, large, boarding stable, female

Additionally, all of the interviewees mentioned that they use Google as the main channel to seek information, especially in case of an interesting product or service, but also when they want to know something else. Therefore it may be wise to invest in a search engine marketing and ensure that the company ranks high in the search engine. Additionally, the company should put effort on keywords and ensure that the keywords match with the vocabulary the customers are using.

“And when I need something I Google. Like, if I need some advice or anything and also, for my clients if they need a horse, I can reach my connections that way, Facebook for example. It's a great way to reach people. Yeah, of course to connect with my friends and send funny things and make them laugh, you know (laughs), making everybody happier.”

- Interviewee\_S2, Sweden, age of 50-59, very large, boarding stable, female

“Well, I mean, I usually go on websites to find information like the Swedish Ridsportförbundet [The Swedish Equestrian Federation] and things like that to find trainings and so, then I do like maybe use Google to do searches and find information and I would say, then also some newspaper sites and I actually recently downloaded a few apps on my phone like newspapers like Hippson, with the information. [so you mostly use these sites to find information, are there any other purposes?] I would say, 70% is looking for information.”

- Interviewee\_S1, Sweden, age of 40-4, very large, riding school, female

The interviewees stated that they would like to get news and offerings through email and Facebook. However, emails should not be sent too frequently. A website is a good channel to provide deeper information for customers.

“Not that I noticed really. Maybe like if we find some information like on Facebook is more personal like other riding schools. Maybe, I don't know why I would but I do have some friends that work at riding schools and to follow their pages and there is more you know on a daily basis what is happening or, it's more personal but if you go on a website, it's more official information.”

- Interviewee\_S1, Sweden, age of 40-4, very large, riding school, female

“I Google. Before we started using Fortum, we had problems with getting rid of the manure and so, that’s how I started to search for an alternative: "how can I get rid of manure", because it’s [the previous system] very expensive. You have to pay for shipments and everything so I Googled and Fortum came up, this is how I contacted. But it was a very long ago, before it even started actually. [Do you remember what words you were using on Google search? Was it “gödsel hantering” or like manure management services?] Exactly, manure management and handling.“

- Interviewee\_S2, Sweden, age of 50-59, very large, boarding stable, female

“I think it’s good to have a website to find and look for information. Like more, I mean, Facebook maybe is a bit limited, like more if I want to spend time on looking what kind of beddings they have, what kind of references they have, what kind of other services I can take. I would seek things and information on the websites. But, I think I would look on Facebook if they have something new coming up, or something. I would follow them on Facebook as well.”

- Interviewee\_S1, Sweden, age of 40-4, very large, riding school, female

“I do think it’s quite good, that letter to the customers that we get, and if there are some new things, offerings or such like, and just on Facebook, it at least reaches me the best, so email and Facebook.”

- Interviewee\_F5, Finland, age of 50-59, midsize, trotting stable, male

#### **4.4 Summary of the Empirical Findings**

The following table summarizes the empirical findings of this research and provides a simplified IMC blueprint for the marketers’ to use. This blueprint combines the main IMC elements covered in this thesis work: stakeholders, content and channels. Content is divided into customer values for content creation, content themes and content types. The equal findings between Finland and Sweden are presented in the “common findings” column and the country specific additional information is presented in the columns of “Finland specific findings” and “Sweden specific findings”.

TOPIC	COMMON FINDINGS	FINLAND SPECIFIC FINDINGS	SWEDEN SPECIFIC FINDINGS
STAKEHOLDERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hasty lifestyle</li> <li>- Interviewees prefer traditional phone calls and face-to-face</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rational buyers</li> <li>- Hobby stables</li> <li>- Business stables</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Business stables</li> </ul>
CUSTOMER VALUES FOR CONTENT CREATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Economic values: Cost-savings</li> <li>- Emotional values: Well-being of horses and animals</li> <li>- Functional values: punctuality, convenience, practicality, ergonomics</li> <li>- Symbolic values: environmental friendliness, recycling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Economic values: indirect cost-savings such as decreased consumption of beddings, more time available for earning money, cost-time/effort ratio</li> <li>- Emotional values: well-being of horses, safety, quality, mindfulness, own well-being</li> <li>- Functional values: lighter workload, cost-time/effort ratio, "everyday ease",</li> <li>- Symbolic values: feeling of belonging, (partnership), reputation of the service provider, domesticity, clean surroundings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Economic values: direct cost-savings</li> <li>- Emotional values: well-being of horses and animals,</li> <li>- Symbolic values: saving the planet in a long run, saving energy</li> </ul>
CONTENT THEMES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Insights of the best practices from other horse stable entrepreneurs related to country specific topics and values. (Participate existing customers)</li> <li>- Information about academic research and academic findings combined with company's offering.</li> <li>- Price, availability and delivery information is important later at the pre-purchase stage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Business stables: efficiency and ergonomics-related topics</li> <li>- Hobby stables: discounts, information about academic research and reminders of the current issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Well-being of horses, working efficiency and an environmental way of working</li> <li>- Emphasize environmental friendliness of the offering when increasing awareness among horse stable owners as a target group.</li> </ul>
CONTENT TYPES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) An attractive and relevant picture that describes the issue combined with a short text</li> <li>2) Video, which is especially wished for showing product or service functionalities.</li> <li>3) Entertaining posts to increase brand awareness among potential customers</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Two customers, one from the business category and one from the hobby category stated that they prefer textual content the most by explaining that they are quick to perceive the text and they don't find pictures very attractive and videos are too slow</li> </ul>	
CHANNELS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Websites are important for official information, where the customer can find deeper information and do comparisons, for example compare different beddings and prices.</li> <li>- Emails for communicating with customers and providing information</li> <li>- Social media channels: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Facebook, to provide current news</li> <li>2) Instagram to reach also younger people (if resources)</li> </ol> </li> <li>- possibility to conduct business with a real sales person over phone or face-to-face, especially in case of a complex product or service</li> <li>- Increase awareness by investing in Google advertising, search engine optimization and keywords.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facebook groups mentioned by the interviewees: "Talliniksit" (Stable hacks), "Hevosyrittäjät ympäri Suomen" (horse entrepreneurs all around Finland) or "Naisyrittäjät" (women entrepreneurs)</li> <li>- Websites mentioned by the interviewees: The Equestrian Federation of Finland, The National Horse Breeding and Trotting Association Suomen Hippos ry, Ravinetti, Hevosurheilu -magazine, a Finnish gaming company Veikkaus and the National Equine Competence Association of Finland Hippolis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Websites mentioned by the interviewees: The Swedish Equestrian Federation, Hippson, Ridsport, Hästnet, Swedish breeder association and Trainerportal.</li> <li>- Mobile applications are used if available.</li> </ul>

Table 3 The IMC blueprint

## **5. DISCUSSION**

This section covers the theoretical contribution of this research, managerial implications, suggestions for further research and the limitations of the study.

### **5.1 Theoretical contribution**

Companies utilize marketing communications to persuade, inform, inspire and remind customers directly or indirectly about the brands, products and services they sell (Kotler et al., 2012; Lane Keller, 2001) and the benefits customers can obtain by consuming the products or services (Clow, 2010). The development of technologies has shifted the balance of market power towards customer centricity and therefore selling to customers has become more complex due to numerous options and the myriad amount of information available on the Internet (Crittenden, Peterson and Albaum, 2010). A digital environment enables interactive, two-way communications and modern customers don't want to be passive targets for marketing actions, instead they want to interact with the company and serve as active co-creators of value (Trainor, 2012). According to Digital Marketing Institute digital marketing is utilization of technologies for the creation of integrated, measurable and targeted communication. Digital marketing aims to acquire and retain customers and build deep, meaningful relationships with them within a multi-channel buying process and customer lifecycle. (Chaffey, 2010; Smith, 2007). Digital marketing has provided companies with new opportunities to gather revenues, build relationships, acquire new customers, increase awareness, et cetera (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, Chaffey, 2010; Smith, 2007).

According to Kotler et al. (2012) a promotion mix or a marketing communication mix consists of eight tactical elements that companies use to pursue their objectives. The elements are advertising, sales promotion, events and experiences, public relations and publicity, direct marketing, word-of-mouth marketing, interactive marketing and personal selling. In a nutshell, integrated marketing communication creates synergy among those different communication mix elements to deliver a solid and consistent message to stakeholders across different channels by conforming, optimizing and coordinating the marketing communications (Kitchen and Burgmann, 2015; Pitta, Weisgal and Lynagh, 2006; Pickton and Broderick, 2005). The AIDAS-model has been used in advertising and

marketing to understand the effect of advertising media and therefore in creating a successful marketing communication strategy based on customers' purchasing journey. The model stands for Awareness-Interest-Desire-Action-Satisfaction and describes the stages occurring during the customer's purchasing journey. (Rawal, 2013) The AIDAS-model helps to explain how a marketing communication message shall involve and engage customers in brand choice and therefore move consumers from brand awareness towards purchase action.

The first stage of the model, awareness refers to arising attention of customers with eye-catching product advertising. Interest is the second stage of the model. It signifies arising and maintaining customers' interest towards the product, for instance with detailed product information on a company website. The third stage is creating a desire in the consumer to own the product, and in the best case the product itself or the advertisement of the product can trigger the feeling of actually using the product (Rossiter and Percy 1980), which can create the desire of purchase. The last stage means the real action, where the customer purchases the product. Satisfaction is the post-purchase stage, where the customer evaluates the purchase.

### **5.1.1 Stakeholders**

Garretson (2008) suggested that modern customers want to engage with the company and connect with other customers having valuable insights, instead of only looking for information about the product. Trainor (2012) supported Garretson's suggestion by stating that modern customers are not satisfied with only being passive targets of marketing actions, but instead want to serve as co-creators of value and interact with the company. This thesis research also provides support for these claims. The interviews revealed that the "business" customers of Fortum HorsePower consider Fortum as their collaboration partner and the interviewees find it important to provide two-way visibility so they can increase each other's prestige, as one of the interviewees said. Additionally, especially the "business" interviewees, both Finnish and Swedish wished for information about the best practices from other customers relating to working efficiency, cost-savings, an environmental way of working and the well-being of horses, which would help them to connect with other users as well. Almost all of the customers stated that they have promoted the service voluntarily and all of the interviewees would gladly place an Fortum HorsePower advertisement on their

websites, which would also be advertisement for them being part of the environmentally friendly manure management service.

Most of the interviewees emphasized their hasty lifestyle when asked about their preferred type of content. Almost all of the interviewees prefer a short text combined with a descriptive image, also videos may work if they are not too long and do not require too much focusing. The feeling of not having time for a longer text may be due to the myriad amount of information available on digital media, which may make it difficult to focus on one post when the next one is already on screen, as it often is on social media channels. On the other hand the interviewees said that a website is a good channel to deepen the information about the product or a service and spend the time required to explore the solution. This may be due to lacking another stimulus which attracts to move forward. Pavlov, Melville and Plice (2008) stated that digital media channels offer a low-threshold channel for marketers but consequently the information overflow may even lead to avoidance of advertising and also differentiation becomes more crucial. This claim was not fully supported by the interviewees but one interviewee stated that it is irritating if some product is advertised a lot and the advertisement on a “wrong” product is displayed all the time when looking for something else. On the other hand, she stated all visibility as being good, because then the advertised product or service sticks into mind and the product or service may be on top of mind when customers need that kind of solution; the solution is also often associated with the most visible provider. According to Ries and Ries (1999) brand leaders should advertise their leadership, which is the single most important motivational factor driving the behavior of customers.

### **5.1.2 Content**

Earlier marketers provided highly interactive content, nowadays it needs to be more interactive and customer-centric to be able to build relationships with existing and potential customers. (Berthon, et al., 2012; Wymbys, 2011; Urban, 2004). In addition to the relationship building, advertisers aim to create and maintain attitudes that (Appendix 1 –math problem post) persuade customer behavior towards the product purchase (Rossiter and Percy, 1980). Trainor (2012) stated that advertising needs to be attractive and relevant for the audience to arise their attention. This thesis work aims at providing information for marketers about the

topics that horse stable owners find relevant and attractive for themselves. According to the interviewees, working efficiency, an environmental way of working, cost-savings, ergonomics and the well-being of horses are interesting topics. Also findings from academic research and discounts are desired, especially among hobby stable owners, and the Swedish customers prefer academic research as well. Using these topics in advertising should attract this target segment and may therefore create and maintain attitudes which will advance purchase intention. The interviewees stated that those topics would be the most interesting if they are ideas from other entrepreneurs in general or related to the product or the service. Therefore this research also supports the user-generated content theory. According to Rowley (2004) user-generated content (UGC), meaning content produced by customers such as reviews and informal conversations but also customer panels and self-made advertising films made by customers, provide value for other customers when they can improve their skills as product users, learn more about the product from other users, et cetera (Rowley, 2004). This thesis research indicates that user-reviews are an important content type during the pre-purchase investigation, as seven interviewees stated that they could consider purchasing a product or service based on reviews. On the other hand, even though the interviewees desire reviews, they treat over- positive and -negative reviews with skepticism and one interviewee stated that companies are doing too much extravagant storytelling and several other interviewees also supported this by stating that the reviews written by other customers are more reliable. Reviews from colleagues or acquaintances are considered as the most reliable. Additionally, especially the Finnish and Swedish “business” interviewees stated that they would like to learn about the best practices from others who work in the same industry or from entrepreneurs in general, which is one of the main purposes in UGC - to educate other users about the product and usage. However, the interviewees said that this content can be published by Fortum HorsePower, but it must be reliable.

Already in the eighties, Rossiter and Percy (1980) suggested that visual advertisements such as pictures and videos are the most effective way to advertise, because customers can imagine themselves using the product and the message will be internalized based on personal imaginary. (Rossiter and Percy, 1980; Shepard, 1978). The findings in this research supported those suggestions, as the most preferred content type among the interviewees is a descriptive picture combined with a concise text. Another useful content type is a video, which is especially wished for showing product or service functionalities. However, also

videos need to be concise and they cannot require too much effort, and subtitles would be an advantage, because videos are often watched without sound. Taylor (2009) stated that campaigns including entertaining elements and interactivity tend to be effective and successful. Choi, Hwang and McMillan (2008) suggested that entertaining elements on advertisements generate positive attitudes towards the advertisement and consequently increase the purchase intention. However, only one “hobby” interviewee stated that she sometimes solves math problems and takes tests sometimes on digital media channels, other interviewees said that they don’t have time for that kind of activities. One business stable interviewee mentioned that if there is some contest on social media, she can participate by posting a picture but she finds it irritating if she needs to like the page to participate. The interview findings seem to be contradictory with the suggestion by Taylor (2009). However, the “math problem” post (Appendix 1 –math problem post) published on Fortum HorsePower’s Facebook page received almost 19 000 organic reach and some new contacts from potential customers, therefore it may be possible that the suggestions by Taylor (2009) and Choi, Hwang and McMillan (2008) are valid among the “potential customer”-segment. The other possible conclusion is that the interviewees considered some other type of content when responding to the interview question related to entertaining content, or the contest included to the post with a possibility to win tickets might also have affected their willingness to participate and they may have only considered entertaining content in general during the interview.

According to Wilkie (1990) “consumer values” or “personal values” refer to important personal goals that individuals want to pursue. Huber, Herrmann and Morgan (2001) suggest that some of the goals can be achieved through the possession or consumption of products. According to Huber, Herrmann and Morgan (2001) many consumer researchers have argued that consumers are buying products because of the product benefits that will satisfy their personal needs, not because of the transactional value. It seems that the interviewees in Sweden chose Fortum HorsePower service mainly because of the environmental aspect and in Finland mainly because of a lacking manure handling solution, both the findings support the claim by Huber, Herrmann and Morgan (2001) stating that the transactional value is not the main purchase driver. However, Saren and Tzokas (1998) suggest both descriptive (personal values) and normative buyer’s evaluation (cost-benefit) aspects being essential in guiding the purchase intention of customer. The cost-benefit-ratio was also mentioned by

the interviewees, either costs versus saving time and effort or saving money compared to the previous solution. Mazumdar's (1993) suggestion of customers not being only influenced by a lower price or high quality seems to be also supported by the findings of this research. Mazumdar (1993) stated that as customers are becoming more value-oriented, they tend to make a reasonable trade-off between the perceived benefits and sacrifices in the process of consuming and obtaining services or products. The judgement of value is based on trade-off between benefits (positive consequences) and costs or sacrifice (negative consequences) (Woodruff and Gardial, 1996; Mazumdar, 1993). Positive consequences mentioned by the hobby stable customers are for example saving time and effort, punctual deliveries, clean surroundings, saving the planet and "everyday ease", and the main benefits mentioned by the business interviewees in Finland are punctual deliveries, the well-being of horses, cost-savings, easiness and energy-utilization of manure, and the Swedish interviewees mentioned cost-savings, easiness and doing good for the environment. The only sacrifice that the interviewees mentioned directly was the cost of the service. The following model expresses the literature-based customer value creation, which is combined with theoretical model of the thesis (presented in chapter 2.3).

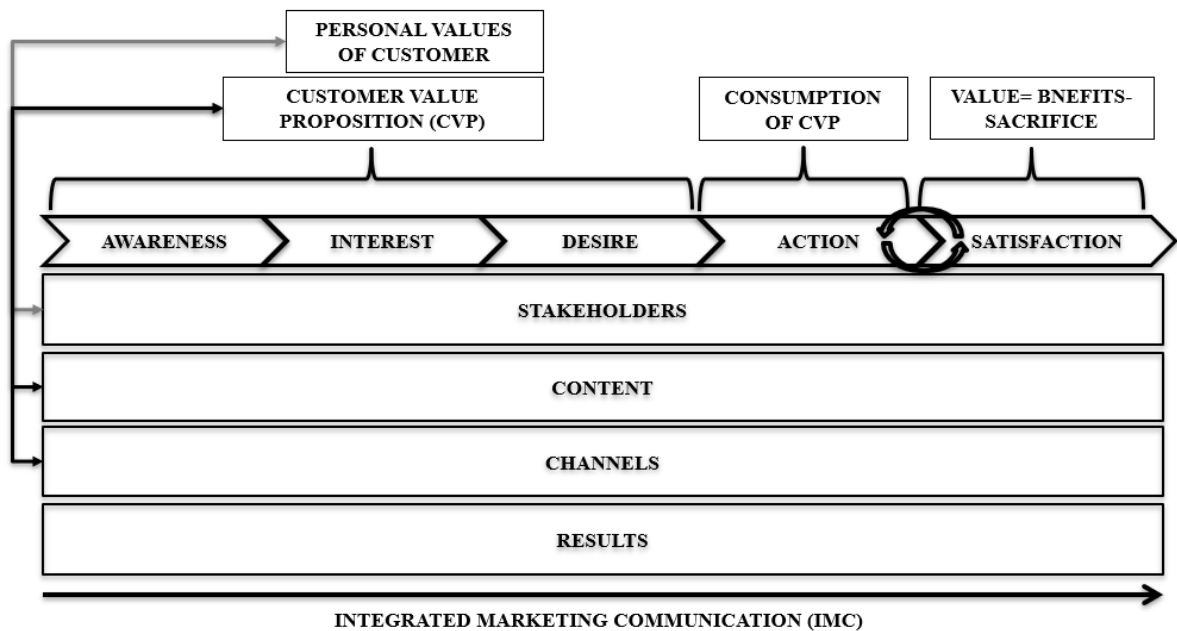


Figure 4 Customer values in purchasing journey

According to Kotler et al. (2012), customer value propositions are company's suggestions of benefits that customer can achieve by consuming a product or services such as Fortum HorsePower's "get rid of horse manure easily" or "environmentally friendly solution to the manure management of horse stables." These customer value propositions have been presented in advertising and the advertised propositions create expectations for the potential customers of the service, which customers then interpret through their personal values at the pre-purchase stage. Personal values reflect important personal goals that individuals want to achieve (Wilkie, 1990). Huber, Herrmann and Morgan (2001) suggested that some of the goals can be achieved through the possession or consumption of products. If the customer value proposition makes sense for the customer and meets the needs of the customer, the purchase may occur. According to Kotler et al. (2012, p. 428), customer evaluates the fulfillment of the company's value proposition through all the experiences that occurs on the way acquiring the product or service or when using it. After a purchase the customer starts evaluating the real value of Fortum HorsePower service by comparing the benefits and sacrifices. Benefits refers to the positive consequences of consumption, such as convenience, easiness, clean surroundings, environmental friendliness, the well-being of horses and cost-savings, which the interviewees stated being the positive consequences of Fortum HorsePower manure management service. Sacrifices refers to all negative consequences of the service, meaning monetary and non-monetary costs such as costs and the necessity to rent a container if the manure storage cannot be emptied with Fortum's machines. These were the only sacrifices mentioned by the interviewees. Based on this benefit-sacrifice equation the customer defines the value and decides if the re-purchase occurs or not. This thesis research provides Fortum HorsePower with information on value and benefits, which the existing customers gain from Fortum HorsePower service. The information will be used in content creation to attract potential customers and to ensure that the value proposition will be reliable.

### **5.1.3 Channels**

This study supports the findings by Dahlén, Rasch and Rosengren (2003), who found out that a website is an important advertising tool for high capital value investments, such as Fortum HorsePower service, which are purchased after a careful consideration. Dahlén, Rasch and Rosengren (2003) stated that it is critical to fill the website with relevant

information to make the visitor stay as long as possible. A website visit can actually improve the attitude towards the brand and therefore advance purchase intention for high-involvement product (Dahlén, Rasch and Rosengren, 2003). The interviewees stated that the website is an important channel for seeking deeper product or service information such as finding out the features of the solution, prices, delivery and availability information, and they may spend much time on the website by seeking deeper information and advertisements. Dahlén, Rasch and Rosengren (2003) also found that first-time visitors stay for a longer time on a high-involvement product websites and repeating visitors only for a moment, this finding was also supported by the interviewees. They stated that they haven't visited Fortum HorsePower's websites after purchasing the service or they have only sought for contact information there. Only one interviewee remembered that the website is green, but others had no image of the website at all. In general, a website lacking price information is considered annoying among the interviewees because it is time-consuming to call and ask all the prices separately. Therefore, companies could benefit from utilizing a customer-centric integrated marketing communication strategy and consequently ensure the spread of a solid and consistent message, as well as provide a seamless experience for customers across different channels (Kitchen and Burgmann, 2015; Pickton and Broderick, 2005).

Despite the increased investments companies make to improve digital media marketing (Gartner, 2013; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), the interviewees of this study emphasized the handiness of using a mobile phone for running errands, while driving or working at the stable. Additionally, the interviewees considered face-to-face meetings desirable, especially in case of a complex product with a vague or unclear pricing that is based on chosen features for the solution. On the other hand, one interviewee mentioned that there is no difference between weekend and weekdays for a horse stable owner, because horses need to be taken care of similarly every day, so the interviewee thinks it is important that a bedding order can be placed outside the customer service hours when the matter comes to mind. These findings support the suggestion by Wymbs (2011) who claimed that digital marketing is the most effective when it is integrated with other communication channels such as face-to-face, direct mail or phone. In fact, according to Wymbs (2011) online channels can be used to support the entire purchasing process from presale to postsale stage (Wymbs, 2011). Additionally, the interviews revealed that customers prefer using different channels on their purchase process. They look for information on the solution in general, tips on what

characteristics to look for when searching for a specific solution, and reviews from other users or colleagues from Google or other digital media channels, but when they have a desire to buy, they prefer face-to-face service or at least a call to get the exact price offer, especially in case of a complex solution such as an insurance instead of internet calculators. On the other hand, the interviewees prefer making price and product or service comparison, search for deliveries and availability, and delivery checking on the internet.

The interviewees stated that content topics are quite similar in different channels, which supports integrated marketing communications - delivering a consistent and solid message across channels. However, the content types differ a bit across channels: Facebook is for news, offerings, new products and other daily updates a company wants to share, Instagram's purpose is to show flash news, attract with a picture and build a follower base. A website is supposed to provide deeper information about the solution so the potential customers can spend time to familiarize themselves with the solution and email is for providing information about current news, such as information on new products or service related issues.

#### **5.1.4 AIDAS-model**

The AIDAS-model is a simple model for planning marketing and advertising actions. Despite the fact that the model was developed already in the early 20th century it is customer-centric (Rawal, 2013; Barry and Howard, 1990). The AIDAS-model helps to explain how a marketing communication message should involve and engage customers in brand choice and therefore move consumers from brand awareness towards purchase action (Rawal, 2013). In fact, according to Chiagouris and Wansley (2000) a customer may move quickly from awareness to action. Therefore, marketing tactics should be customized for the stage where the potential customer is, to maintain the engagement of the potential consumer (Chiagouris and Wansley, 2000) According to the interviews, it seems that the purchasing process is not always as straightforward as the AIDAS-model, but the model may still be very useful in planning marketing actions and advertising for the different information needs of customers. It seems that whether the product or service type is a low- or high-investment purchase has an effect as well. In general customers seem to follow an AIDAS-type of model in their purchasing process, but the interest and desire stages seem to be a bit unclear, which may possibly result from moving quickly from awareness to action stage as Chiagouris and

Wansley (2000) suggested. The importance of user-generated content and reviews were emphasized in the interviews, as several interviewees stated that they look for reviews on the internet or call their colleagues as pre-purchase investigation. Seven interviewees also stated that they could consider purchasing a product or service based on positive reviews. However, the interviewees mentioned being skeptical towards over-negative or -positive reviews and one interviewee emphasized that companies are doing excessive storytelling.

The following model is the theoretical model used in this thesis work in chapter 2.3 Theoretical model. The model combined the AIDAS-model standing for the different stages of purchasing process of customers, and three integrated marketing communication pillars: channels, content and stakeholders. The content pillar is divided into “content themes” referring information needs of customers and content types signifying effective ways to communicate the information. In this chapter the research findings are included in the theoretical model. The objective of this filled model is to help marketers with planning content for the horse owning customer segment and their information needs at different stages of the buying process. According to Rintamäki (2016) understanding the customers’ channel usage (offline, online, mobile) across their purchasing journey (pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase stages) and shopping drivers provides opportunity for retailers to create customer value and achieve a competitive advantage (Rintamäki, 2016).

The following model combines the research findings and the theoretical model, presented in the chapter 2.3 and consequently provides framework for the primary research question, “How to increase purchase intention of customers through integrated marketing communications on digital media?”

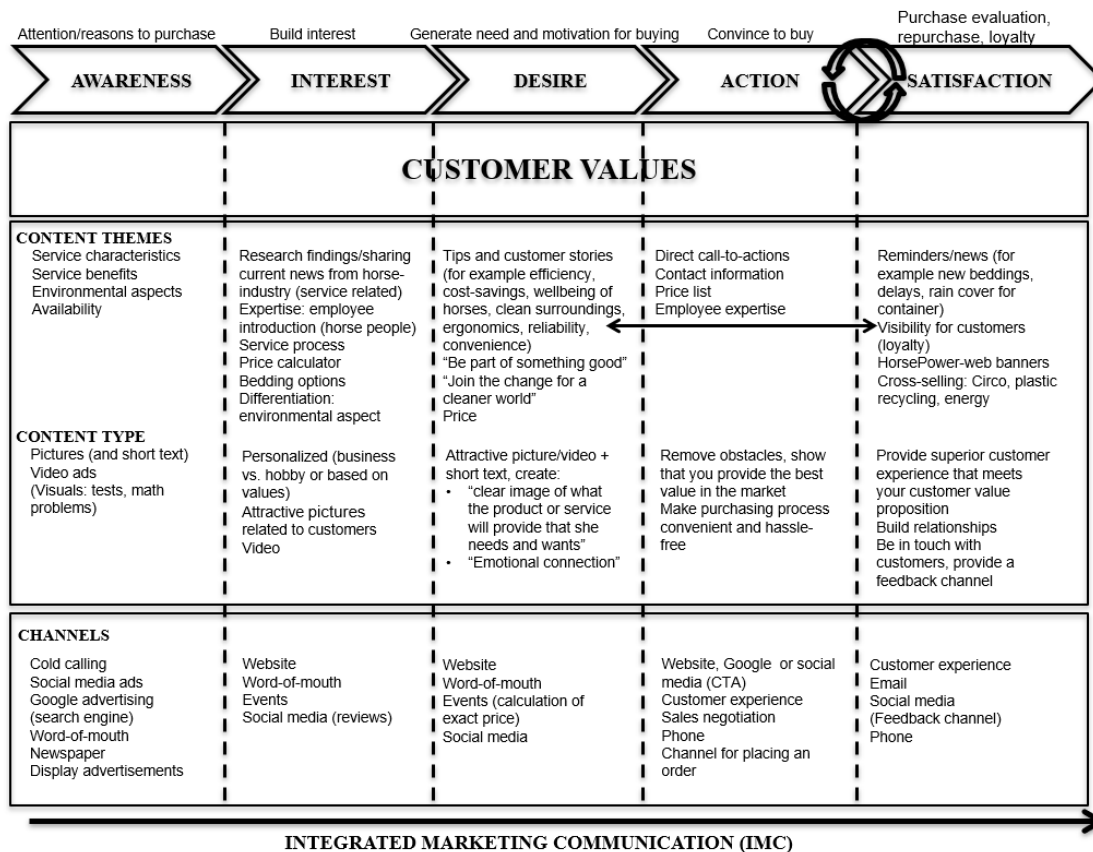


Figure 5 increasing purchase intention of customers through IMC

At the first stage, the attention of potential customers needs to be aroused with eye-catching advertisements (Rawal, 2013), the solution should be presented in general from different value perspectives such as convenience, time savings, environmental values and the well-being of horses to attract customers and to make the message adaptable and arise the interest or need. Understanding customer values should be utilized in creating a customer value proposition and an advertising message. The second stage is followed by the awareness, at this stage the idea is to build and maintain the interest of the customer towards the solution and brand by showing the product benefits and features on a deeper level and show product benefits in the light of recent research in the industry, which also increases credibility. Starting from the interest stage, advertising could be more fact-based as the interviewees stated horse stable owners in general and themselves being deliberate buyers. The third stage is to generate desire to buy by generating motivation, which can be for instance time-savings, cost-savings, a feeling of belonging ("being part of doing good"), which can be presented via customer experience stories. After the motivation is generated for buying, then the customer needs to be convinced to buy with clear prices, experienced sales representatives

and good service, any buying obstacles should be recognized and removed. The last stage refers to purchase evaluation and the repurchasing loop is added to the model. The purchasing journey of customers is not always as straightforward as the AIDAS-model and customers can spend different amounts of time at different stages. Chiagouris and Wansley (2000) pointed out that customers can move quickly from awareness to action in the digital environment: first the customers become aware of a product and visit a website, then they take their time to learn about the product, orientate themselves with the product and then they may initiate a purchase. (Chiagouris and Wansley, 2000).

One customer stated that it is irritating if a wrong product advertisement is displayed when browsing and looking for something else, on the other hand she thinks that the visibility is good and that a certain product gets the ownership of the product segment and will be the first product that comes to mind when the need arises. Therefore, the display advertisements on the internet seem to be particularly effective advertisements to arise attention, also social media advertisements, word-of-mouth and newspaper were mentioned as sources for awareness of Fortum HorsePower service in Finland. In Sweden, Google advertising and sales calls were considered to be an effective way to spread the word about a new service. The second stage, a website is an especially important channel, where the customer can spend time by seeking and proceeding product information and advertisements (Rawal, 2013; Dahlén, Rasch and Rosengren, 2003), and so are also events with possibility to meet sales representatives, social media and reviews. At the third stage the customer needs to be motivated for the purchase, so events are an important offering possibility to meet the sales representatives, as well as social media to seek reviews from other users and user experience stories and a website to find out prices, availability and delivery information and customer experience stories. Especially visual advertisements could be effective; Rossiter and Percy (1980) stated that visual and verbal advertisements can create a feeling of actually using the product through the imagery of the customer, which can create the desire for purchase.

The purchase stage should be as convenient as possible and it seems that the phone and face-to-face meetings are the preferred way to contact the sales representatives. Customer satisfaction should be ensured by offering the customers a feedback loop and by keeping them updated about current issues with informative emails. Customer service and a convenient way for placing an order also seem to have an effect on customer satisfaction according to the interviewees. Additionally, as customers appreciate a partnership with a

company and wish for two-way visibility such as customer experience stories, companies should utilize those to engage the existing customers and promote their willingness to recommend the service to other customers. Garretson (2008) stated that customers want to connect with other customers having valuable insights and also to serve as value co-creators (Trainor, 2012). Therefore, customers should be engaged and participated.

## **5.2 Managerial implications**

This chapter summarizes what the results mean in terms of actions and indicates which actions should be taken to advance purchase intention of customers.

### **5.2.1 Content themes**

The Finnish interviewees in the business-category stated that the most interesting content themes are working efficiency, cost-savings and ergonomics, especially if the ideas are the best practices from other entrepreneurs. Linking these topics to a service or product that the company provides in advertising and customer value proposition may increase the attractiveness of the offering among potential customers and demonstrate the real service or product benefits and their value. In addition, existing customer relationships could be strengthened by doing customer stories, which is advertising for the customer's business and credible marketing material for the company. According to the interviewees, the most reliable stories or reviews are the ones that customers have provided themselves. If the company provides customer success stories, they should be as credible as possible, for instance if the person is presented with his own name and face on a video or in a written story, it may be considered more credible. Additionally, an interviewee suggested that stories could be written for example from the viewpoint of ergonomics, cost-savings, working efficiency or well-being of horses, which may be more useful and easier to adapt, instead of promoting customer success stories that can be considered as incredible such as "a trotter became winning trotting king after joining Fortum HorsePower-service" as one interviewee stated.

In Sweden the most preferred content themes were insights from other entrepreneurs related to the well-being of horses, working efficiency and an environmental way of working. The

Swedish interviewees are also interested in findings from academic research related to the above-mentioned interesting topics in general, and the Swedish customers are also impressed if the company is on top of the research in the horse industry or in the research concerning sustainability in the horse industry. The Finnish customers in the hobby stable category are interested about findings from academic research as well as reminders of current issues and collaborative discount campaigns with other players in the horse industry such as fodder or wheelbarrow manufacturers. Based on the interests of the Swedish customers in the “business” category and the Finnish hobby stable owners, companies could benefit from publishing existing research findings and linking those findings to the benefits that the product or service provides. Another option is to start investing in the industry-related research and be on top of it and consequently show the expertise, increase credibility and the attractiveness of the brand in eyes of potential and existing customers. Many interviewees stated that horse stable owners in general or they themselves are non-impulsive or rational buyers, therefore the most efficient advertising message in this “horse stable owners” customer segment may be fact-based marketing, which is based on experiences of existing customers or linking company’s offering with horse industry -related research findings. Fortum HorsePower could start following the research in horse industry more actively and try to find some links between research findings and the service, which could be used to increase the attractiveness of the service. Fortum HorsePower could benefit from using some social media listening tools such as Hootsuite to follow the discussion on different social media channels conveniently. Additionally, providing customer experience stories from the angle that shows the service benefits in a credible manner could increase the attractiveness of the service and improve the relationship with existing customers, which is important as the objective of modern marketing is to build a relationship with potential and existing customers in relationship- and customer-oriented manner (Berthon, et al., 2012; Wymbs, 2011; Urban, 2004).

#### *5.2.1.1 Partnership and reviews*

The Finnish business interviewees also emphasized their partnership with Fortum, they stated that Fortum is a valuable partner and the collaboration also improves their status and vice versa. It seems that building partnerships is very important for this customer group, therefore marketers should consider marketing actions that promote the existing customers

and strengthens the relationship with them and provide opportunities for existing customers to promote the company. In fact, over one half of the interviewees stated that they have promoted Fortum HorsePower service to their friends. Based on Facebook statistics, the customer centric post (Appendix 2 – customer centric post) was the most commonly shared post published on Fortum HorsePower Facebook site during the spring 2018.

According to the interviewees, reviews and user-generated content seem to be very effective and very much used in pre-purchase research. Several interviewees stated that they look for reviews on the internet or call their colleagues to avoid purchase mistakes. Recommendations from acquaintances are considered to be the most reliable, but internet reviews can affect purchase intention too. Seven interviewees would consider purchasing the product based on reviews. However, interviewees also stated having skeptical attitude towards over-negative or over-positive reviews as well as the reviews published by a company. One interviewee emphasized that companies have gone too far with storytelling. Customer success stories would therefore be more reliable if they were presented with a real person and the topic would be service benefits such as cost- or time-savings instead of over positive visions.

#### *5.2.1.2 Values in content creation*

The values that were recognized during the interviews and that the interviewees found important were economic values such as cost-savings, cost-time/effort-ratio and saving beddings; emotional values such as the well-being of horses, safety and their own well-being; functional values such as a lighter workload, punctuality, convenience, practicality and convenience, as well as symbolic values such as environmental friendliness, recycling, clean surroundings, saving energy, domesticity and the feeling of belonging. Considering these values in product or service development and especially in integrated marketing communications such as in communication with customers, digital marketing et cetera may increase the attractiveness of a product or a service and hence advance purchase intention of customers.

It was surprising to find out how much the interviewees emphasized environmental values, even over economic values. However, environmental values may be the most important

values at the first stages of the customer journey, but economic values such as cost-savings compared to previous solutions and the price may be more important criteria when the purchase intention occurs. Functional values were following the environmental values among Finnish customers; many Finnish customers stated that they were lacking manure management solution and it was very difficult to get rid of manure, it was costly and the transportation equipment needed to be rented, or the customer considered the bureaucracy and the legal requirements of reporting the manure handling so difficult that the manure extradition contract by Fortum was considered as a relieving solution. Applying these values and the preferred content to content creation may trigger a desire to own a product or “be part of the service” and therefore a purchase intention among customers. Marketers should remember that customers may have different information needs for different stages of their purchasing journey, therefore the content should be customized for the different needs of customers to be able to provide meaningful and relevant content. As Ramsay (2010) suggested, companies should think of social media conversations as small business meetings and personalize the content because a “one fits all” solution does not exist. The AIDAS model could be a useful tool for marketers to use in planning advertising as it is a model for the planning of marketing and advertising. AIDAS stands for awareness, interest, desire, action and satisfaction, it reflects the customer purchasing journey in a generalized manner.

### **5.2.2 Channels**

A meaningful and relevant marketing message should also reach the target audience to be effective, therefore it is critical to understand the channel preferences of the target group. According to the interviews, the most preferred digital channels seem to be email and websites, which are used by all the interviewees. Websites are considered as a good channel to find deeper information about the services or products and to compare features such as bedding types, especially in the pre-purchase investigation. A website also provides more official information compared to other channels. However, Fortum HorsePower’s existing customers stated that they haven’t visited the Fortum HorsePower’s websites after joining the service, or if they have, it has been only to look for contact information. Therefore, it can be assumed that the target group for the websites are the potential customers. This finding is supported by Dahlén, Rasch and Rosengren (2003), who found out that a website is an important tool for acquiring new customers for high capital value investments, which are

purchased after careful consideration, but after the purchase customers may not even visit the website (Dahlén, Rasch and Rosengren, 2003). As the website seems to be so important for new customer acquisition, Fortum HorsePower should ensure that the website content serves primarily the potential customers and that the content is created from the viewpoint of values and topics that the customers find attractive, such as working efficiency, the well-being of horses, cost-savings and ergonomics. Therefore, especially Fortum HorsePower's Swedish website should be filled with information as it is lacking important information such as container service and a price calculator. The manure transfer agreement should also be mentioned as one benefit of the service, because then the customer does not need to worry about bureaucracy.

According to the interviewees, email is considered as an important channel to run errands and communicate with clients. The customers would also like to get informational emails from Fortum HorsePower, the emails should however not be sent too frequently and the content should be informational and include current news such as delivery delays, reminders or offers. On the other hand, some of the interviewees in Sweden consider messaging apps such as Facebook Messenger a more useful way to communicate with their customers as the sender can see if the receiver has seen the message or not. Also Google was mentioned by all of the interviewees as an important channel for seeking information. Therefore, investing in search engine marketing and providing appropriate keywords which customers are using and making some other actions can improve website ranking on a search engine such as backlinks to the company's website from other sites. Creating partnerships with customers and doing cross-advertising with them is not only effective from the customer acquisition and retention point of view. It could also offer a possibility to get backlinks to other trustworthy websites, which affects the search engine ranking positively (Kelly, 2018).

The suggestion, coming from hobby category interviewees, of having collaboration with other companies such as fodder or wheelbarrow manufacturers could be useful from the search engine ranking point of view when the company could get backlinks to other websites. Fortum HorsePower should consider this especially if the competition increases in the future.

With the exception of one interviewee who has no social media account, all of the interviewees have a Facebook account including Facebook Messenger, which they use almost daily or even several times a day. However, a few interviewees stated that Facebook

is starting to be “last season” or “dead” especially among the younger generation. Seven interviewees have an Instagram account. A few interviewees also brought up having a Twitter account, but it seems that Twitter is not an important channel within this customer group, because those who have the account are not very active. In addition to Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, the interviewees also mentioned messaging apps such as WhatsApp, Slack and Facebook Messenger when asked about their digital media channel usage.

According to these findings, Fortum HorsePower should primarily invest in Facebook as a social media channel and resources allowing also an Instagram account could be actively used. However, when companies decide to invest in social media channels, they should find the current algorithms and follow the changes, because the algorithms affect the site reach directly. Especially due to the current changes in Facebook algorithms that came into force in the beginning of the year 2018, it is difficult for business pages to get a high reach with organic content, since Facebook has personalized the content so the users can see more meaningful posts from their families and friends, and companies are encouraged to invest in paid content if they want a higher reach. Due to the algorithm change, among other things, the engagement baits such as “tag a friend” or “vote with a reaction” are no longer effective and a site needs also to be active with posting frequency and provide active, meaningful conversations with its followers, otherwise the site reaches less and less followers and may even totally disappear from the newsfeeds of its followers (Tien, 2018). Also, based on my own experiences, posts should get likes immediately after posting, otherwise Facebook stops showing them for the audience, and the reach will also remain low if the published picture is too filled with text.

Despite the digital marketing centric research context, it turned out that the interviewees prefer traditional phone calls and face-to-face (f-to-f) meetings the most. According to the interviewees, phone calls are the easiest way for them to run errands while driving from one place to another or while cleaning the stable. Texting is considered as a time-consuming way to communicate and as the mobile is the most commonly used device also running errands via email takes time. In addition to slowness, one interviewee pointed out that horse people may have dirty hands, therefore texting is not the desirable way to communicate. The same thing applies to chats, according to the interviewees they do not have time to wait for a reply and they prefer communicating with a real person. F-to-f meetings are wanted especially if the product, service or pricing is complex and that is the most convenient way to make a

deal according to the interviewees. On the other hand, a few interviewees mentioned that it is important to be able to place an order or run an errand when it comes to mind, for stable owners Thursdays and Sundays are similar days, because horses have to be treated in the same way and at the same times regardless of the day. However, only two interviewees wished for more digitalized services for instance for placing an order and others emphasized personal customer service via phone and fret about everything being digitalized nowadays. On the other hand, the interviewees found functional values such as convenience and “everyday ease” important, therefore some simple digital service for placing an order could be useful.

### **5.2.3 Summary of the findings**

To summarize the findings, it seems that companies should invest in the website for informing people on a product or a service; in emails for communicating with customers and providing information for existing customers, and in social media channels, especially Facebook, to provide current news, and possibly resources allowing in Instagram when targeting these over thirty-year-old horse stable owners. Instagram could also be a potential channel to reach younger people as 59% of all Instagram users are 18-29 years old (York, 2017). The possibility to conduct business with a real sales person over phone or face-to-face if possible should not be forgotten.

The most preferred content format is an attractive and relevant picture that describes the issue combined with a short text. The shorter and more concise the text is, the easier it is for the reader to get the message at a glance. Several interviewees also stated that videos are a good content type as well, if a text or a starting picture captures the attention first. Videos are often watched without sound so it would be important to include subtitles. Additionally, a few interviewees stated that a video should be simple and short so it doesn't require too much effort to watch it. Especially video reviews and service or product functionalities presented on video format are desired among the interviewees. Despite the nationality, the interviewees provided quite homogenous opinions related to content type and they preferred the most the content type that reminds Facebook's content. However, two Finnish customers, one from the business category and one from the hobby category stated that they prefer textual content the most by explaining that they are quick to perceive the text and they don't

find pictures very attractive and videos are too slow. However, the title and the first sentences of the text are the most important features. Only one interviewee from the hobby category stated that she sometimes solves math problems on social media channels, others stated that they don't have time for quizzes and math problems, on the other hand the math problem post (Appendix 1 –math problem post) provided on the Facebook page of Fortum HorsePower received hundreds of comments, but it is possible that the participants were potential customers or the contest related to math problem attracted everyone to participate, therefore there seems to be a conflict between these research findings and the statistics from the Facebook post. Several interviewees stated that they are very busy and do not therefore have time for reading long texts or taking tests or solving math problems. One interviewee from the business category also mentioned that she doesn't like social media lotteries which require liking the page, because she doesn't always want the content from the site. She stated that she can participate if the requirement is for instance to post one picture.

Being able to provide attractive content for the needs of customers and potential customers to steer them towards purchase intention requires a deep understanding of the market, meaning competitors, different customer types and values and especially customers' needs, wants and the existing solutions customers are using. Additionally, understanding why the existing customers chose the service or a product, what the core value they get is, how they would improve the solution, how they utilize the solution in their everyday life, what the benefits are and so on, will help the marketing department to provide meaningful content that may even create a need among potential customers by providing a solution to their problem that they haven't even recognized yet and may also steer potential customers towards purchase intention. Building partnerships with existing customers may increase loyalty and improve the feeling of belonging that may seem attractive among potential customers, and the company may also get new promoters from satisfied customers as the research findings pointed out. Sales representatives are the key persons knowing customers and their needs, wants and suspicions or misconceptions about the solution. Therefore, collaboration between sales and marketing and even product or service development should be improved to provide information about customers for marketing, which can then provide more attractive and meaningful content and then also a product or a service could be improved to fulfill the customers' needs better, naturally depending on the resources of the company. An improved collaboration also supports delivering integrated marketing

communication messages across traditional and digital channels as well as in customer encounters. In addition, utilizing some digital media management solution may help a company to be aware of the current discussion in the industry provided by the competitors, researchers, customers and other stakeholders, which may also provide new content ideas, a possibility to notice and react quickly on current issues, benchmark competitors and even find some new content or product development ideas.

Based on the research findings, the Finnish interviewees in the “business” -category wish for efficiency, cost-savings and ergonomics-related insights of the best practices from other entrepreneurs. The interviewees in the “hobby” -category stated that they wish for discounts, information about academic research and reminders of the current issues. When targeting Swedish markets, companies should emphasize environmental friendliness of the solution when increasing awareness among horse stable owners as a target group. Price and delivery information is important later at the pre-purchase stage. The most preferred digital channels according to the Swedish interviewees are Facebook, websites and emails. Facebook is for sharing daily news. Websites are important for official information, where the customer can find deeper information and do comparisons, for example compare different beddings and prices. Additionally, email is an important channel for running errands and communicating with a company. Calls and text messages were also mentioned by the Swedish customers as communicating channels with a company, for example for placing an order. One Swedish customer desired a digital service for placing an order. Two Swedish customers also stated that they use Instagram.

According to the three Swedish interviewees the most interesting websites are following: The Swedish Equestrian Federation, Hippson, Ridsport, Hästnet, Swedish breeder association and Trainerportal. Also mobile applications are used if available. These sites may be working advertising channels for this target group. As mentioned earlier, the most interesting content topics among the Swedish interviewees are the well-being of horses, working efficiency and an environmental way of working, financial savings were also mentioned. These are the most attractive topics if they are ideas from other entrepreneurs or from academic research. Academic research in general is also considered as an interesting topic among the Swedish interviewees. Marketers should find a way to combine these topics with their own offering in marketing communications. The Swedish interviewees got aware

of the Fortum HorsePower service by Googling manure management solution or through a sales call. Based on this finding sales calls seem to be effective when launching a new service in new markets as the interviewee was thanking the sales representative for calling. In addition to investing in sales calls, companies should increase awareness by investing in Google advertising, search engine optimization and keywords.

The following table summarizes the empirical findings of this research and provides an IMC blueprint for marketers to use. This blueprint combines the main IMC elements covered in this thesis work: stakeholders, content and channels. Content is divided into customer values for content creation, content themes and content types. The equal findings between Finland and Sweden are presented in the “common findings” column and the country specific additional information is presented in the columns of “Finland specific findings” and “Sweden specific findings”.

TOPIC	COMMON FINDINGS	FINLAND SPECIFIC FINDINGS	SWEDEN SPECIFIC FINDINGS
STAKEHOLDERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hasty lifestyle</li> <li>- Interviewees prefer traditional phone calls and face-to-face</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rational buyers</li> <li>- Hobby stables</li> <li>- Business stables</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Business stables</li> </ul>
CUSTOMER VALUES FOR CONTENT CREATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Economic values: Cost-savings</li> <li>- Emotional values: Well-being of horses and animals</li> <li>- Functional values: punctuality, convenience, practicality, ergonomics</li> <li>- Symbolic values: environmental friendliness, recycling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Economic values: indirect cost-savings such as decreased consumption of beddings, more time available for earning money, cost-time/effort ratio</li> <li>- Emotional values: well-being of horses, safety, quality, mindfulness, own well-being</li> <li>- Functional values: lighter workload, cost-time/effort ratio, “everyday ease”</li> <li>- Symbolic values: feeling of belonging, (partnership), reputation of the service provider, domesticity, clean surroundings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Economic values: direct cost-savings</li> <li>- Emotional values: well-being of horses and animals,</li> <li>- Symbolic values: saving the planet in a long run, saving energy</li> </ul>
CONTENT THEMES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Insights of the best practices from other horse stable entrepreneurs related to country specific topics and values. (Participate existing customers)</li> <li>- Information about academic research and academic findings combined with company’s offering.</li> <li>- Price, availability and delivery information is important later at the pre-purchase stage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Business stables: efficiency, cost-savings and ergonomics-related topics</li> <li>- Hobby stables: discounts, information about academic research and reminders of the current issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Well-being of horses, working efficiency and an environmental way of working</li> <li>- Emphasize environmental friendliness of the offering when increasing awareness among horse stable owners as a target group.</li> </ul>
CONTENT TYPES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) An attractive and relevant picture that describes the issue combined with a short text</li> <li>2) Video, which is especially wished for showing product or service functionalities.</li> <li>3) Entertaining posts to increase brand awareness among potential customers</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Two customers, one from the business category and one from the hobby category stated that they prefer textual content the most by explaining that they are quick to perceive the text and they don’t find pictures very attractive and videos are too slow</li> </ul>	
CHANNELS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Websites are important for official information, where the customer can find deeper information and do comparisons, for example compare different beddings and prices.</li> <li>- Emails for communicating with customers and providing information</li> <li>- Social media channels: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Facebook, to provide current news</li> <li>2) Instagram to reach also younger people (if resources)</li> </ol> </li> <li>- possibility to conduct business with a real sales person over phone or face-to-face, especially in case of a complex product or service</li> <li>- Increase awareness by investing in Google advertising, search engine optimization and keywords.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facebook groups mentioned by the interviewees: “Talliniksit” (Stable hacks), “Hevosyrittäjät ympäri Suomen” (horse entrepreneurs all around Finland) or “Naisyrittäjät” (women entrepreneurs)</li> <li>- Websites mentioned by the interviewees: The Equestrian Federation of Finland, The National Horse Breeding and Trotting Association Suomen Hippos ry, Ravinetti, Hevosurheilu -magazine, a Finnish gaming company Veikkaus and the National Equine Competence Association of Finland Hippolis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Websites mentioned by the interviewees: The Swedish Equestrian Federation, Hippson, Ridsport, Hästnet, Swedish breeder association and Trainerportal.</li> <li>- Mobile applications are used if available.</li> </ul>

Table 3 The IMC blueprint

The following model provides more specific framework for the primary research question, “How to increase purchase intention of customers through integrated marketing communications on digital media?” by combining the elements of IMC with AIDAS-model. This model was presented also in chapter 5.1.4 AIDAS-model.

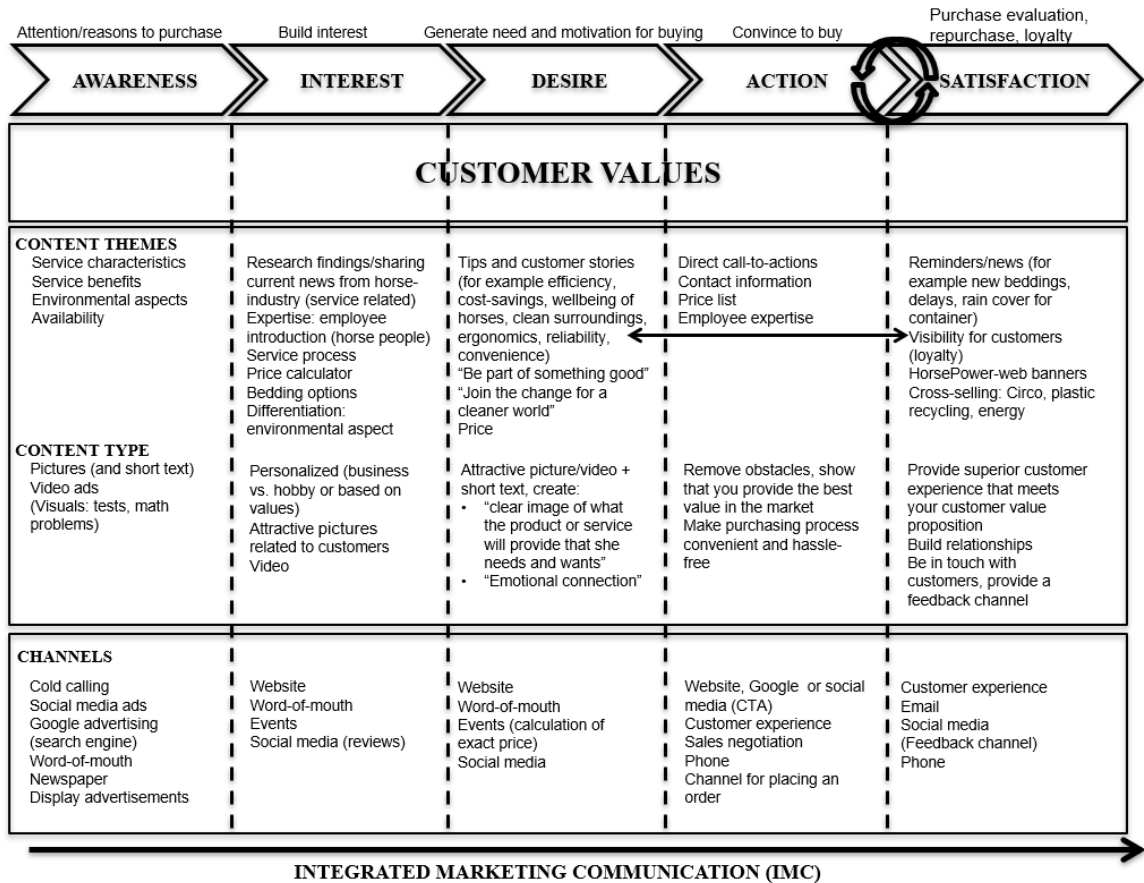


Figure 5 increasing purchase intention of customers through IMC

### 5.3 Future research

This thesis research investigated the preferred content and channels of customers in business-to-consumer service context. The findings revealed that the customers may have different information needs at different stages of their purchasing journey. The research in the future could deepen the understanding of the content at the different stages of the consumer’s purchase journey that supports the decision-making of the consumer. The content could therefore be customized even better to meet the consumer’s needs and interests in order to attract customers and arise their purchase intention.

Future research could also investigate the effects of customer-focused content on different digital channels on sales by investigating the main customer touch points with attribution modeling. During the purchasing path consumers go through a series of touch points across media, channels and devices, therefore understanding the effectiveness of each touch point and their roles in leading to overall conversion is critical to succeed. (Kannan, Reinartz and Verhoef, 2016). An attribution model consists of a rule or set of rules to define how each credit for sales and conversions is allocated for a desired customer action to each touch point on consumer's purchase path, both the carryover and spillover effects across channels are taken into account (Kannan, Reinartz and Verhoef, 2016).

Attribution models can provide insight for companies into effective marketing investment allocation across channels, and into targeting consumers across channels and devices, if the company focuses on estimating the incremental value of individual touch point and spillover effects across channels (Kannan, Reinartz and Verhoef, 2016). In addition, the usage of attribution modeling and analytics can answer many other relevant questions as well, including advertisement types that drive conversions the most efficiently, keywords that drive customer acquisition and the effects of social interaction on purchase funnel (Kannan, Reinartz and Verhoef, 2016). Therefore, attribution modeling is worth further research and a closer review, also the Marketing Science Institute (MSI) highlighted attribution modeling as the first priority research topic of research priorities already in 2016 (Marketing Science Institute, 2016). Attribution modeling solutions in the market are for instance Google Adometry, Visual IQ and Ingenious Enterprise.

#### **5.4 Limitations of the study**

This thesis work is provided for Fortum HorsePower and the research was conducted by interviewing Fortum HorsePower's existing customers in Finland and Sweden, which may have led to a homogenous group of participants and may limit the generalization of the research findings. In addition to interviewing only customers of Fortum HorsePower, the sample is quite small, especially in Sweden, where only three customers were interviewed. However, the interviewees in both countries were chosen from different age demographics from the customer listing.

Fortum HorsePower's business operations are quite different in Finland and Sweden therefore the questions were slightly edited so the interviewees were able to provide appropriate responses. Additionally, the service in Sweden is only available in Stockholm area and only for larger stables of ten or more horses in the stable, when in Finland the minimum requirement is four horses, making the stables incomparable in the hobby category. Starting in the August 2018, the minimum requirement in Sweden was changed to five horses. Suggestions for Swedish markets may not be generalizable to the entire Sweden, due to rather a small sample size of Swedish interviewees as well as to a regional sample as all of the interviewees are located in Stockholm area. A possibility to interview potential customers in Finland, Sweden and even other countries abroad would have provided even more accurate and trustworthy information for growth purposes. This research provides useful information about content preferences, digital channel choices and digital media behavior of existing customers. The information can be used to attract potential customers with similar preferences and values. However, we are lacking information on other potential customers: why they are not customers yet, what kind of content and channels they prefer.

The findings of this thesis need to be critically examined as they are viewpoints of individual customers. Providing questions in advance could have made it easier to answer the interview questions, especially the ones related to content preferences and channel usage in the purchasing process. In addition, the value topic was quite difficult and could therefore not be asked directly. Almost all of the interviewees were however very talkative, therefore the value aspect and purchasing process behavior emerged during the interviews and were possible to understand or interpret from the interviews in general. Also, emphasizing certain values such as environmental values in research findings may not be completely generalizable among all horse owners and may partly result from interviewing only customers of Fortum HorsePower, which is providing an environmentally friendly solution for manure management.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Customers spend increasing amounts of time by consuming different digital media channels. Modern customers and their widespread use of digital channels and devices offer marketers new opportunities to gather revenues from the marketing function, for example Dell's presence in Twitter has generated them \$ 1 million additional revenue due to sales alerts (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Particularly social media has become a high priority for many business managers, company decision-makers and consultants who are trying to find out how different social media platforms can be harnessed to increase profits (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). According to Rintamäki (2016), understanding the customers channel usage (offline, online, mobile) across their purchasing journey (pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase stages) and shopping drivers provides opportunity for retailers to create customer value and achieve a competitive advantage (Rintamäki, 2016).

This thesis work sought understanding of shopping drivers of the interviewees and their channel preferences to be able to attract new customers towards purchase intention of the service and retain the existing customers. The research phenomenon is to understand those previously mentioned issues in horse stable owner context. This thesis work is provided for the needs of Fortum HorsePower, the research data was therefore collected by interviewing ten existing customers of Fortum HorsePower, which is the main limitation in this study, as the group of interviewees may be homogenous. The interviewees were divided into "business" and "hobby" categories, based on form of activity at their stables. Seven interviewees are Finnish, divided into three hobby stable owners and seven business stable owners. Other three interviewees are Swedish business stable owners. Despite the "business" category in the categorization of the interviewees, the context of this research is business-to-consumer based on the type of business, which is more similar to business-to-consumer decision-making than business-to-customer. Using customer interviews as the data collection method is justified with the objective of integrated marketing communications, which aims at providing solutions, value and benefits for target audiences by providing communications that are based on the needs and wants of customers. (Berthon, et al., 2012; Taylor, 2009; Kliatchko, 2008; Wymbs, 2011; Urban, 2004).

The pillars of integrated marketing communications (stakeholders, content, channels and results) (Kliatchko, 2008) were combined with the AIDAS-model (Barry and Howard, 1990) in the theoretical model of this research. The AIDAS-model stands for the awareness, interest, desire, action and satisfaction stages of a purchasing journey, it is a simple and useful tool for planning these integrated advertising and marketing communications for different stages of the purchasing journey of customers (Rawal, 2013). According to previous research, the AIDAS-model is suitable for digital environment as well, for example Ashcroft and Hoey (2001) suggested the suitability of the AIDA-model in online marketing, Wood and Burkhalter (2013) inspired using it in social media marketing and Rehman et al. (2014) found out that mobile marketing affects significantly the awareness, interest and action stages of the AIDAS-model.

This research found answers to the primary research question and four sub-questions. The answer for the primary research question “How to increase purchase intention of customers through integrated marketing communications on digital media?” is complex, but it seems that providing attractive and relevant content for customers at different stages of their purchasing journey (AIDAS) and targeting the integrated content across their preferred channels may lead to an attitude that advances the purchase intention. According to the interviewees, the best channels to deliver a message are Facebook, a website and email. Facebook is best for advertising, offers, quick news about the product and teasers, which attract customers to the website. A website is the channel where customers immerse themselves with the product or service information and spend time to explore the information (Dahlén, Rasch and Rosengren, 2003). This research supports the suggestion by Dahlén, Rasch and Rosengren (2003) as they suggested a website playing an important role in new customer acquisition with expensive investments, but the existing customers may not visit the website at all. Email seems to be the main channel for customer retention and the customers stated that they are happy to receive informational emails from the company every now and then. By informational emails is meant content relating to new products, discounts and reminders of current issues such as delays, changes in the schedule due to holidays or other service or product related issues.

This research also includes a few sub-questions, which help to explain the main research question. The first sub-question is related to user-generated content “*Does user-generated*

*content affect purchase intention?*” The findings suggest that user-reviews have a critical role during the pre-purchase investigation, as interviewees stated that they look for reviews on the internet or by calling their colleagues. Additionally, seven out of ten interviewees stated that they could consider purchasing products based on positive reviews. However, they regard over-negative and over-positive reviews with skepticism and the reviews from acquaintances are considered as the most trustworthy. Still, user experiences and stories about other customers are desired. The interviewees stated that the most attractive content type is a concise text and a descriptive image, because customers are so busy nowadays they do not have time to immerse themselves with long texts. Also videos are considered as an effective content type, especially for showing the product or service functionalities. According to Rossiter and Percy (1980) and Shepard (1978) visual advertisements are effective, because they may trigger the imagery of the customer using the product, which also helps to internalize the advertising message. This finding also answers the sub-question about content types *“What kind of content is the most attractive?”*. The most interesting content topics are related to working efficiency, ergonomics and cost-savings among the Finnish business stable interviewees, to an environmental way of working, the well-being of horses and working efficiency among the Swedish business stable interviewees, and discounts, reminders of current issues and academic research findings are considered attractive among the interviewees in the hobby stable category in Finland. Findings from academic research related to horse industry were considered as an attractive topic also among the Swedish interviewees and all the interviewees in the business-category desired insights into the best practices in the horse industry and from entrepreneurs in general. These topics should be considered when creating an advertising message for a product or a service. However, the message should be solid and consistent across the channels and stages of purchasing journey.

The third subquestion *“For what purposes do customers use their preferred digital channels?”* did not provide anything surprising, the key finding was that most of the channels are used in order to communicate with friends and customers, or to advertise your own services. However, an interesting finding came out during the interviews as all of the interviewees stated that they prefer traditional phone calls for running errands, and face-to-face meetings especially when purchasing a complex product. The findings related to the last sub-question *“Which are the key dimensions of customer value that could be utilized in*

*content creation to advance purchase intention?*” were interesting as the interviewees highlighted the importance of environmental values, especially the Swedish customers who stated that the environmental friendliness was the main decision-making criteria when considering Fortum HorsePower-service. Among the Finnish interviewees, the environmental values did not affect decision-making, but they are considered as the main benefits of the Fortum HorsePower-service, and horse stable owners in general seem to be very aware of environmental issues. The Finnish customers were seeking convenience and solution for manure handling when joining the service. These customer values should be considered in creation of advertising messages and customer value proposition, since linking the product benefits to customer values may increase the attractiveness of the brand and desire to purchase. Other important values that came out during the interviews were economic values such as cost-savings, emotional values such as the well-being of horses and functional values such as ergonomics and symbolic values such as recycling. The values were categorized in this research based on the categorization suggested by Rintamäki, Kuusela and Mitronen (2007) including four dimensions, which are economic, emotional, functional and symbolic values. The following model provides framework for the primary research question, “How to increase purchase intention of customers through integrated marketing communications on digital media?” by combining the theoretical model (presented in the chapter 2.3) and the main research findings. The model was also presented in the chapter 5.1.4 AIDAS-model.

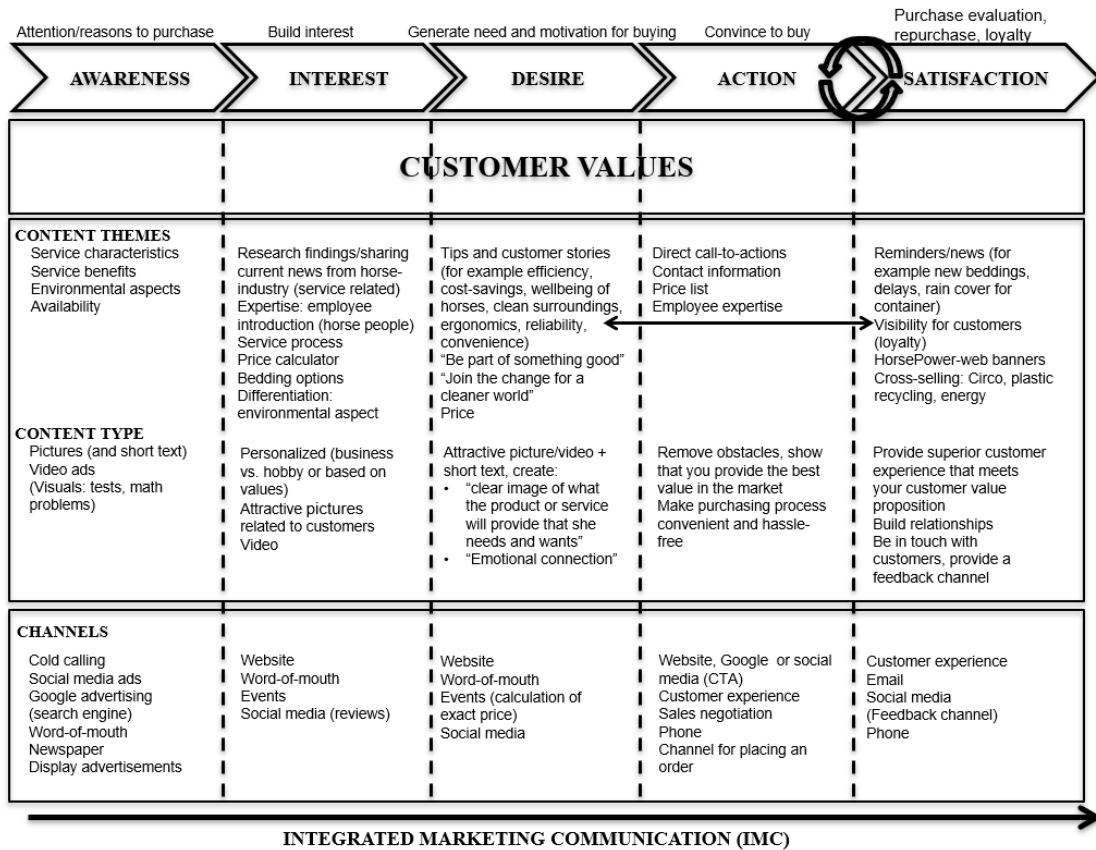


Figure 5 increasing purchase intention of customers through IMC

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## APPENDIX

### Appendix 1 – math problem post

**Fortum HorsePower**  
20. helmikuuta · €

ARVONTA ON PÄÄTTYNYT! 🐾 Lippuarvontaa pukkaa! 🐾 Tykkää sivustamme ja ratkaise alla näkyvä yhtälö, niin olet mukana Helsinki Horse Fair- lippuarvonnassa!

Me vastaamme tänäkin vuonna Horse Fairissa vieralevien hevosten pehmeistä purupedeistä ja toimitamme tapahtuman aikana syntyvän kuivikelannan lähienergian tuotantoon. Puukuivikkeet ovat uusiutuvia, hevosenlanta syntyy lähes loputtomasti ja hyödyntämällä lanta ympäristöystävällisesti, voidaan parhaassa tapauksessa korvata fossiilisia polttoaineita uusiutuvalla energialla. Näin syntyy vihreää kavionjalkia!

Kaikkien vastanneiden kesken arvotaan 3kpl 2 hengen lippupaketteja Helsinki Horse Fairiin 2.-4.3! Vastausaikaa on 28.2. saakka ja voittajille ilmoitetaan henkilökohtaisesti. Facebook ei mukana arvonnassa.




👍 Tykkää      💬 Kommentoi

### Appendix 2 – Customer centric post

**Fortum HorsePower**  
27. helmikuuta · €

Pakkaset paukkuu, mutta onneksi hevosenlanta lämmittää! Viime vuonna keräsimme 15 000 tonnia lantaa, jolla lämmitettiin n. 1000 taloa. Hienoa, että tällä hetkellä jo reilut 4300 hevosta on mukana edistämässä kiertotaloutta, tuottamalla uusiutuvaa kuivikelantaa energiatuotannon polttoaineeksi. #kiertotalous #uusiutuvaenergia #jointhechange



**2017**

n. 3600 hevosta = 15 milj. kg kuivikelantaa = n. 1000 omakotitaloa

Join the change  
**fortum**

👍 Tykkää      💬 Kommentoi

## Appendix 3 – Interview questions

### **Background information:**

Name:

Age:

Amount of horses in the stable:

Form of activity (business/ hobby):

#### 1. Channel preferences and usage:

- a) Which digital media channels do you use the most?
- b) Could you name a few examples of websites and/or social media sites that have aroused your interest?
- c) How does the content differ across channels?
- d) What are the main horse-related websites, forums, sites, etc. you follow?

#### 2. The impact of content:

- a) What kind of advertising posts/content arise your attention in general on digital media channels?
- b) Now I kindly ask you to think of some service and think about the situation of purchasing a service: what kind of information do you search on digital channels?
- c) Think about the service again: what kind of advertisements support your purchase decision?

SWEDEN:

#### 3. Fortum HorsePower – digital channels:

- a) On which digital channels would you like to follow Fortum HorsePower?
- b) What is your opinion about the Fortum HorsePower's websites?
- c) Do you think that you would have received benefits for your purchasing process if there had been a customer service chat on the Fortum HorsePower website?

#### 4. Fortum HorsePower – content:

- a) Now I kindly ask you to consider the moment when you were considering Fortum HorsePower-service. What kind of information had the biggest impact on your purchase decision?
- b) What kind of image do you have about Fortum HorsePower, based on advertisements and communication?

- c) How do Fortum HorsePower's advertisements differ from those of other service providers/bedding suppliers?
5. Extras: Fortum HorsePower service:
- a) Which factors made you choose Fortum HorsePower service?
  - b) Which words would you use to describe the service?
  - c) What kind of benefits have you received after purchasing the service?
  - d) Which values do you think are in the center of Fortum HorsePower service?
6. These were my questions: Do you have anything else in mind that you would like to share or send greetings to Fortum HorsePower before we finish?

FINLAND:

3. Fortum HorsePower – digital channels:
- a) On which channels do you follow Fortum HorsePower?
  - b) Now I kindly ask you to think of the time when you planned to purchase the service, on which channels did you get information?
  - c) Do you think that you would have received benefits for your purchasing process if there had been a customer service chat on the Fortum HorsePower website?
  - d) On which digital channels would you like to follow Fortum HorsePower?
4. Fortum HorsePower – content:
- a) What kind of image do you have about Fortum HorsePower, based on advertisements and communication?
  - b) How do Fortum HorsePower's advertisements differ from those of other service providers/bedding suppliers?

5. Extra: Fortum HorsePower-service:
- a) Which factors made you choose Fortum HorsePower service?
  - b) Which words would you use to describe the service?
  - c) What kind of benefits have you received after purchasing the service?
  - d) Which values do you think are in the center of Fortum HorsePower service?
6. These were my questions: Do you have anything else in mind that you would like to share or send greetings to Fortum HorsePower before we finish?