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MARKETING PLAN FOR HIEKKASÄRKÄT GOLF OY

A plan to get more people involved with golf in Kalajoki

Thesis

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ABSTRACT

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<p>The aim of this thesis was to provide Hiekkasärkät Golf Oy with a marketing plan, which could be used to attract more customers to give golf a try. The main focus of the thesis was aimed to marketing golf to children in order to get more junior golfers as members to the club and into the course. There was also a plan to market golf to teenagers and adults.</p> <p>SWOT analysis was made to provide the reader an overall picture of the company, Hiekkasärkät Golf Oy, where strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are examined separately. The marketing plan itself consisted of recognizing the age-divided target groups, finding the preferences for each group and figuring out what would be the best way to reach certain people.</p> <p>Golf as a sport was explained to the reader from general, physical and mental aspects. It will provide a secure understanding of the game without them having to do research of it themselves. This area was taken into a careful consideration, in order to give the reader an understanding of golf life without them ever being involved with the sport. The effect of Finland's main stream media to golf's reputation was examined with some insight about how golf is overlooked by the Finnish news.</p> <p>The situation of golf in Kalajoki was explained and a deeper look into the junior golf is given to the readers. The history and the present of golf in the area were looked into, and what should be done to junior golf program in the future, are all examined separately.</p>		

Key words golf, Hiekkasärkät Golf Oy, juniors, marketing plan, media, SWOT,

CONCEPT DEFINITIONS

Alue Tour = junior tour aimed to children age 15 to 21

Approach shot = shot you hit after the drive as near the hole as possible

Arnold Palmer = an American golf legend, who sadly passed away in autumn of 2016.

Birdie = score of one under par (-1)

Bogey = score of one over par (+1)

Drive = usually the first shot of the fairway

Driving range = an area where people can practice hitting the ball, usually 200-300m long

EGA handicap = an annual handicap verification system based on players score on the course

Fairway = a piece of the course where you should hit your ball

Finnish Tour = the number one tour in Finland

Golf class = a series of lesson regarding different aspects of the game

Club House = the main building in the golf course area

Golf club = the equipment players use to hit the ball

Golf course = the field where people play

Golf kart = a small "car" players use to get around the course

Green = the short grass surface at the end of the fairway, where the hole and the flag are located

GreenCard = a certificate showing that the person has taken classes and is a capable golfer

GreenFee = the payment players must pay in order to go to the course

Hole = one complete track, including tee, fairway, green and all obstacles

Hole = the finishing point of each hole, also known as a cup

Layup shot = usually the second shot in par5s, placed to the best possible place regarding the approach

LPGA = Ladies Professional Golf Association

Match play = a game where two people play against each other, can be played in pairs 2 vs 2

Par = the expected score per hole (E), dependable on the length of the hole; generally par3 (approach from the tee + 2 putts) 80-220m, par4 (drive, approach + 2 putts) 250-450m and par5 (drive, layup, approach + 2 putts) 430-600m

PGA = Professional Golfers' Association

Putt = a short shot on the green, aim is to roll the ball in the hole

Stroke = the correct name for a golf shot

Tee = a small wooden piece which is used to elevate the ball on the first shot of the hole

Tee box = the starting point of each hole

ABSTRACT

CONCEPT DEFINITIONS

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1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis was to create a marketing plan in order to get more people interested in golf in the Kalajoki area. The way to start the expansion is to get golf more acquainted to the people. That begins with making a marketing plan that is sufficient and gets the word to the public that anyone can get into golf, even at an older age. I'm using ice-hockey a lot as a comparable sport, because it's the single biggest reason why golf doesn't do well in Kalajoki amongst juniors. I will also use the name Kalajokigolf instead of Hiekkasärkät Golf Oy. Kalajokigolf is the club's name and Hiekkasärkät Golf Oy is the company name.

This thesis was done as an assignment to Hiekkasärkät Golf Oy, and permission for any pictures, quotes or other material from Kalajokigolf's web pages was asked and granted by Kalajokigolf's executive Esa Takala. The research problem of this thesis is something I feel is very close to my own goals, since I've been instructing junior golfers for Kalajokigolf since the summer of 2011. Kalajokigolf has sponsored two of my golf instructor classes, first one in 2012 and the second in 2015. This topic was something I've put a lot of thought into and even experienced some of these questions myself when I was playing as a junior in Kalajoki.

There isn't many references in this thesis, because a lot of the material is something I have learned in my time working with other clubs instructor student's and the professional coaches training us, posing questions about their club's views of recruiting and managing junior golf. These people are divided all around Finland from Levigolf in Kittilä to Helsinki. Every club has their own plan and I had to manage to create a plan that fits into Kalajoki area's population and the rate of eligible golfers in the area. You can't make a marketing plan based on the same as Oulu has, because of the sheer differential in numbers.

2 GETTING TO KNOW HIEKKASÄRKÄT GOLF OY

2.1 Hiekkasärkät Golf Oy

Hiekkasärkät Golf Oy is a small golf club located in the famous holiday resort Hiekkasärkät in Kalajoki. It's a fairly young club, being established in the late 80s. It currently employs five people all year around; in winter two at the club house and three in the course maintenance. By summer the number of employees varies around 20 people. The club has a regular 18-hole golf course with an addition of not so regular 9-hole par3 practice course, which is open for everyone.

They currently have just over a 1,000 members and that number has steadily grown smaller for a few years. In order to make more profit the number of members needs to grow, and to make this happen, Kalajokigolf has to look into the future, not the present. Member base needs to get younger, if Kalajokigolf wants to keep the number as it is. One way to do this is improving and marketing their already impressive practice areas and one of the best conditioned courses in "Northern-Finland". This would further help them recruit new members; make them loyal to the club and more importantly for the future of the club, recruit more juniors.

2.2 SWOT analysis

With the SWOT analysis, we can figure out the internal strengths and weaknesses of the Kalajoki golf club and also think about the external opportunities and threats the club faces going forward. It gives a clear picture about the current stage of the company and what they have to do to get to the next level.

Strengths

Kalajokigolf has an exquisite advantage when it comes to location. Hiekkasärkät Kalajoki is one of the most famous holiday locations in Finland, with its long sandy beaches and numerous activities for the entire family. Tourists come there every summer to enjoy their holiday and a large number of them like to try out golf as well. One of the major plus-sides is the fact that golfers from different locations come to Kalajoki and they can spend the entire week there, because the Hiekkasärkät is filled with hotels such as Sani, Lokkilinna and Rantakalla. Hiekkasärkät also offers other housing options, with the largest being Kalajoki Keskusvaraamo, which provides customers with a cabin in the area for a certain period of time.

At the course itself, there's a rare 9-hole Par3 Pay&Play course, which is open for everyone. Customers don't have to have a GreenCard in order to play there, so they can be novices when it comes to skills and knowledge about the game. This is an ace in the hole for Kalajokigolf, being one of the few clubs in the country to have a whole 9-hole practice course and through it they make dozens of members a year. They have acquired a new way to get more people into golf by beginning the transformations of the driving range from carpet-based, one slot for one player –type into a full ground and dirt –based, open-area driving range. This is a feature that has been lacking from Kalajokigolf since the beginning and they decided to make the change this fall. This should surely attract new players, if not from non-member to members but members to more enthusiastic players. They even built a shelter with four mats in order to give people a chance to practice in rainy days. (FIGURE 1&2)



FIGURE 1. Grass based driving range in the making at Kalajokigolf in autumn 2016



FIGURE 2. A shelter with four practice mats is being set up for rainy days

The biggest aspect, when it comes to visiting golfers, is the quality of the golf course and the whole environment in Kalajokigolf. In 2015, Kalajokigolf was voted in an annual poll as the third best golf course in the nation when it comes to the quality of the course. Kalajokigolf also did well in the club atmosphere section. This poll collects the data by sending an automatic e-mail to visitors including the answer sheet about the overall experience in certain courses. At the end of the season they send one to the members also, but these results won't be taken into consideration when counting the final scores.

Kalajokigolf is working closely with other golf clubs like Nivala, Virpineimi and Kokkola. Senior members of Kalajoki, Nivala, Kokkola, Pietarsaari and Lappajärvi golf clubs even have their own non-official 5-club tour. These events are played once a month and the location changes from course to course in random order so that every venue gets played one time. Other great events between Kalajokigolf and other clubs include a two day match play against Nivala, where the captains choose 24 players in their team and they play head-to-head on Saturday and Sunday, with other match taking place in Kalajoki and the other one in Nivala. Lately, Kalajokigolf has dominated that event winning three times in a row.

Summarizing the strengths of Kalajokigolf, the biggest factor is the location, which provides travelers a one-of-a-kind opportunity to spend the weekend in Kalajokigolf. When you add restaurants, sea-air and great weather to the golfing area, the results have been great so far. Visiting golfers are very important to Kalajokigolf, especially in the spring, because most of the players visiting there in April and May are from north of Kalajoki, where the season hasn't started yet. And this is evident from the poll. They want to provide their customers with the best possible experience in the golf course, and they now decided to upgrade their practice area by grass range and a shelter for rainy days (FIGURE 1&2). Their co-operation with other clubs is also important because it brings new players there, and gets the word going at how great Kalajokigolf is to play.

Weaknesses

The biggest weakness of Kalajokigolf is the member group of 30 years and younger with 161 people. This member base need to grow in order to sustain the club at a point it is today, but if the senior members continue to be the main group, then the future looks bleak. Older people don't play as much and have other issues, such as health that keeps them away from the club. But people aged under 30 have priorities of their own, with studies, start of their working life and starting a family. These are pretty inevitable steps in life and

perhaps these are the reason younger adults don't want to get in to golf, which is considered to be an expensive game.

Other weakness is the lack of winter practice facilities. There is a tennis hall in Ylivieska, about 45km west of Kalajoki, where Kalajokigolf books couple of hours a week for their use in order to get people practicing. In there, there's only couple of mats where people hit balls to the net, and that's it. You can't really practice the game itself in there, only the technique. These hours are not used in their advantage, when during workdays the hall is nearly empty every other day. And weekends there's only couple of juniors doing their winter practices. This should be marketed especially to people in Ylivieska to come and try golf with their friends if they don't want to go alone.

The ratio between young members and senior members is just too high. Seniors won't be around as long as juniors and the concentration has clearly been on seniors for the past couple of years in Kalajoki. A few years back someone said in Kalajokigolf that junior members were an expenditure, and couple of years later Kalajokigolf didn't have that problem because there weren't any juniors. And if this kind of mindset continues to drive the club, then it's too late for any of this.

Opportunities

One of the greatest marketing opportunities for Kalajokigolf is its long season. Their motto "*Golf from mother's day till father's day*" is shown at their website and they are always aiming for that, and 2015 was the first year they succeeded on it. The location right next to the sea gives the course a lot longer season than to those located more inland. Kalajokigolf is well known as one of the best conditioned courses in Finland and they were rewarded as the third best course by the condition last year by the Finnish golfers. But this is entirely up to the climate and how the winter plays out. If the winter is bad, it affects the condition, which affects the players and therefore the reputation.

Kalajokigolf could take advantage of the many hotels in the area by creating packages for tourists who come to have their holidays in Hiekkasärkät. With hotel Sani being the nearest to the course and the largest in the area, this would be an obvious choice. These packages could include discounts from the products and other goods the club has to offer. For example if the visitor already plays golf, they would receive a discount from GreenFee and if they didn't, they could take cheaper training classes or maybe even entire Green Card lessons if their schedule is suitable. This wouldn't necessarily bring more members but it could increase income.

During the summer however, Kalajokigolf is always one of the more well-kept courses north of Tampere. This is due to the sole of the course, which is sand based, where most courses have clay based sole. This allows the course to absorb rain water at high rate. Where clay based courses float after heavy rain, Kalajokigolf has a few puddles. Kalajokigolf is located right next to the coast line and the water level, so players can see the sea from couple of holes. This is usually what impresses the visiting golfers, the combination of the view, condition and the atmosphere.

There are also other events Kalajoki can, and has been marketing golf to children. Last year they took part in an event specifically aimed to children, where different sporty hobbies were available to children to try out in Kalajoki high school gymnasium. There were more than 30 available hobby options for kids to discover and golf was one of them. Kalajokigolf had a great space right between JHT's speedometer and Kalajoki gymnast's large bouncy mat, so children were able to try golf while they waited to get into those two. Sadly Kalajokigolf wasn't able to get any junior golfers to join the club the next summer. If this event will be arranged again this year, maybe they can learn from last year's poor result and try something new.

JHT, the ice-hockey organization is a big threat to golf in Kalajoki, but it also can be an opportunity to recruit new juniors to the club through co-operations and other events. Also, the drop out in ice-hockey among children is very common in their teenage years. At the age of fifteen to sixteen, talents start to separate themselves among the rest of the group and this results to lot of dropouts in players who may haven't been as good as the spearhead. So where do all these dropouts end up? Golf is a perfect hobby for someone who dropped out of team sports perhaps due to injury or other matters regarding once personality. Kalajokigolf just needs to reach out and offer these young people an opportunity to find them. This could be done by bringing teams to have good time and try golf as part of their otherwise strict summer workout. This gives them an image that there is a sport available for them if hockey doesn't pan out.

Threats

The main threat to Kalajokigolf is the small town of Kalajoki itself. Because the available customer base is small in itself, it's very difficult to recruit new members. Kalajoki has around 13,000 people now when its neighbor town Himanka merged with Kalajoki in 1.1.2010. Kalajokigolf has members from many neighbor towns, including Ylivieska, Kokkola and Oulainen. Kokkola has its own course, so marketing in Oulainen and Ylivieska should be much bigger due the fact that if they get interested, they either go to Nivala or come to Kalajoki as members.

The location of Kalajoki is also what drags Kalajokigolf down. As a "northern" golf course from a Finnish point of view, it's difficult to get any national events to Kalajoki. Finnish Golf Union usually arranges all the biggest golf events near Helsinki, which is close to a certain amount of players. A few top players in Finnish Tour have shown their interest in playing north of Tampere, which is evident from the participation to the event in Paltamo Golf as a part of Finnish Tour. Paltamo is located right next to Lake Oulu, and is way farther than Finnish Tour events usually are from Helsinki. Participation numbers drop,

when you move bigger events more north and this affects the Unions profit. Kalajokigolf has had junior tour events in the past, biggest recent event being the National Team Championship in 2008. After this, they have only gotten two Alue Tour and one Finnair junior tour events.

Lastly, I hate to say this, but Kalajoki's ice-hockey organization, JHT, is the single biggest reason why Kalajokigolf doesn't have as much junior golfers as they would like. Ice-hockey is the number one sport in Finland, especially now after the tremendous success in International junior tournaments, and top young Finnish players, spearheaded by Patrik Laine, Jesse Puljujärvi and Alexander Barkov. If only golf would get as much hype and success in Finland, then maybe there wouldn't be anything to worry about, but the truth is that ice-hockey is man-handling golf in popularity today.

Finland has 32 players currently playing in the NHL and three playing golf in the European Tour; Mikko Ilonen, Roope Kakko and Mikko Korhonen. There was a slight uprising in golf nationally after Ilonen, Kakko, Ursula Wikström, and Noora Tamminen competed in Rio Olympics this past summer, and getting surprisingly lot of screen time. Golf was part of the Olympics for the first time in over 100 years, and to golf as a game, Rio was a huge success. But the Olympics itself can't carry golf to the top in Finland when rest of the year ice-hockey dominates the media even in summer.

3 GOLF AS A SPORT

The late great Arnold “The King” Palmer once said:

Golf is the greatest game mankind has ever invented. (Palmer, 1996)

And he might have been right, because where golf might not be the most physically demanding sport on earth, it challenges the athletes mentally more than any other game. One of the reasons for golfs’ greatness is that it gives people something that other sports can’t give; a lifetime to play the game. Other sports such as ice-hockey and football are young mans’ games, but golf can be played at the age of 80. Some of worlds’ biggest names in golf such as Tiger Woods, Phil Mickelson and Lee Westwood are all over 40-years-old, and this is just a scratch form the top of the name list. In comparison, Czech ice-hockey legend Jaromir Jagr turned 44 this year and is still playing in the NHL, which is considered a phenomenal accomplishment. Even “The Great One” Wayne Gretzky retired at the age of 38 in 1999.

Golf isn’t a contact sport so the length of professional careers is a lot longer in than in other sports. In ice-hockey, for example, players deliver and receive hard body checks and the bravest ones block shots from the blue line and take the punishment in order to carry their team to victory. This kind of sacrifice and physical play style takes toll on their bodies and the players who play this well have even shorter career than those who don’t. None of this is a concern in golf, where the only physical contact to your opponent is in handshakes before and after the round with occasional high-fives.

3.1 Physical aspect

Many people may argue that golf isn’t a sport, and that’s only because they haven’t looked into it and have the chance to find out that it’s more of a sport than they realize. Like Robin Williams, another late great man said in his Broadway Comedy Special in 2001:

Golf is such an amazing sport. Players whack the ball, get in the cart. They whack the ball, get in the cart. (Williams, 2001)

This may be true in many parts of the World, where they have golf courses that have the policy that you don't walk the course, but instead drive around in a golf kart. In Finland, there are no such courses, and you are expected to walk the course every time you go out and play. And here comes the sport aspect of golf. One round of golf, depending of the course is played as 5500-7000 meters long, and when we add the distances between holes and the fact that people don't walk a straight line, the average round of golf is about 9500 meters. Therefore, golfers walk approximately 10 kilometers per round and strike the ball 70-100 times, depending on their abilities.

Don't get the wrong idea; golf needs work for your body, and body maintenance is a vital part of not only to get to the top, but most importantly, staying there. The schedules at professional tours can be very hard, with the event itself lasting four days from Thursday to Sunday, if the player qualifies to the last two rounds. Before that, there's usually one or two practice days to get to know the field so that's easily six days of golf in a row. And if you play a lot, you need to travel across the Globe to get to the next event that starts next Thursday. This demands durability because in golf, there's no off-season like in many other major sports. The season ends in October and the next one starts the very next week.

Today's golf professionals are not like they used to be for example in the 90s. Back then players didn't see nearly as much effort to their physique than they do nowadays. When you look at such players from the top of the game today as Rory McIlroy, Dustin Johnson and Jason Day, you can see they have been working ferociously in order to shape their physique to the point they are now. And right now, they are collecting the fruits of their hard labor. Those three are the most powerful hitters on tour and they all are in the top-5 of the Official World Golf Ranking. People used to say that golf isn't a power game but the players today are showing that it kind of is. It certainly helps to have a bit of extra juice in

your golf swing because the equipment these days are evolved to such point that you need to have your club head speed high enough to fly the ball as far as you need.

3.2 Mental aspect

The mental aspect of the game consists of series of situations, where you have to concentrate at every stroke. There are lot of golfers, who just go out there and have fun hitting the ball and guessing where it will end up. Golfers, who have been playing for years and consider themselves better than an average club player, have to imagine the stroke before they hit it. The visualization of the ball flight and the end result helps them to create the kind of shot they need to put the ball where they want. And when you do this in average of 75 times per round, a round of golf is a mental and physical exercise, not many people will understand before they try it out themselves.

World number one Jason Day usually closes his eyes and stands behind the ball in every shot imagining him hitting the ball. He was asked what he saw when he closed his eyes to which he answered;

I see myself, my swing, the contact to the ball, ball flight and the end result. Then I don't have to do anything but to hit the ball. (Day, 2016)

And this is what it takes to make every shot as good as you can.

Some ways golf like chess. In chess, you must be able to see the moves before they take place on the board and you have to be five or six moves ahead of the game. This is also true in golf, where you have to see the area that's the most beneficial for you to hit your next shot. When you walk to the tee to hit your drive to the fairway, you have to know how the course is played so that you can place your shot where you need to be and what's the best place for you to hit your ball forward. So if you concentrate on just getting your ball into play and playing one shot at the time, you might not be able to get the results you

want on the field. So basically, you have to be thinking about your next shot when you're hitting the current one.

What made Tiger Woods so great was the fact that he was able to shoot any kind of shot he wanted, when he wanted, to get the best possible outcome of any situation. People have compared him to Gretzky, even if hockey is a totally different game, because what made Gretzky so much superior than any other player in his time was that he was a genius on the ice. Gretzky is great example, even as hockey player, since he's been described as a chess master on skates, because he was able to pass the puck in openings that no-one else saw before the puck was there. He predicted where his team mates were going, not where they were and passed the puck to lead his line mates on. This is what's important in today's golf; players must see where they want the ball to go before they hit it, so that they have "an open net" to the green and to the hole.

In the book "Every Shot Must Have a Purpose" (2005); golf coaches Pia Nilsson and Lynn Marriott talk about Golf54, which is a way of thinking the game that it shouldn't be any more difficult than hitting the ball in the fairway, then hitting it to the flag and putting in the birdie. The 54 stands for the score, the regular par in a course being 72, and if you make a birdie to every hole, your score will be 54 ($72-18=54$). This hasn't been accomplished in golf yet and probably will never be, because of the mental stress this would cause to a player close enough to achieve such a milestone. Let say you are at the 15th hole and you have scored 14 birdies in a row, which is unheard of, and you have to keep your focus in the game and in the next couple of shots to make yet another birdie. If you start thinking about the score 54 in the middle of the round, you are doomed. Your focus shifts from present to future holes and before you know it, you score a par, or even a bogey and the hunt is over.

Every professional golfer has a mental coach, and without them they wouldn't be professional because their mental game would not survive the stress and the expectations they

have to achieve. In other sports players are coached to win the opponents, but in golf players need to win the course. They have to know where and how to hit the ball with minimal risk to get maximum reward. This way of thinking is unheard of in any team sport; *“Okay, you run to the other end of the pitch as fast as you can, but be careful not to trip over”* In golf, you need to know how to “run the pitch” by hitting the ball exactly where you need in order to make the next shot as easy as possible.

3.3 Status in Finland

A certain Finnish professional golfer, who plays in the Asian Tour, was asked about his annual budget to which he told sad story. Apparently one of his foreign friends on Tour received almost 80,000€ of support money to help his career and goals of becoming a professional golfer and was able to take part in competitions, travel and train himself with the money. Meanwhile in Finland, he had to take a loan of 20,000€ because he wasn't “suitable” for a bigger loan and the Finnish Golf Union wouldn't give him any support money. If this is the current situation, it has to change in order to make Finnish golf more successful compared to Sweden for example.

Most of the Finnish people, who haven't played golf, have an idea of the game that it's a rich man's game that takes all of your free time away from them. This is partly true, because starting golf as a hobby is quite expensive with all the equipment costs and other expenditures. But once you are all settled in and just playing, you have no choice but to enjoy the feeling of a great summer day and flying your ball over the trees into the green. It's one of the best feelings a golfer can have, the feeling of success. You can't put a price on that. And the possibilities for success are so much bigger than other sports. In hockey, best players shoot the puck less than ten times in one game and maybe get a goal or two. In golf best players strike the ball 60-70 times and if you shoot a score like that then every shot has been a good one.

When it comes to the relationship between golf and educational system, Finland has a lot to learn from other countries. Recently, a certain elementary school in Shanghai inserted golf into their annual study program. They even decided to make the attendance mandatory for students. So in addition to regular P.E., they have golf as an extra subject for children. From this, the thanks go to South-Korea, which has dominated the LPGA Tour, which is the highest golf tour for women in the World. They made the same adjustments years ago, and are now enjoying the fruits of their labor. Same should be done in Finland, because the excuse "You can't play golf in Finland all year around." is wrong.

There are many facilities in Finland where you can practice golf effectively in winter. Finland just happens to be an ice-hockey –country, and there's no interest in media nor money to promote golf. Theoretically, if you try this format in 100 schools across Finland and you find five students from every school with the motivation and talent to improve to the national level, those 500 children would make a huge impact in Finnish golf. This kind of commitment to any sport would pay off. All you need to do is try it for couple of years and you would find those talents that you need to push the sport to the next level.

Marketing Finland's success in golf around the World is highly needed to get young people interested in golf, because children need idols in order to have the desire to get involved in certain sport. This marketing is done by people who can show others that it's possible to achieve your goals if you work hard enough. The biggest worry in growing the sport of golf in Finland is commitment. Finland is known to be a "hockey-country", and that's all Finnish media is writing about these days. Perhaps that's because golf isn't as media-sexy as ice-hockey or football or the fact that golf has a lot significantly smaller follower group. The growth of hockey in Finland has been dramatic in the past ten years and a big reason for that are the constant stories in different news and media about certain people and the sport itself.

The Olympics was probably the best thing that has happened to golf in Finland in the past years. The great coverage that golf had in Rio created a spike in golf's popularity and every club in Finland should take advantage of this. During the Olympics and mostly because of Mikko Ilonen, who led the Olympic golf event in one point but wasn't able to hold on to the lead, Finnish people got a real glimpse of golf as a sport, because golf isn't broadcasted in Finnish television. Every major tour and every event is broadcasted in Viasat, C-More or other chargeable channel. Golf clearly made a huge impression to the public and things are looking much better after the Olympics.

3.4 Golf in Finland national media reporting and marketing

Newspapers in Kalajoki have not written about golf enough to make the sport visible for a smaller audience. Somehow this is happening in the national level as well, because the news about golf hasn't been seen in the main stream media all that much. Here are some of the main events in golf during the past couple of months and the way Iltasanomat presented them, which is the biggest news magazine in Finland:

- Golf in the Rio Olympics (numerous)
- Finnish women professionals in LPGA (2),
- Finnish girls in the World Team Championships (0),
- Arnold Palmer's passing (1),
- Ryder Cup (4)

(Number of headlines in brackets)

The fact that the Finnish media only covered one headline from the sad passing of Arnold Palmer is unacceptable. Palmer was the largest and the most loved figure in golf for more than 50 years, and in Finland they manage only this one headline:

<http://www.iltasanomat.fi/golf/art-2000001268928.html>

The other big event in 2016 was the Ryder Cup, which is played every other year between the United States and Europe. The European team has dominated the event in the for the last two decades, winning eight of the last ten events before this year's Ryder Cup, which was won by Team USA, for the first time since 2008. Even the domination of the European team in the past wasn't enough to propel the Finnish media into writing more than four headlines about the biggest event in golf, one of them being entirely about Tiger Woods. The headlines are as follows:

<http://www.iltasanomat.fi/golf/art-2000001273328.html>

<http://www.iltasanomat.fi/golf/art-2000001273860.html>

<http://www.iltasanomat.fi/golf/art-2000001274342.html>

<http://www.iltasanomat.fi/golf/art-2000001274082.html>

Ones in a while, you stumble across some unrelated news about golf, mainly with the downhill skiing star Lindsay Vonn, who was in a relationship with Tiger Woods. There's a lot of different looks into their brief relationship; was it a "mistake", wasn't a mistake, was a fling, was serious, the story has changed every time it's been brought up. Other news that are completely irrelevant but somehow the Finnish media keeps on writing them, is about professional hockey players trying golf. Here is the headline about Washington Capitals Captain Alexander Ovechkin trying to hit with a driver:

<http://www.iltasanomat.fi/nhl/art-2000001927454.html>

Ovechkin is one of the top5 hockey players, and one of the best stick handlers in the World, and the message audience gets from this headline and video is *"Well, if he can't hit the ball even with all of his talent, what chance do I have?"* These headlines are completely unnecessary because a lot of NHL players do play golf during the summer, and some of them play fairly well. The fact that the headline focuses on someone who doesn't quite know how to do it is completely irrelevant in content and sends a totally wrong picture about golf to the public.

Finnish media even left out the news that the Finland's Girls National team, consisting of three players, came in eighth place in the World Team Championships in Canada at the start of October. Not a single headline was written about their success in the main stream media and people had to go the Finland's Golf Unions website to find the story:

<http://golf.fi/kilpagolf/suomi-kahdeksas-tyttojen-mm-turnauksessa/>

What these things show is that the Finnish media is part of the problem that golf doesn't do that well in Finland because golf doesn't get the attentions it deserves. Finnish media writes about national soccer league, even when they know Finnish soccer is a joke compared to international levels. Yet the newspapers stretch themselves out of proportions when some soccer player from Finland scores for example in England or in Germany. Yet, when a group of Finnish girls come in eight place in the Golf's World Team Championships, no one bats an eye.

4 GOLF IN KALAJOKI

Kalajoki is not a big city, so gathering juniors to play golf in particular is pretty hard. Kalajoki has about 13,000 people, but since Ylivieska, which is a bigger city and doesn't have its own golf course, helps a bit. People who want to play golf usually come to Kalajoki to get the membership, but a lot of them go to Nivala, which is the neighbor of Ylivieska. Golf is also a very small sport compared to football and ice-hockey, and these are the main reasons why it doesn't do very well in Kalajoki. It's not "trendy" to play golf, when you could play hockey. Especially now when JHT, the hockey organization in Kalajoki, is doing so well in the Finnish league (Suomi-sarja), which is the third highest league in Finland after Liiga and Mestis.

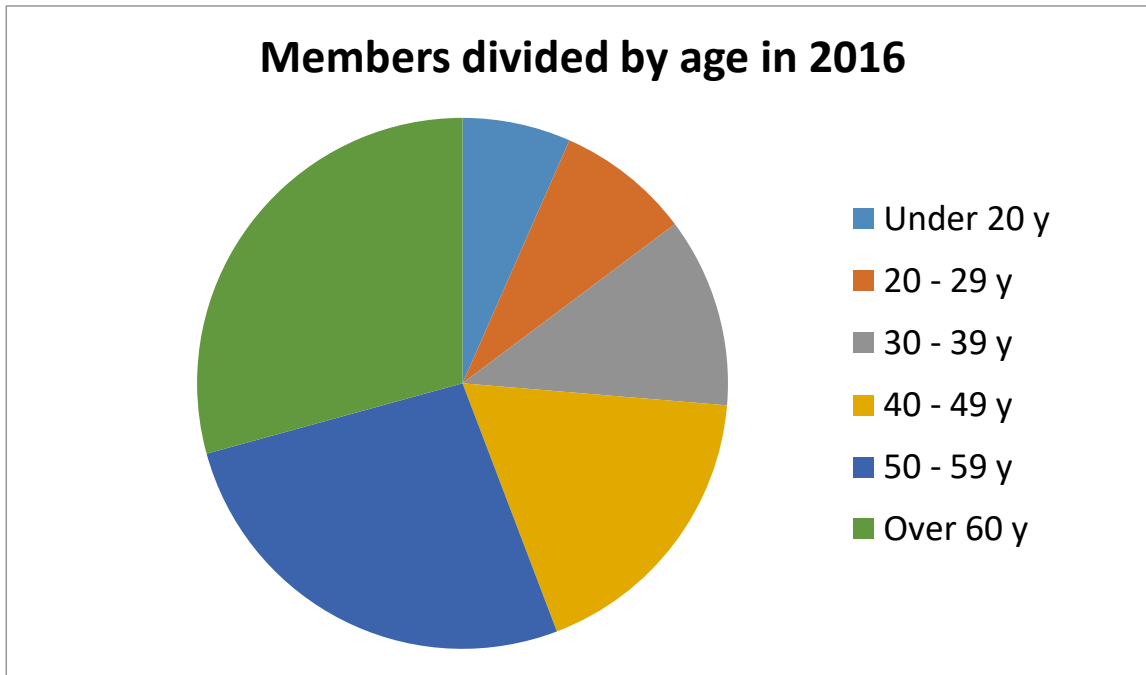
At the moment, the stage of golf is quite minimal in Kalajoki, particularly among children, but the situation is getting better, mostly due to the success of Niina Liias, and the Finnish National Women's Golf Championship in 2015. She won the championship that year by the margin of one shot and it came down the wire, as her final stroke, she holed a putt from two meters and took home the title. In addition to the championship, she was awarded with the trophy 'The Best Golfer in Northern Finland' in 2015. This is something Kalajokigolf could use to market golf to girls, since the percentage of girl golfers in the junior program is non-existent. (TABLE 1.) The role model to girls is in place, all they need to do, is utilize that fact. Have her go to schools and tell children about the benefits of the game and hopefully be an example to many young children who decide to try golf out.

4.1 Current situation

From the numbers adapted from TABLE 1, which contains Kalajokigolf's numbers from the year 2016 regarding the members and active members we can see that the situation is not looking good for the future. Out of 1,090 members in 2016, 161 of them were under the age of 30 which is only 14.76% of the total amount. The numbers also show us that the majority of members are in the age groups 50+; 608 and 55.78% to be exact, and therefore the marketing must be concentrated in getting more young people involved. The gray area is the members between ages 30-50 because they cover pretty much a third of the member base with 321 out of 1,090 and 29.45%.

Active members were discovered by looking at the EGA handicap system from the past summer, which gives us the most active members of each age group. The number of active players in Kalajokigolf is quite alarming; with 407 out of the 1,090, equaling 37.34% of the members playing annually. EGA is a system where players keep their handicap in check by leaving scorecards over the summer, either from competitions or practice rounds. You need to leave at least three cards to have an active EGA handicap. This system is relatively new, being enabled for a couple of years so far. (Table 1.)

From these numbers only, we are able to read that in the next 10-15 years, Kalajokigolf's member base will halve itself. Seniors retrieve from golf, due to different reasons and now, when they don't have juniors, who are going to replace them in the future? In 20 years, the 321 members that are between 30 and 50 should be able to replace those 608, who are over 50-years-old. There's a 47.2% drop in the number of seniors if the club can't recruit new members, and this concerns only the adults. In that 20 year span the group of under 30, containing 161 people, should replace the 321 adults that are now over 30. That's 49.8% drop in the numbers. So in this rate, in the next 20 years, Kalajokigolf could lose about half of their members based only on simple math.



GRAPH 1. Members divided by age

Age group	Women	Men	Total	Share %	EGA	Share %
Under 20 y	22	50	72	6,60	12	16,67
20 - 29 y	16	73	89	8,16	31	34,83
30 - 39 y	31	95	126	11,56	43	34,13
40 - 49 y	56	139	195	17,89	53	27,18
50 - 59 y	97	192	289	26,51	119	41,18
Over 60 y	115	204	319	29,27	102	31,97
Total	337	753	1090	100,0	407	37,34

TABLE 1. Age distribution between club members and finding the active players (EGA) in 2016

4.2 Junior golf

The situation with junior golf hasn't always been as bad as it is now. Once upon a time, Kalajoki had almost ten youngsters who represented the club in certain junior tours. Their success was varying, from national success to not-so-great performances on Tour. "The Golden-Age" of junior golf was nine years ago, in 2007, when an eight-junior team from a small town of Kalajoki finished in ninth place in the National Junior Team Championship –event. Next year the same event was held in Kalajoki by Hiekkasärkät Golf. This time team Kalajoki finished in eleventh place. After that KalajokiGolf hasn't had enough junior golfers in order to qualify for the event. The team must consist out of eight members with at least two girls.

Today, the core of junior golf in Kalajoki consists of five boys, with four of them playing in Junior Alue- and TsemppiTour. TsemppiTour being for children aged eight to fifteen, and AlueTour for children aged fifteen to twenty one, which is the maximum age for juniors in golf. Four out of these five are between ages fifteen and seventeen, and then there's "The Kid", Konsta Jutila, who is nine, but goes without complications with the older boys. He even succeeds some of them in certain areas of the game, so we are perhaps looking at the future of golf success in Kalajoki with him, if he can maintain his composure and not to let his status in the club get in to his head.

The conditions for golf are nearly perfect for juniors to start playing. Practice areas in Kalajokigolf are great, and the par3 practice course is perfect for children to practice the game itself. The only difficult part is the course location, ten kilometers from the Kalajoki town center. Children can't get there by themselves and for some reason parents don't come and drop off their kids, because of the distance. Yet, these same parents drive in some cases the same distance to get their children into football or ice-hockey practices. So eventually in Kalajokigolf's case, it comes down to the parents and getting them involved.

The coaching situation isn't particularly good, but it's good enough for the present situation, with three available instructors and even that's not a certainty all the time. The instructors; Antti Jutila, Pentti Turpeinen and myself, coach juniors of all ages and they are divided into two groups; beginners and competitors, which is my responsibility. In the competitor group we have five players and the number in the other group, coached by Antti and Pentti, varies between five and ten juniors.

5 RECRUITING TOUR EVENT IN OULU 7.11.2016

Finnish Golf Union put together a recruiting tour in November with the main purpose to figure out in groups, how to get more members and how to make them more loyal to their club and how to recruit more junior golfers to the game. This is exactly what Kalajokigolf is hoping to achieve with this thesis, and this was a great opportunity to get more information from other people discussing the same matter, but from their own club's perspective. The meeting was held in Sokos Hotel Eden in Oulu on Monday 7.11.2016. There were three representatives from the Finnish Golf Union and about 30 people listening and working out the main topics of the evening. People were divided into two groups; to think about the recruiting and more members and their loyalty to the club, and to focus on getting more junior golfers into golf. (Golf Union, 2016)

I was part of the junior program and this is what we discussed. There were six main points highlighted in the process of marketing and recruiting more juniors;

1. Why?
2. To whom?
3. What?
4. Where?
5. When?
6. How?

These six steps create an actual plan on how to find and interact with juniors in order to appeal to them and get them interested about golf. They give guide lines about all seven points and how to operate each and every one of them.

5.1 Why?

Why should we market golf to juniors? Easy, they represent the future not just in golf but in life. The more juniors the club has, the better it's going to do in the future, and Kalajokigolf is in desperate need of more junior golfers. This fact also creates more and more players as a snowball effect if it's utilized properly. And this helps the club to get more recognition among its peers. The large amount of young players also helps golf as a game to get rid of its current image as a rich grownups game.

It also helps children exercise, and that's important because less and less children these days play sports. This is not just in Finland and not just in golf, this is a global phenomenon and it's happening in every sport, also. In America, the college football is at its all-time low. While in Europe, football and ice-hockey are little by little losing the younger players. Because of this, clubs are forced to create long- and short term goals, considering their activities moving forward.

5.2 To whom?

This section is divided into two separate issues; who we want to reach and how do we do it? There are numerous things we must consider in marketing golf to children. Firstly, we have to decide what is the targets age and gender. Marketing to 15-year-old girl is different in every way that of a 9-year-old boy. But if you were to advertise golf in a school, this will not be a problem, since the children are all under the same roof and will all be a part of the targeted group. To answer the point on how to reach them, we must go to schools and kindergartens in order to get the children's and their parent's attention.

We also have to recognize the difficult groups from the easier ones. The most difficult ones to get interested in golf today are the children in junior high and high schools. They have

so many other distractions in life at that age that golf isn't the first one that comes to their minds when thinking about activities and hobbies. It's usually video games and the opposite sex that gets their attention, and the second one could be used as an advantage to lure them in.

The easiest group is the children in kindergarten because they will do anything that's fun. And if their parents bring them to practices and their children have a good time, they will come again. Making and seeing their friends is also important to children of that age, and golf practices are the perfect place for young children to come and have a good time together. You must not forget about the parents either. In a certain golf club in Finland, they had a place specifically designed for parents to spend time and work while their children were playing, since practices are usually an hour long, sometimes longer.

5.3 What?

What should we actually be marketing? Golf as a sport and as a hobby is nothing if not versatile. There are many aspects of the game we can use in marketing and we shouldn't waste the opportunity. One of the most successful ways of getting junior golfers is the Schoolgolf program, where people in charge of these things go to schools and teaches golf to children. This is usually done in a regular P.E. class and according to the people who have actually done this the teachers don't mind at all, in fact, they are grateful that once in a while someone else teaches the class.

The greatest invention in recent years has been the Drive to School –program, in which Finnish Golf Union trains P.E. and any other teachers for free in order for them to be able to teach Drive to School –classes to children. This consists of different aspects that are useful not only in golf but in mobility altogether. Speedgolf also came up in the conversation on the possibilities of different marketing catches. Speedgolf is a form of the game where you try to get the ball as fast as possible. This is a perfect game mode for young children,

who are full of energy and are just running around with difficulties of concentrating to the actual game. And Kalajokigolf has the perfect place to play speedgolf in the par3 course. (Golf Union 2016).

Once you get children to come and start practicing and playing golf, you can't stop marketing the game. The first time matters greatly for them and just like in real life, the first impression is the most important one. You have to get them into the game at the first try. You have to keep them interested and maybe get them to hook their friends and bring more children with them next time. The content of the practice is the key in this. If children don't enjoy themselves, they lose interest very quickly and won't be back next time. That's why the trainers and coaches have to make sure that fun is the main thing while training children. The younger your trainees are, the more you have to entertain.

5.4 Where?

The marketing can be done either in schools and kindergartens or in the golf course. Before this, we must figure out whether to concentrate on being a C2B business or aiming to become more of a B2C company. This means that we either go to the target groups or the groups come to us. Golf can be practiced pretty much anywhere, because the practices don't only consist of striking the ball or playing on the course. Sometimes all you need is one club and one ball, or no golf equipment at all. All sort of mobility, balance and strength training are essential in today's golf and the Drive to School –program teaches children and adults to practice different aspects of golf without using golf clubs. So it can be done in schools, golf courses or even at home.

Previous method that Kalajokigolf has also utilized in recent years is no longer viewed as an effective way to get children into golf. It consists of bringing children into the course, giving them a club and practice balls and letting them hit the balls into the driving range like machine guns. This gets boring pretty quick and it's not easy on the hands as the grip

of the club is very rough. Alternate methods to this would be going to the target groups ourselves or figure out how to make their time more interesting once they come and try golf for the first time as group. Maybe try arranging events just for children where they can do so much more than to hit balls and do something completely unrelated to golf. Like having long jump competitions into the sand trap or a ball collecting competition on the driving range, requiring it's empty of ball hitters. This would perhaps get them to have a good time while playing golf and they get to spent time in the golf course area.

Golf has so many different options nowadays. Frisbee golf, for example has been the most growing sport in the last couple of years, and it is great practice to golfers also. Golf swing is all about body rotation and throwing a Frisbee, or any other object for that matter, is one of the more useful practices in golf. And there happens to be a Frisbee golf course in Kalajoki Hiekkasärkät, where the golf course is located. Practices and even junior events could easily be held in there in order to get children accustomed to throwing motion and the rotations of certain body parts. There are just so many different things you can do if you put imagination into the process.

5.5 When?

Marketing should be started in the autumn in order to get the maximum results for next year. We must concentrate to winter and sell the upcoming summer to the customers. This is obviously the best time to contact children since they are in schools during winter and usually have P.E. classes inside, unless they play ice-hockey. The gymnasium is a good place to practice other aspects of golf in the winter, such as strength and balance. The Drive to School –program plays a huge part in this since it gives the teachers the knowledge required in teaching these things.

The year clock must be set to run towards the spring because the season starts and customers are physically able to play golf for real. And after a heavy winter marketing golf in

schools and certain events, April-May is crucial time to make children and their parents aware of the game and the local junior program. This of course requires recourses in form of people who actually go in schools and present golf to children.

5.6 How?

The main question in this chapter is; how to get more participants to do the marketing? The main things to arrange are the equipment, communication, networking and contacts, and finally the outcome of all these. Kalajokigolf has an equipment bag filled with training props, which are used in indoor practices through the winter. The holder of the bag is usually one of the two instructors in the club, and the use of it is their responsibility. One thing that has gotten a lot of consideration among the instructors is a brand called Short Golf, which is a line of plastic practice clubs for the smallest children. They are extremely light and they got a massive club head, which makes hitting the ball very easy. It also contains target mats like a dartboard and balls that stick to it. This would make the practices much easier for the younger children since real clubs are quite heavy for them.

Communication is usually a responsibility of the club personnel and it's usually done via e-mail, text messages or in the social network like Facebook. Kalajokigolf sends reminders and requests for their members about certain events and notifications and they use Facebook very well in other marketing. Every time something new happens in the club, members usually know about it very shortly after. This area is taken care of efficiently in Kalajokigolf and it's not something that needs to be changed any time soon.

6 MARKETING GOLF IN KALAJOKI

Marketing strategy in this thesis is based on finding the target groups, which is pretty much everyone, since golf can be played despite one's age. After finding the target groups, we look at the media these groups use in everyday life to get the message through to them using certain media for every group. But we don't use media only. We have to find other ways to get children involved with the sport. And to get to children, we must contact schools and parents. After finding the right way to contact every one, we figure out how to put things into motion and find the way to get people in the course and to the club.

6.1 Target groups

Preferred target group would be children and students, but since Kalajoki is quite limited in its population, we have to target adults also. This way we might get bigger percentage of people to come and try golf. When grownups and more importantly, parents, get a good look at the game, there may be a spike in membership sales. Very often the formula is as follows; one or both parents come to take a course and learn about golf, sometimes as a gift but mostly independently, and a month later they come back with their children. This occurs four-to-five times a year, and it brings about ten-to-twenty new members to the club.

To get more people to come and try golf, there must be a specific way to get these people intrigued by the sport. Golf such a great game, because no matter what age you are, you are suitable to play golf. Unlike other sports which require great strength and stamina, golf can be played even at retirement age. There's even a professional tour for men aged over 50, which is the "senior age" in golf. Kalajokigolf has a few members, who are over 80 years old, and a lot who are over 70. So it doesn't really matter how old you are, unlike other sports. So in order to find the certain target group, you can't rule anyone out.

You have to find certain things that appeal to certain aged people. You have to make separate plans to market golf to juniors, young adults, adults and the elderly people alike, because the things that young adults find attractive in the game certainly doesn't appeal to the senior citizens, and vice versa. So you need to be careful not to mess up the marketing process with too much information, in order to get the message through to the chosen group.

6.2 Group's preferences and used media

In order to appeal into certain people's preferences, we must advertise golf in a way that suits the specific target group. Here we divide the target group into three separate groups based on their age, so that it's easier to find the correct media and pattern to marketing. The three groups are children, teenagers and young adults, and grownups and seniors. In today's World, internet and especially social media is in the center of our everyday lives, that's why it's important to concentrate marketing to the web. Even more so, when the young and elderly people are getting more and more acquainted with internet. This didn't apply ten to fifteen years ago, when the internet was still in its diapers.

High percentage of people in different ages can use a computer or a smart phone to receive or search information from the internet about the things they are interested in. Only adults and elderly people read newspapers anymore. And most of the adults are using phones to read the news these days. So newspaper marketing is a diminishing part of the marketing, because it's only directed to the senior audience of golf marketing. Even little children today have iPhones and Samsung's and they are efficient with computers also, so the social media is also available to our younger audience. Adults play a vital role in all today's marketing because you can sell golf to them and through them to their children using their point of view as a parent. And sort of you have to use that, because children

are in no position to make decision and they need their parents as a financial and transportation aid.

6.2.1 Marketing to children

Getting more children involved is the biggest task of Kalajokigolf in the upcoming years. The number of junior golfers has plummeted in ten years, when they had over ten players in junior tours, instead of the three they have today. In order to get more children involved with golf, they have to come up with a plan to get the message through to them via schools and more importantly, their parents. Children don't usually know how to pick a hobby by themselves before certain age, so a bit of a push from their parents in the right direction is always helpful. The primary marketing targets would be schools and parents because parents have a huge influence on their children's hobbies and activities.

Marketing in schools would not be that difficult. You could get permission to put up posters and even go and show children what golf is like in PE class. From these interactions they could draw their own conclusions about golf and whether they want to try it on the course. You don't even need real equipment to show children what golf is all about. All you need are some PE equipment like variant balls and mats and other things which you can use to show some of the main parts of the golf swing. Throwing the ball is one of the best exercises in golf because it creates rotational movement through your entire body, which is the key to an effective golf swing. Kalajokigolf has offered elementary schools a possibility to bring students to try golf at the end of the study year, when the snow has melted. This has been going on for a couple of years now, and it's finally starting to generate more juniors.

Kalajokigolf is located 10 kilometers south of Kalajoki, in Hiekkasärkät, so it's basically unreachable by children without their parents help. So, to get the children to the course, you have to appeal to their parents and through them, you might inspire their children to

try the sport. As a parent, adults want and search different past time activities for their children and golf, unfortunately, isn't on the top of the list these days. Parents think that golf is also a very expensive hobby to have for their children, but this is the exact opposite of truth. Ice-hockey, for example is way more expensive than golf, where parents can get a whole summer of training for their children for just 75€. In Kalajoki this payment includes practices once or twice a week, equipment and a possibility to play the Pay&Play Par3 practice course for free all summer. The costs in hockey are ten times bigger, with all the equipment prices, with sticks costing around 300€ these days, add all the ice time fees and other expenses and you have the most expensive hobby for a child and parents. In golf, your children will be provided with practice clubs and balls so that parents don't have to buy them beforehand.

Why golf is such a great hobby for children? A few reasons, firstly, they make friends in golf course just as they do in other sports. Nobody needs to play the game alone, and if they behave like their current juniors by playing mostly with the grown-ups in the club, that's great. And when you have many friends playing golf also, you can always go play with each other. And that's encouraged by the trainers, because playing with their friends creates a certain atmosphere and competitions so they know how to play in real ones after that.

Golf is also beneficial for the fact that it's played outdoors, except in winter when they train indoors. This is increasingly important in today's world when more and more children are playing more and more computers and other videogames in their past time. Golf gives them an opportunity to escape these things and concentrate in hitting the ball rather than sitting in a dark room playing. It increases children's social skills as well, because juniors are usually interviewed a lot by the grownups and seniors in the club. They learn how to interact with older people and to behave accordingly. In golf, the majority of the members are grownups, so juniors have a mascot-like reputation in the golf clubs, being smaller and present almost every day of the week.

6.2.2 Marketing to teenagers and young adults

Marketing golf to teenagers is way easier than marketing it to children. Everyone has a mobile phone these days, and phones being as high-tech as they are today, the main focus in marketing for teenagers and young adults will be in the internet. Social media plays a crucial part, with Facebook, Twitter and Instagram being the dominant channels in reaching to the target group. Kalajokigolf is using Facebook actively, Instagram moderately and Twitter practically not at all. Young people have been switching Facebook to Instagram for a couple of years now, “leaving” Facebook mainly for adults and it’s safe to say that Instagram has surpassed Facebook in popularity among youngsters. Kalajokigolf needs to use both sites, in order to attract a larger audience.

The perfect way to get young people familiar with golf is to present the sport in schools. In Finland, golf is overlooked in schools’ annual PE schedule. There’s everything from dancing to orienteering, and everything from between, but no golf. Pupils get to try golf during junior high and high school for maximum of two times. This is the fact that needs to change if Finland is ever going to get to even level with Sweden, let alone to the top. Young people don’t want to discover golf on their own because it’s not “sexy” to play golf, compared to ice-hockey or football. And getting golf as a part of the PE system in schools would provide them the opportunity to change their idea about golf and perhaps start playing.

And why should young people play golf instead of something more main stream like ice-hockey or football? It’s true that golf has a smaller circle of friends than in other sports, which are usually *team sports*, but those youngsters who have decided to take golf as their hobby, are most of the time 100% all in it. So they will always have someone to play with and the practicing part of golf is also completely different than other sports. Players usually like to train against each other, not with them. This helps them on the course because

they have practiced in “competition mode”. This creates great friendships that usually last for a long time.

Also young people are kept in high regard, due to the fact that they represent their club in different events, such as junior tours or match plays against other clubs (Kalajokigolf vs Nivala Golf). This gives them a feeling of importance and it makes them feel welcome and at home. And if they have enough friends to represent with, they can qualify to the National Junior Team Championship event organized every year. Kalajokigolf participated twice in consecutive years in 2007 at St. Laurence Golf in Lohja and in 2008 at Kalajokigolf. Since then the number of juniors has diminished so that they haven't gotten the required eight participants. But hopefully these days come back to Kalajoki.

6.2.3 Marketing to grownups and seniors

Marketing golf to the eldest of the target groups is vital because a large numbers of the customers are parents and working people, who have recourses to start playing. The places for marketing are also quite easy to determine; internet, newspapers and mouth-to-mouth marketing in the workplaces are the main marketing streams for grownups.

Kalajokigolf offers and arranges companies' personnel relaxation events, if a certain company wants to bring their workers to try golf. This is a huge part of the marketing process, because words have a tremendous power since they can provide an extensive picture to the outsiders. Let's assume a company brings 20 people to Kalajokigolf to learn and play golf, eat dinner and maybe later arrange a sauna for them. If everyone has a good time and they want to come back again, it's almost certain they say only good things about the day's activities. And with whom do they share this information, their families. So suddenly we have approximately 60 to 70 people who know Kalajokigolf is a great place to experience.

Kalajokigolf also arranges so-called “god-parent golf” –events, where more seasoned golfers and members can bring their friends with them to play without expenses. This took a dramatic step forward last season, when they arranged a bigger event with same purpose. It turned out to be a success, because almost 20 members showed up with a different amount of their friends. Overall over 50 people were introduced to golf that day and the event will be recreated again next year with the aim to get more children to come and visit, since all of them were adults last year.

Adults these days know how to use the internet and a large portion of them are using some kind of social network, with Facebook being the most dominant amongst adults. They also actively follow club’s webpages since everything new that happens in the club, whether it’s a competition, notification or other event, they will find it from the homepages. This is great bonus because many of Kalajokigolf’s adult members live outside the range of local newspapers.

The biggest positive factor about golf to adults and seniors is the fact that it’s the greatest outdoor past time available where you combine good company hours of fun and the possibility to keep up their condition. It is a great hobby especially for retirees because it takes quite a long time to play all 18 holes, about four and a half hours, and what would be a better way to spend your days than flying your ball over the trees to the flag. And as a senior citizen, they can’t really do more than a few other sports so golf provides them with a chance to keep up their youthful health and spirit.

Seniors also have their own tour in Kalajoki region called Senior Alue Tour, and the bonus events consisting of five clubs; Kalajoki, Nivala, Kokkola, Pietarsaari and Lappajärvi. Any seniors are welcome to play in these events and they have been immensely popular among local seniors so far. The sense of community is very important to seniors and golf community with other seniors and a splash of youth in form of children running around gives them a homely feeling in the club house.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to provide Hiekkasärkät Golf Oy with a marketing plan to recruit more members to the club. The main focus was in the new customers in general but recruiting juniors got a bit deeper look into it because the main purpose of the author in the club is to coach junior golfers and to be as big a part of the junior program in Kalajoki as possible. Marketing golf in Kalajoki region is a very limited process because there are just so many places and so many ways you can do it. Also the population is a concern.

The thesis hopefully provides insight to the current state of the club and helps it to look into the future on what should be done in order to gain larger member base. The recent upgrades to the practice area helps in this regard and the fact that the junior program is finally paying off as new children begin to emerge to the junior tours from Kalajoki. One of the most fascinating points in the study was the realization of the dropouts from other sports that would be a good thing to investigate further in the future.

The current numbers however are quite disturbing. If we fast forward for even five to ten years, Kalajokigolf is about to lose a significant amount of members simply because of the high number of senior golfers who eventually can't play any longer. This is why I took the assignment in order to achieve a youth movement in the near future of the club. And going to schools and taking part in the Drive to School –program would help immensely.

The overall point in the marketing plan itself was to get more children involved by going to schools and trying to reach parents in order to eventually get the children involved. For teenagers and young adults golf will be advertised as a hobby and as a past time. And for adults and seniors it's marketed as a social past time above all other qualities.

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