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**Marketing plan for a new service concept: case Taksipalvelu MPS Oy
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1 INTRODUCTION

The amount of services companies is growing all the time (Statistical databases). In addition, it is a fact that 99 percent of companies in Finland are small and medium sized companies (SMEs) (Confederation of Finnish Industries, EK). It also seems that there are no concrete studies made that take these two issues into consideration when talking about one the most basic marketing tool, marketing plan. Due to this, the concept of marketing plan should be especially examined through the viewpoints of services and an SME-company.

1.1 Subject of the study and goals

The marketing plan studies consist mainly of marketing plans created for product-oriented manufacturing industry or for large companies. It seems that small businesses create their plans without any model designed particularly for them, if creating a plan at all. Like said, the studies lack especially comprehensive applications to service marketing and SME-companies. This increases the importance of this study, which seizes into these fields of a marketing plan in particular.

The study is applied to the new service concept the case company, Taksipalvelu MPS Oy is planning to establish. The service is aimed at the Russian visitors and Russians living in the Lappeenranta area and the contents of the service will be designed on the high end basis. The research is important because the taxi service branch is highly regulated and there would be lots of potential for differentiation and conformation in the service packages as a whole in the limits of the regulation. Furthermore, in the taxi services in general, a very little or none of targeting has been made that would take different customer groups into account. Studying possible demand and prosperity of this new taxi service concept gives guidelines to whether it is a profitable or not.

The research includes also interest towards the Russian customers, whose importance in the customer basis of Lappeenranta area has increased significantly. The Finnish Border Guards statistics shows this well: border crossings in the border sta-

tions of Southeast Finland grew 15 percent in 2010 from the year 2009 and was 6,5 million border crossings in total. Also the border crossing traffic in the Nuijamaa border station, which is the nearest station of Lappeenranta, has increased with over 300 000 crossings when comparing the years 2009 and 2010 (Rajavartiolaitos, rajanylitysliikenne). The potential of this growing customer group and Russians' interest towards Finland may have not been yet discovered or utilized. Thus assumingly a great deal of market niches may wait to be identified. The case study aims at finding out whether there would be undiscovered market niche and demand in this specific customer segment when considering the taxi services.

The aim of the study is to create a beneficial marketing plan for the case company Taksipalvelu MPS Oy when paying special attention to the branch and customers. The point is to give guidelines to the case company of how to approach the potential markets and how to market the service as successfully as possible. The sub goal of the study is to survey whether there is demand in the chosen customer segment and consider whether the target customer group should be defined by other determinants.

1.2 Research problems and limitations

The research problems are the following, the first one being the main research problem and the other two being sub problems:

1. How to create a marketing plan for a new service concept?
2. How to take the viewpoints of service marketing and an SME-company into consideration when forming a marketing plan?
3. How to survey the demand in the chosen customer segment?

The study is limited to the aspects of a marketing plan including the narrow viewpoints of service marketing and an SME-company: issues of service marketing and SME-company are only touched upon to support the marketing plan facts but their role is not emphasized significantly or deeply discussed. Also the facets of the de-

mand survey and its applications are being examined although not thoroughly focusing on the survey making theory and processes. The study does not cover the issues related to the establishment of a new service nor the creation of a brand or its aspects, such as logo or the colors used in the marketing material. In addition, the cultural differences between the Finns and Russians are not considered.

1.3 Research methods

The aim is to survey the potential demand by interviewing both companies and target customers. The companies interviewed are located in Lappeenranta and are known among the Russian visitors, for example hotels, tourist info, exchange company and other taxi companies operating in Lappeenranta area. The companies are interviewed by phone on a qualitative basis, the questions consisting inquiries of Russians' travelling customs and whether the company representatives see prospects in the new taxi service to be established. Qualitative study means that the material collected through the study is in a non-quantitative form, and as the questions are open from their nature a qualitative method is the best way to examine the views of the companies. The customers instead are interviewed by means of a quantitative survey questionnaire, in other words the results of the quantitative study are in a quantitative form. The survey includes questions concerning for example their interest towards the service and the motives for their visits in Lappeenranta. To conclude, the research method used in the study is triangulation, or more specifically method triangulation, combining both quantitative and qualitative research methods (Eskola, J. & Suoranta, J. 2000. p. 13, 70). Both ways are used to create an overall picture over the matter and to collect information of the situation in the target market.

1.4 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework consists of three parts that are linked together: marketing plan, a new service concept and an SME-company. The marketing plan plays the key role and the contents of it are represented in the framework. Different parts of the contents are linked with each other with arrows representing a process which is carried out when making a marketing plan. The arrows also tell about the cumulative aspect of the marketing plan: every part is the basis for the following parts and how

well one part is completed determines the success of the part following. The other two parts mentioned (new service concept and SME-company) in the theoretical framework depict the viewpoints from which the marketing plan and its contents are being viewed. Both these viewpoints also represent the attributes of the case company Taksipalvelu MPS Oy: the case company is an SME-company operating in taxi service branch. Because of these attributes of the case company it is crucial to examine the marketing plan from services and SME viewpoints in order to create a suitable marketing plan for the needs of the case company.



Figure 1: Theoretical framework

1.5 Literature review

Marketing plan, as a subject of study has been processed through contents-based review, by pondering, what to take into consideration and why. The reviews have been made mainly from the viewpoint of manufacturing companies and designed to fit the needs of medium to large sized companies. There are also a lot of guidelines

and instructions for creating a marketing plan and reasons of why to create one. (Kotler, P. 1997; Torrico, B. I. 2001; Quagliaroli, J. 1985; Graham, J. R. 1998; Garman, R. L. 1993; Reese, S. 1996) The service marketing has been viewed on a very general basis concentrating on the nature of the service, customer behavior, service quality and management processes. Also the aspects that affect the service and aspects that have a positive impact on it have been discussed. Furthermore, the strategies and decision making attributes in service marketing are also being covered. (Zeithaml et al. 2009; Fitzsimmons, J. A. & Fitzsimmons, M. J. 2006; Berry, L. L. 1999) Strategies of a manufacturing based SME-company are being discussed in the article of Poolton et al. (2006). The general issues concerning qualitative study and its aspects are being covered by Eskola, J. & Suoranta, J. (2000).

1.6 Definitions and concepts

Marketing plan

Marketing plan is a regularly updated document, which includes analysis of the current situation of a company, goals and strategies made for marketing purposes and plans of implementing the planned. (Quagliaroli, J. 1985. p. 1-2; Reese, S. 1996. p. 58)

Service

Service is a process, act or performance which one entity or a person offers or co-produces for another entity or a person. The output of this kind of an action is not a physical product or construction, in other words a service is produced and consumed at the same time. Furthermore, the added value of a service is intangible; other features are heterogeneity and perishability. (Zeithaml et al. 2009. p. 4, 20-22)

SME enterprise

The determinants for an SME company in Finland are the following: the amount of personnel below 250 people, turnover 50 million Euros or below and total amount of balance sheet 43 million Euros or below. (Confederation of Finnish Industries, EK)

1.7 Structure of the study

The study is divided into different parts. First it takes a look on the theory basis examining the marketing plan as a whole and searching viewpoints from the service marketing studies and applications of an SME-company. After that the empirical study and its contents is introduced with taking a glance at the results. The study continues with the marketing plan created for the case company on the basis of the theory and the results of the empirical study. The case company is introduced in the marketing plan and suggestions are made concerning the marketing of the planned service concept. Finally in the end there are presented the summary and the conclusion made.

2 MARKETING PLAN AND ITS ASPECTS

Marketing plan is in general one of the most important tools of marketing. It tells what the company wants to be, how it wants to be it and what are the ways and methods to reach the desired. In other words, marketing plan can be called a map guiding the company from where it is now to where it wants to get (Reese, S. 1996. p. 58). More specifically, it states the internal facts of the company including the aspects of the product/service, the resources and the inner strengths and weaknesses. In order to be able to choose the right strategy and plans of action, the marketing plan considers also the external variables affecting the company, such as the overall market situation with trends and actions of the competitors. Writing a marketing plan, not just creating it in one's head, makes a company representative aware of what is happening in the business field as one is forced to examine the company's situation in detail. One becomes an expert, which makes it easier in future to forecast and form tactics. (Torrice, B.I. 2001) Marketing plan, if done well, can furthermore affect positively the performance of a firm (Slotegraaf, R. J. & Dickson, P.R. 2004. p. 371).

Important issues to be considered and covered in a marketing plan: coherence, unity and consistency (J. R. Graham. 1998 p. 57). Everything planned have to make sense in addition to being in line with the corporate strategy and values. Different parts of a marketing plan should also form a unite ensemble and not be apart from each other. The time period covered in a marketing plan can differ from one year to five years (Leeflang et al. 1996. p. 77). Furthermore, the plan is created on the ground of earlier marketing plans and the nature of it is to be the basis for the becoming one. There is therefore a continuum in the planning but also in one plan as well, as there is always a schedule that is being followed. A new plan is commonly ready earliest two months before the beginning marketing plan period (Leeflang, P. S. H. & de Mortanges, C. P. 1996. p. 77). All these rules should be carefully complied and emphasized in the planning process. They also affect the quality of the later marketing actions done. Like the old proverb says it, well planned is half done, which applies to the marketing plan as well: if the plan is made with effort the results of it are more likely to be satisfactory. (J. R. Graham. 1998 p. 57)

Marketing plan can look very different and take a variance of forms depending on the company and the industry: a marketing plan of an SME-company differs a lot from one of a large sized company (LSE) for example in size, scope and form. Also the actual process of conceiving the plan has a variety of different possibilities and, in addition, the number of persons involved may vary too. (Quagliaroli, J. 1985. p.6-9) However, in this study we concentrate on the aspects of a marketing plan of an SME company operating at service branch.

The process of creating a marketing plan may in some cases be considered as very strenuous and time consuming task, especially in the SME-companies it is seen this way. (Quagliaroli, J. 1985. p. 2-3) Purchasing a marketing plan from a professional marketing bureau may also turn out to be rather costly for a small firm (Curnow, R. 2007. p. 34-36). Because of these, before the actual purchasing or making of the marketing plan the basis for the plan has to be clarified. Important issues are the reasons why the plan is carried through and which purposes in a company it is about to serve. Also some basic issues have to be covered, such as who is in charge of producing it and in what kind of a scale and form the plan is most profitable and rational to produce. (Quagliaroli, J. 1985. p. 6-9; Anwar et al. 2001. p. 43) In case of purchasing a marketing plan it has to be clarified that what is actually get after the plan is finished and whether the agreed deal includes also implementing the plan or not (Curnow, R. 2007. p. 34-36). Furthermore, emphasize has to be put on the management of the marketing planning process as well (Greenley et al. 2004. p. 933). All these issues have to be processed before starting the process for avoiding the situation that the company has no use for it or the plan stays untouched without regular updates after the first version is finished. In other words, it is important that the company and the personnel involved are committed to the process of a marketing plan and to its continuous development. (Garman, R. L. 1993. p. 190)

2.1 Contents of a marketing plan

A company may have several products/services or even brands within it but each of them need to have their own marketing plan as every brand or product has specific goals and targets that usually differ from others. Marketing plan is developed to achieve these goals. In the beginning of a marketing plan there is a summary briefly

highlighting what the plan is all about, the key objectives of it and further suggestions. The aim of the summary is to give the readers a quick overlook of the plan's most important points in case one does not read it through in a whole. After the executive summary there is table of contents presented. (Kotler,P. 1997. p. 95-96; Torrico, B.I. 2001; Reese, S. 1996. p. 61)

2.1.1 Current market situation

The actual marketing plan begins with assessing the current marketing situation (Kotler,P. 1997. p. 95-96). This situational analysis is the basis for the rest of the plan, and the plans effectiveness and compatibility depends on how thoroughly search of information and interpretation is carried through (Quagliaroli, J. 1985. p.11). It includes overall data about the product and the target market not forgetting the analysis of competition in the specific market and distribution channel possibilities. Data about the market contains facts of history, size, structure and growth through several latest years, as well as perceptions of trends, phase and customer-related issues prevailing in the market. The factors that have affected to the situation where a company is now, work also as reminders warning from former pitfalls (Torrico, B.I. 2001). Product/service-related data instead consists of quantitative figures such as price, sales, profits and contribution margin as well as the position in the market and in its own lifecycle. Also who are the customers of the product/service and their goals, values and buying/consuming habits are relevant to be stated here (Torrico, B.I. 2001; Reese, S. 1996. p. 59). The more history data is gathered, the better in order to ensure effective comparison between years and to enable more precise forecasting. (Kotler, P. 1997. p. 96-97; Quagliaroli, J. 1985. p. 13-14)

Analysis of competition in the target market is vital part of the situations study as well. It determines the major competitors and their most important factors, such as market share, size, strengths and weaknesses, goals and strategies, sales and profit figures and the position in the market. All these factors are recommended to be analyzed on the viewpoints of both the competing company itself and its product/s. (Kotler, P. 1997. p. 95-96; Quagliaroli, J. 1985. p. 13-14; Reese, S. 1996. p. 59) In addition to the direct competitors, the indirect competitors need to be stated as well to avoid unnoticed possible threats (Torrico, B.I. 2001). Furthermore, distribution channels and

factors related; such as their quality, importance and size are good to be presented (Kotler, P. 1997. p. 97).

The market situation analysis ends to the discussion of trends and future changes in the macroenvironment. This includes the powers affecting the target market and the product itself, and these are socio-cultural, technological, economical, political-legal and demographical determinants. (Kotler, P. 1997. p. 98; Reese, S. 1996. p. 59)

2.1.2 Opportunity and issues analysis

After assessing the current situation the plan continues with opportunity and issue analysis. It argues the outer opportunities and threats that face the company/product line and considers its inner strengths and weaknesses. The issues analysis uses these variables in defining the issues that should be pointed out in the plan. (Kotler, P. 1997. p. 96-99)

In case of services, one opportunity but also a threat is to be considered. As the main goal of every company is to exceed the customers' expectations when compared to the competitors, the change of expectations may become a matter to consider carefully. When one company in the market raises its service quality and features into a certain level, the customers expect to receive the same kind of service level from every company in this specific market. Because of this the performance level has to be consistently developed in order to cope in with the competition and this can prove to be either an opportunity for the certain service firm or a threat depending on the company's inner strengths and weaknesses that determine how agile and innovative the company is and how it can adapt into the changes in the market. (Zeithaml et al. 2009. p. 96-97)

2.1.3 Objectives

Next section in the marketing plan is outlining the objectives that are required to be reached. There has to be two types of objectives: both financial and marketing objectives. The objectives have to be supported by the actual resources of the company and they need to be set rationally. Quagliaroli (1985. p.16) suggests that setting up the goals is the most important section of the whole marketing plan. Every set objective should answer in three questions: what is about to be achieved, how much and

in what time should be reached. (Torrico, B.I. 2001) The objectives need to be clearly and precisely outlined for everyone to be able to understand them. In addition, they need to be realistic but, on the other hand, not too easy to achieve to sustain the workers motivation in achieving them. However, John R. Graham (1998) states in his article that there should not be too many objectives in order to maintain focused and clear general view in the marketing plan and in the actions taken. The initial goals should be revised to find the most important objectives and when they have been discovered only one or two goals are adequate. This is a notable aspect for an SME-company as well, as a small firm does not have time or resources to pursue many issues at a same time. Concentrating on one objective at a time ensures thorough marketing planning and implementation but also makes it easier to keep on track of what is being done.

When talking about services focused companies, it can be stated that a great deal of them are very labor-intensive and due to this, some objectives in a service firm should focus on the wellbeing of the employees and on their performance. Investing in the employees' performance is a direct investment into the performance of the service company as well. The more content and work-oriented the personnel are, the better they serve the customers and create value to them (Chowdhary, S. 2003. p. 119). What is more, investing in the employees' working conditions communicates as well of the employers expectancies over the personnel's superior performance. Due to all this, marketing plan of a service company should include objectives concentrated on employees, such as improving the contentment of the staff and increasing the quality of service. These objectives can also be learning-based, such as developing the service skills and integrating the new employees better into the work community. (Berry, L. L. 1999. p. 159, 163-164, 181)

2.1.4 Marketing strategy

So far in the plan the marketing situation and opportunities have been assessed, and the objectives have been clarified, it is time to point out the means to reach these objectives when given the situation and opportunities mentioned above. The means are indicated in the marketing strategy section, which is comparted into several elements. Issues to be covered with suitable strategies are: product(s) and price, R&D and research in marketing, target market and positioning in them, distribution chan-

nels and sales personnel including the service level, and finally sales promotion and advertising matters. (Kotler, P. 1997. p. 99-101)

When talking about services, the actual percentage of the service and goods components in the final purchase entity may vary. Services may be an accompanying factor beside the core product or the final offer may consist of services only. Different combinations are possible and depend highly on the field a company is operating in. There are four assumptions that can be made of services in general. Firstly, services may offer solutions either for personal or business needs: a service and its marketing effort may be differentiated for individual customers and for company clients with varying components to answer in their special requirements better. Second determinant for service is whether the production requires customer's presence or not. As third assumption a service may be either people or equipment based, the first having enormous emphasize on the employees skills and knowhow. Fourth, objectives and ownership have as well an impact on the service and the image of it: service may be profit or nonprofit based or owned by private investors or public institutions. These four determinants of a service conclude the possible marketing actions and strategies planned to each service company. (Kotler, P. 1997. s. 467-468)

When considering the marketing strategies, SME-companies more probably take a reactive approach rather than proactive. SMEs have limited resources when considering both financial and personnel issues that they could agilely utilize the new marketing tricks developed in large companies in the market. Due to this SME-companies need to consider which marketing communication methods are the most beneficial and affordable when taking into account the overall situation of the company. (Poolton, et al. 2006. p. 681)

Marketing activities, such as media relations, advertising and self-promotion are vital to be planned specifically: what is to be done, in what time and how much resources are about to be spent. It is also important that all these marketing activities support the goals. Starting from appearance and contents based issues everything needs to be considered to make sure the message and exterior of the marketing communication materials fit the company's image. The same applies to the advertising as well. Advertising campaigns should not be implemented on a whim as a quick solution for

decreasing sales but as a deliberate outline with clear budget and reserved resources. Furthermore, precisely planned and determined actions are helpful in media relations as well. It can be said that every company is worth of an article and due to this there is a lot of undiscovered material that could be utilized in media. It is beneficial to investigate what the media wants and by forming good relations to the press a company may receive attention and valuable mentions in the articles. For an SME-company this is beneficial. Via articles in a local newspaper, for example, it is possible to gain a lot of visibility with low costs and in the best case, positive publicity. Due to these, especially small firms should put emphasis on marketing their fresh ideas and working methods as potential material for journals and articles. (J. R. Graham. 1998 p. 55-56; Chan, P. S. 1992. p. 49-50)

When talking about overall competitive strategies concerning services and their prices and more generally concerning the production of the services themselves, three strategies can be applied. These generic strategies are very commonly known: cost leadership, differentiation and segmentation. Cost leadership is all about cost-efficient solutions and tense control but also innovativeness in order to figure out new possibilities to decrease the costs and maintain the low prices. Low costs require great investments into equipment and facilities to reduce the overall passing time of the process. However, services in a cost leadership position may need to make decisions into more product-oriented way, in other words reduce the manpower used in order to lower the costs. For example lessening the personal interaction or changing service operations to happen “offline” without customer servant – customer contact. In addition to this salary costs reduce also standardization and an efficient network are important aspects to consider when practicing cost-efficient service business. Differentiation for one’s part is almost the opposite to this as it is more concerned over the service quality and customer loyalty of the customers than the costs. In differentiation strategy the standard service is customized to meet each customer’s individual needs better. Furthermore, the personnel are the ones to be invested in to ensure their skills and superior service quality, in other words the labor-intensiveness is being emphasized. The service can be also featured with some product aspects to remind the customers of the purchase, for example by offering the customer some service-related product samples as a gift. However, if wanting to use both cost leadership and differentiation strategies, segmentation is the right solution. In segmenta-

tion strategy one specific target market is being served concentrating on their explicit needs. Through that the segmenting service firms gains an advantage in the market by specializing into one precise customer group and has also a possibility to earn a cost-leading position as it is not trying to please the market as a whole. (Fitzsimmons et al. 2006.p. 41-44)

Finally, the most common element of a marketing plan and the crucial aspect of strategies is definitely the marketing mix, known also as the four Ps (Goi, C. L. 2009. p. 4-5). These variables, product, price, place and promotion, form a decision template that is customized specifically for each product/service and for each point of time. Each of these four variables contains many points that need to be considered and determined. When focusing on services, however, the four Ps are not enough and they do not fit in services marketing and management as such (English, J. 2000. p. 22; Goi, C. L. 2009. p. 4). The unique aspect of simultaneous production and consumption of services, direct contact between customer and the firm, and visible execution of the service process require three more Ps to be added (Rafiq et al. 1995.). These are people, process and physical evidence, and these added the three Ps can be called the expanded marketing mix (Magrath, A. J. 1986; Zeithaml et al. 2009. p. 23-27). Apart from product marketing where these three Ps are usually managed by distributors, in service marketing they are under control of the service provider and due to that affect the service experience of the customer (Rafiq et al. 1995.). Services are highly labor- and transaction-oriented businesses and due to that people involved have a high significance to the service experience and perceived quality. Everyone matters: the employees, the customer and other customers as well. Each of these gives a specific impression over the service. Furthermore, the service process itself is important: the efficiency, convenience and bureaucracy of the service matter very highly whether the customers like it or not, and whether they will repurchase again. Finally the physical evidence, or in other words the environment where the service is offered does have an impact. Everything matters: the facilities and their design, the appearance of the employees and other related stuff such as business cards, brochures et cetera. The added Ps may be irrelevant to the customers or they might have a very high significance to the satisfaction and repurchase considerations. They are however all within the control of the firm and by knowing the target

customer group they are easy to adapt according to their preferences and needs. (Zeithaml et al. 2009. p. 23-27)

2.1.5 Action programs

Marketing plan must include clarified action programs which stand for achieving the set goals. The issues covered in marketing strategy must each be converted into action plans by answering following questions: what is to be done in what time, done by whom with what costs? (Kotler, P. 1997. p. 100-101; Quagliaroli, J. 1985. p. 19; Anwar et al. 2001. p. 43) Developing a guiding schedule is important in order to keep on track of what needs to be done and when but also creates a template through which the results and performance are easier to be monitored (Anwar et al. 2001. p. 43). Forming a budget for marketing costs gives the limitations for the actions done and everything needs to be done in the limits of the resources. Again, the goals must be considered: maintaining the current situation requires a lot lighter budget than objectives of increasing the advertising and sales by x percent. (J. R. Graham. 1998; Reese, S. 1996. p. 65)

In action programs there must be noted as well the overall quality and its sustainability, so quality has to be one fundamental determinant behind the action programs. (J. R. Graham. 1998) Action programs of the marketing plan can be called as well the implementation part. It determines how everything works out and through that it can be considered as the most unnerving part of the plan. (Torricco, B.I. 2001)

2.1.6 Planned profit-and-loss statement

There is also projected profit-and-loss statement in the marketing plan. Its role is to be a supportive budget elaborating forecasts on sales volumes and the average price of the product, including production, marketing and distribution costs predictions. Schedules and quantities for production, marketing and employment issues are based on this projected budget. (Kotler, P. 1997. p. 101) The current market situation helps in identifying the target customer group and through that the possible demand for the product or service. The profit-and-loss statement needs to be in line with objectives and strategies placed earlier and it has to be realized that an establishment of a new service concept for example increases the expenditures a lot more than an

ongoing marketing campaign of an already familiar product or service. (Anwar et al. 2001. p. 42)

2.1.7 Controls

Section discussing how the action plans are controlled and assessed is an important tool to keep on track whether the marketing plan is being applied in practice or not and eventually, is it useful for the company or not. In this section are presented the tools with which the company is about to measure and assess the results. Through well defined tools the regular monitoring is made possible which for ones part gives indications whether the plan is up-to-date and whether there is need for some correcting actions in some fields. (Quagliaroli, J. 1985. p. 22-23) In addition to the monitoring phase in the end of the action periods, controlling can be carried out as well in the middle of the marketing actions done (J. R. Graham. 1998). Furthermore, B.I. Torrico (2001) suggests that the marketing plan along with the product/service would be beneficial to be inspected by an external party from time to time. This may highlight some unnoted aspects and gives straight feedback of issues to be covered or fixed.

2.1.8 Plan for the unexpected accidents

Departed from Kotler's structure of a marketing plan, Quagliaroli (1985. s.23) suggests in his study that in a marketing plan there should be also some negotiation for the unexpected accidents just in case the actual plan is no longer feasible for one reason or another. He emphasizes the importance of alternative strategies made for unexpected incidents: in case of sudden occurrences, it is good to be prepared by answering questions of the possible outcomes and effects to the business; also what to do in these kinds of situations is advisable to be clarified. Another sudden incident may be an unexpected success. In this case it is recommended to have a ready plan through which it is possible to utilize the success as long as possible and act accordingly to the resources. Although it is relatively difficult to make plans for such incidents, it is however vital to have at least considered the issues mentioned to be better prepared for the possible outcomes of the future. (Quagliaroli, J. 1985. s.23)

3 CASE RESEARCH

In the case research, there was utilized the triangulation method. Triangulation means that for example different theories, materials and methods are used in the same research. (Eskola, J. & Suoranta, J. 2000. p. 68) In this research two different methods were used to gain knowledge concerning Russian tourists' traveling habits and possible demand towards taxi services in Lappeenranta area. These methods were qualitative and quantitative studies.

The research was carried out exploratively. There were no assumptions made concerning possible results due to the lack of experience and earlier research about the subject. Also there was no need to try to find out possible causalities. Some work hypotheses were made during the research especially based on the qualitative study which was made first.

In the qualitative study altogether six company representatives were interviewed briefly by phone. The questions included some general aspects of the traveling habits of the Russians; such as most common staying time in Finland, the most popular times of the visits and the main transportation method. Also the viewpoints to the demand of Russian-language taxi service and whether the Russians already use taxi services in Lappeenranta area were asked of the interviewees. The interviewed companies were chosen based on their possible knowledge concerning Russian tourists and their needs for taxi services in Lappeenranta area. These companies were the following: Sokos hotel Lappee, Scandic Patria, Taksi-Saimaa, tourist info Go-Saimaa, The Border Guard of Southeast Finland and HH-Kuriiri Oy. The hotels were thought to have very concrete assumptions of how much their Russian customers need taxi services, which refers as well to the local taxi service provider Taksi-Saimaa and the courier company HH-Kuriiri Oy. The Border Guard of Southeast Finland and the tourist info were chosen by their general knowledge of travel behavior of the Russians. All interviewees turned out to be good choices and the answers they gave were fruitful and large enough.

The quantitative study was carried out in the form of survey with a question sheet that can be seen in the appendix in attachment 1. The question sheet was translated into Russian by a native to aid the interviewees in understanding the questions as well as possible. The Russian-language also made it easier to collect volunteer interviewees. The questions were structured and the answer options pointed out, in some questions there was also possibility to answer several options. The border crossing places of Nuijamaa and Vainikkala were chosen to be the places to carry out the survey. The day, Friday, was chosen by the assumption that on that day there would be more Russians coming to Lappeenranta and due to that the making of the survey would be more effortless and less time-consuming. In Nuijamaa some help was got from a Russian speaking border officer who assisted in the surveying by explaining the interviewees the basic idea of the study and answered whether they had any questions concerning the survey. The respondents were chosen randomly as they came through the passport checking making however sure that not all interviewees were for example men or using automobile as transport method to collect as much different answerers as possible.

3.1 Results of the qualitative study

Six companies were interviewed by phone and they were asked some same questions but some questions differed from others. Question concerning the Russian customers' staying time in Finland and the Lappeenranta area collected quite similar answers from all the participants. The most common staying period was one to three days. It turned out that some Russian use Lappeenranta as a bypass city because of which the staying time is not that long. Also many Russians come to Lappeenranta in shopping and free-time purposes which do not require that long staying time. All respondents also were unanimous of the travelling method of Russians: they saw that nearly 99 percent of the visitors used their own car as a transport method to enter Finland. Another popular transportation mode is bus but its role is not that significant.

The most popular time for Russians to visit Finland and the Lappeenranta area is definitely during winter and national holidays, for example the international women's day brings masses of Russian tourists to Lappeenranta. Another good example is the Russian Christmas during Epiphany when all the hotels in Lappeenranta are nearly

full booked of Russian visitors. On weekly basis the weekends are definitely more likely time for Russians to visit Lappeenranta.

When asked about the Russians inquiries towards taxi services in Lappeenranta, the answers were very similar: little to none inquiries were made. Whether some Russian tourists had ordered a taxi ride, the most common route where the taxi ride was offered was between a hotel and train station or border crossing area. Also the firms offering taxi services in the Lappeenranta area mentioned that very few Russian customers use their services. Even a courier firm offering person transport till Saint Petersburg and Moscow with a bypassing permission in the border crossing lines, has very few Russian customers. Similar to this were the answers to the question whether the company representatives saw chances in the new taxi service targeted to the Russian customers. Many could not see any greater demand for such service due to the vast use of own cars during Lappeenranta visits. Only the visitors using train as the main transport mode could find the service very useful. However, the Russian-language taxi service was generally seen as a good and fresh idea.

3.2 Results of the quantitative study

In the quantitative study altogether 43 responds were collected. The percentage shares of the answers and the question sheet can be seen in the appendixes number 1 and two. Half of the respondents were male and half female. The most common age was between 25 and 35 with 42 percent share, the next biggest age group being 40 to 55 years old persons with 33 percent share.

The professions worth mentioning are the persons in leading position with nearly 30 percent share and the entrepreneurs with 19 percent. Senior staff members and employees represented both with 14 percent share and lower employees with 12 percent share.

On this basis we can say that both males and females visit Finland and Lappeenranta, there is no difference between genders in this case. Many visitors are also rather young, between 25 and 35, and the most common Russian visitor is aged between 25 and 55, the emphasis on the younger persons. Many are also financially stable as

the most common status in work was a leading position or an entrepreneur. However, it can be noticed that traveling to Finland is not just the privilege of the wealthiest as there are also employees and lower officials taking a visit.

For none of the respondents was the survey date the first time in Finland. Many respondents or over fifty percent answered that they visit Finland/Lappeenranta four times per year or more and the duration of the trip is typically under three days. The purpose of the trip is most commonly shopping and leisure time. Based on this information it can be said that Russians do visit Lappeenranta area quite often in order to do shopping and spend leisure time, and Finland is a popular destination to weekend or holiday trips.

The most popular transportation methods are definitely own automobile and bus, also train plays a minor role. The majority of the respondents do not use taxi in Finland: nearly 80 percent answered this way. However, there is still 20 percent who do use taxi already and if having a chance to use Russian-language taxi service targeted especially to Russians, over 55 percent of the respondents would find it useful. Based on these answers Russians seem to value the ability to speak Russian which is an important factor for the case company.

When asked about the possible routes where the respondents would find the taxi service useful, all the answer options got support. The most popular routes were sightseeing tours (28%) and possibility to drive till Vyborg or St. Petersburg (26%). Also doing the shopping was preferred with 23% of the answers. Taxi drive between train and hotel collected 14 percent of the answers and so did border crossing as well.

The respondents found tourism brochures (51%) and wireless Internet (37%) as very useful extra services provided in a taxi car. Possibility to cross border by taxi was not that popular, only 17% found it functional. Other helpful service would also be data about local places.

If the respondents had a possibility to use this kind of service 53 percent of the res-

pondents would shift in using this service instead of their own car. There was also nearly thirty percent who answered no to this question.

Best advertising method in the respondents' opinion was definitely Internet with 67 percent of the answers. Other sources, newspaper advertisements and hotels, were the second popular both with 23 percent share. There can be seen that recommendations of friends have also a little role with 17 percent of all answers.

The most effortless way to order a taxi was by phone with 56 percent on the respondents' opinion. E-mail was popular as well with 35 percent but text message (14%) and an Internet form (9%) did not collect that many answers.

One significant factor in the answers can be the day when the survey was done. If the survey was done on a weekday, e.g. Tuesday, the amount of work tourists maybe would have been larger. Also not that many responds were able to gather from train travelers which emphasized the role of automobile and bus travelers. However, based on the observations made in the border crossing station, it can be said that definitely automobile is the most significant transportation method when looking at the queues in the Nuijamaa border and when comparing them into the number of Russians leaving train in Vainikkala. In addition, some error caused the possibility to cross multiple answers in the questions, the purpose of the trip being an example of this. The answers and their percentages shares in this kind of questions may be distorted because of this. Some also answered only few questions, for example if not seeing any use for taxi services in Lappeenranta the respondents left the questions concerning the service without answer. Also a little error was made when forming the age questions: between options of 25-35 years and 40-55 years there is a five-year gap but hopefully the effect of this error is not in a significant role in the survey and general image over the matter is still possible to reach.

4 MARKETING PLAN FOR THE CASE COMPANY

This section introduces the proposal of the marketing plan for the case company. As being the first marketing plan concerning the new taxi service, this plan covers the included issues quite thoroughly. This is because the new concept requires as precise information of the market as possible especially in the establishment phase for the firm being able to forecast and design the near future as well as the possible occasions after a year et cetera. After this it is recommended to develop a plainer version of the plan due to its simplicity and ease of use particularly in the case of an SME-firm. Brief plan is probably more effective and easier to update regularly and due to these aspects the marketing plan is simple to clarify for the whole company and employees, not just to the owner. (Quagliaroli, J. 1985. p.8)

4.1 Assessment of the current market situation

Currently the case company Taksipalvelu MPS Oy employs three persons including the owner of the company. The company has one vehicle operating in Southern Finland in capital city region. The company was founded in 2005 and turnover per year is about 100 000 Euros. At present state the company offers ordinary taxi services on a call center basis including customers' running errands and call up services. (Sinkko, P. 2011)

Taksipalvelu MPS Oy is establishing a new service model. The planned service concept will be offered in region of the city Lappeenranta with possibility to service customers on a relatively wide range, including call up services behind the Russian border. The service is operated by 2 drivers working in shifts, their salary consisting totally of commission fees at first. The attributes of the service are the drivers' guaranteed Russian-language skills, possibility to border crossings between Finland and Russia and other additional services, such as access to internet, travel related leaflets and maps, interactive advertisements et cetera. The additional features are added based on the needs and interests of the customers. According to the case survey it appears that especially tourism information and brochures would be useful in addition to the WLAN –possibility so those would be the extra services Taksipalvelu MPS

Oy should especially consider investing in, in order to take the customers' interests into account. (Sinkko, P. 2011)

The vehicle with which the drivers operate in Lappeenranta area is a Volkswagen Passat Variant and it has four customer seats (Sinkko, P. 2011). According to the survey made the Russians could have demand for a taxi service that would carry them from Lappeenranta until Vyborg or St. Petersburg. Also shopping and sightseeing tours were found useful. As a matter of fact, the most popular reason to visit Lappeenranta was to do shopping and spend leisure time. Referring to these answers it could be stated that expanding the taxi service with a bigger car or a minibus would be good to take into consideration. For the convenience of the service it is more comfortable the less people are chauffeured especially when thinking possible shopping and through that the amount of shopping bags. Also during longer trips for example to St. Petersburg, comfort is a crucial factor for the passengers and it affects the perceived quality of the service as well.

The target customer group are the Russian tourists visiting Lappeenranta region. (Sinkko, P. 2011) Observing the survey results the common customer seems to be aged between 25 and 55 and has rather good economical situation according to the profession. The ordinary customer visits Finland and Lappeenranta rather often, over 4 times a year and the purpose of the trip differs from leisure and shopping to work. The trips of this customer are also relatively short, between 1 and 3 days. Currently the situation within the target customer group is that the emphasis in transportation used when arriving from Russia to Finland and Lappeenranta relies heavily on own automobiles of the Russians in addition to the bus travelers. There are some train travelers as well but their share is not that high. When arriving to Vainikkala by train the transportation possibilities from the station to Lappeenranta are rather on their infancy and it seems that the link between Vainikkala and Lappeenranta has not been taken into serious consideration when thinking transportation as a business. A certain taxi takes care of the link but the transportation possibilities could be better and more advertised, and here is one niche for Taksipalvelu MPS Oy to consider. According to the survey made, there could be interest among the automobile users to switch into using instead Russian-language taxi services with extra features, if having a possibility to that.

Possible competitors for Taksipalvelu MPS Oy are Taksi-Saimaa Oy, which is the main taxi operator in the region of Lake Saimaa and Lappeenranta, and HH Kuriiri Oy, which does courier activity between Moscow, Saint Petersburg and Lappeenranta for passengers and mail. (Sinkko, P. 2011) Taksi-Saimaa Oy is a dispatch operator offering ordinary call up services for everyone (Taksi-Saimaa, 2011). HH Kuriiri Oy instead is focused only on the border crossing traffic (HH-Kuriiri, 2011). They both are known due to their long experience on the field and have gained a faithful customer group. The service concept of the case company has attributes from both of the competitors but has however, distinguished business idea. Due to that especially HH Kuriiri can be seen also as a partner, both supporting each other's businesses. According to the research HH Kuriiri is rather pricey for a Russian to use their service as transport method between Lappeenranta and Vyborg or St. Petersburg. Also the services of Taksi-Saimaa can be regarded as rather expensive as the start tariff is between 5 to 8 Euros depending of the weekday, and the trip is charged by the driven kilometers. Based on the survey results it seems that a typical Russian tourist is rather wealthy so the higher prices are maybe not a problem. However, the services of these competitors do not include anything extra, such as Russian-language service or travelling brochures et cetera. When talking about the market shares of these two competitors, it can be stated that Taksi-Saimaa has quite a monopoly in the ordinary taxi services provided in the Lappeenranta area. HH Kuriiri instead has profiled its operations differently and its share of the public transport made across the border is hard to estimate.

It seems that the amount of Russian tourists in Finland and Lappeenranta is growing: between the years 2009 and 2010 the border crossings increased with 300 000 crossings (Rajavartiolaitos, rajanylitysliikenne). Also the income level of Russian citizens is increasing all the time, which means that probably more and more Russians have a chance to come to Finland to spend holidays and to do shopping.

4.2 SWOT Analysis

The SWOT Analysis concentrates on the inner aspects of Taksipalvelu MPS Oy, in other words on strengths and weaknesses, but also discusses the outer opportunities

and threats as well. These all help to determine the situation of Taksipalvelu MPS Oy in the market but also gives insights of what the company is able to do with the given resources and on the other hand what issues are not possible.

4.2.1 Strengths

As strengths of the case company can be seen the founder's experiences from the branch and taxi services in general. Mr. Sinkko has also been dealing with international partners and co-operators in his other work, including Russians, so the interaction between the target customer segment is not a problem. The financial issues of the case company are also well balanced and the possible fluctuations in the taxi business in Lappeenranta do not destabilize the company. Also the possible accidents with the vehicle deposited to Lappeenranta are not a risk in the company's balance sheet. (Sinkko, P. 2011)

The owner of the case company, Petri Sinkko has a strong trust to the success of the new service concept. This can be regarded as strength because trust and enthusiasm and a bunch of new ideas help to develop the service further. Also the employees have very positive feelings towards the business and this mood has direct implications to the quality of the service and to the contentment of the customers whether the service providers are content and enthusiastic with their work. (Sinkko, P. 2011)

In Russia basically every car and vehicle can serve as a taxi so the new high-end taxi service can be regarded positively in the eyes of Russians. Furthermore, this new service of Taksipalvelu MPS Oy is unique and through that interesting with inspiration of giving it a try. Because of the exclusivity of the service it profiles well among the competitors and due to that gets more easily the needed attention in the media. Russians also appreciate Finns for their loyalty and quality of their services, and the Russian-language is definitely an asset as the customers are able to communicate on their own language and they are being understood. The possibility for Russians to communicate with their mother tongue may also be confidence-inspiring as they understand totally what the service provider says and through this the uncomfortable misunderstandings can be avoided. In addition, the Russian tourists will not feel being cheated and will probably co-operate more willingly in possible conflict situations.

Some Russians may also have felt of being treated or serviced badly when running errands in Finland so the Russian-language erases this problem as well as the complete understanding between the customer and the service provider is ensured. (Sinkko, P. 2011)

4.2.2 Weaknesses

One weakness for the company is that Mr. Sinkko, the owner of the company does not speak Russian himself. This makes the communication a little more difficult with the drivers and customers, although the drivers are both English-speaking and Sinkko himself is not involved directly with the customers in Lappeenranta. (Sinkko, P. 2011)

The size of the taxi vehicle and the fact that there is only one vehicle operating may also be called a weakness. Especially when thinking that according to the results of the survey there would be interest towards transportation between Lappeenranta and St. Petersburg for example and as this is rather long trip there is no capacity to serve other customers during it. In other words, in case of possible high demand the supply of the service does not necessarily cover the demand. The question is whether the let-down customers feel to have received bad service or do they not. Furthermore, if the customers want to do some sightseeing or a shopping round, the car used may be too small in case there are more than two people to service.

4.2.3 Opportunities

When talking about opportunities, the most obvious one is definitely the growing amount of Russian customers. The owner of the case company Petri Sinkko says that when the visa processes between Finland and Russia become easier or the border crossing even visa-free, it can be assumed that the large amount of Russian visitors in Lappeenranta area becomes even larger. Now it is believed that the Russian travelers coming to Finland are rather wealthy so the eased visa process could attract more people even from middle class groups but of course the upper class and the Russians living near the border still remain as main customer group coming to Finland. In addition, according to the survey made many Russian tourists visit Lappeenranta/Finland four times a year or more and in this lies an opportunity to form a

group of regular customers whether the taxi service has once found to be effortless and convenient way of transportation. (Sinkko, P. 2011)

The results of the quantitative study reveal vast opportunities on the demand side of the Russians. Over half of the respondents would find the Russian-language taxi service useful and if the service was flavored with few extra services, such as WLAN connection, half of the respondents would switch into using it instead of their own car when traveling into Lappeenranta area. Furthermore, the respondents' preferences towards different routes in which the taxi service would be provided creates opportunities to differentiation. For example, in case of large popularity there is an opportunity to create a totally different offering ensemble based on the Russians needs that provides e.g. transportation between Lappeenranta and Vyborg/St. Petersburg but also possibilities to shopping or sightseeing tours not forgetting the ordinary chauffeuring from hotel to the train station and vice versa.

The Russians are looking for quality, services and new experiences when coming to Finland. Sinkko says that this can be seen as an opportunity because the taxi service can be set as an experience as well. (Sinkko, P. 2011)

As an opportunity can be seen, as well, the similarity of the website address of the new service, www.taximoment.com, with the already operating taxi website in Russia, www.taximoment.ru. The taxi company operating with this address in Russia is regarded as well as "legal" and trustful service among the Russians, and through this the positives images can be linked to the new established service as well. Also the possible co-operation with the Russian taxi company can be seen as an opportunity that could be highly considered. (Sinkko, P. 2011)

4.2.4 Threats

The possible seasonal fluctuations in the visitor flow to Lappeenranta can be seen as threat to the business of case company. According to the case research the most popular times to visit Finland and Lappeenranta are winter and national holidays, for example Easter or International Women's Day. Weekends were also more popular than weekdays for a visit. The drivers do not get paid enough during the low season and conversely during the high season they are being overbooked and may suffer

from stress and overtime work. This scenario would have its affection to the motivation and job satisfaction of the employees. Getting regular customers could be difficult due to the seasonal changes as well. (Sinkko, P. 2011)

The main purpose of the Russians' travel to Lappeenranta, shopping and leisure time, can be seen as a threat as well. Shopping relates to the popularity and convenience of using own car as a transport method. Whether it is not possible to use the taxi service as conveniently to do the shopping and sightseeing, large amount of Russians may not see it as useful for them. In addition, if the Russians do not adopt the service to use the word of it does not spread to other potential customers and the Russians continue using their own cars.

However, the excess demand can be seen as well as a threat to the case company. The company starts with one car and two drivers who will be working in shifts. Whether the demand exceeds the supply possibilities, it may be difficult to get new vehicle and trained drivers quickly. Also the limitations of the taxi branch give restrictions to the case, as the company is not able to increase the amount of operating cars as much as it wants to as there are limitations of how many cars can operate in each area. The company would have to look for other solutions, for example purchasing minibus vehicles which are not on included in the limitations rules, or instead, evaluating possible partnership with some of the competitors. Both options are not carried through on a quick basis so in case of excess demand the options have to be already clear and well planned, unless the company may be forced to sell "cannot do" for inquiries and through that losing promising customers and giving speed to the grapevine conversations. (Sinkko, P. 2011)

Other threats can be the currency fluctuations, decreases in the income levels of Russians or the improvement of the service level in Russia. All these may cause decline in the travelling statistics between Finland and Russia and through that affect in the Russians' demand of taxi services. Especially the improved service level in Russia may decrease the Russians' demand of goods and services from Finland, which could be one possible reason to the diminishing of the target customer group of the case company. (Sinkko, P. 2011)

Also the employees cause some kind of a threat. The drivers were chosen due to their Russian-language skills and they are former Russian citizens now living in Finland. The cultural differences between the drivers and the owner, Petri Sinkko may cause a problem whether the drivers are practicing subsidiary trade with the taxi vehicle, for example using the car to own purposes to deliver goods across the Russian-Finnish border. This may be a possible problem whether the employees are not getting enough income with working at the taxi service, especially if the service is not profitable for some reason. Also being on service is an issue that may cause problems whether the drivers found the overall working conditions frustrating. Dissatisfaction for one's part can affect the service quality and convenience of the service. (Sinkko, P. 2011)

Finally, the success of the marketing communication may be a threat in case it does not produce the desired results and meet the target customer group. The question of how well the Russians adopt the service into use is in addition a threat if they do not find it a convenient way of transport and do not recommend it to friends.

4.3 Goals

The main goal is to gain 50 000 Euros turnover during the first year of operation with the new service concept. The amount of customers should be five to seven customers per day by May, and ten to fifteen customers per day in autumn. (Sinkko, P. 2011)

As a secondary goal that highly supports the primary one, is to increase the awareness of the new service in order to attract customers. Advertising and other marketing communication tactics are crucial especially in the starting phase of the service in order to make the target customers aware of the possibility and to create even a little buzz over the new service, and through these raise the interest towards the service.

One general goal could be also to offer the best service. The quality and convenience of the service are crucial to the success of the service and due to that they need to be invested in.

4.4 Strategies

Generally, the most applicable strategy to Taksipalvelu MPS Oy is definitely differentiation strategy. The new service is certainly concentrated on one specific target market, the Russian travelers in Lappeenranta area, and through that the service has a competitive advantage in the taxi market in Lappeenranta. The specialized service may also have potential for segmentation strategy in gaining cost leadership by differentiated pricing but that is rather the matter of future as the overall demand in the market has to be first noticed in real life.

When applying the expanded marketing mix to the case of Taksipalvelu MPS Oy the first issues, or the basic four Ps, to be covered are product, price, place and promotion. Like earlier stated, the product or in this case the service, is a differentiated Russian-language taxi service for the Russian travelers in Lappeenranta area and the service is provided with additional features, for example tourism related brochures, according to the needs of the customers. The service is provided with the vehicle Volkswagen Passat Variant, and the car is designed of its appearance to differ from the ordinary taxis operated by for example Taksi-Saimaa Oy. The quality level is to be high in order to offer the best taxi service and in the same time creating the taxi ride as an experience itself. The brand issues are negotiated as the service gets started. Place where the service is provided depends on the customers' needs but the operating area is the Lappeenranta area and according to the needs it can be expanded beyond the Russian border to Vyborg or St. Petersburg. There are no middlemen in between the service provider and the customers in this service. Price is based on the kilometers and the maintenance costs of the operating vehicle, the purpose being to offer high-end service with Russian-language skills and added features, the price being according. In promotion the survey results are being utilized. The internet was found as the best way to search for information of this kind of a service so applying this, the web pages of the company are the most important communication and promotion channel. Internet and co-operation with the travel-related companies (hotels, tourist info Go-Saimaa) in Lappeenranta are beneficial to be utilized by co-operated advertising in each others' web pages, and the search engine Google is also being used. Furthermore, the service is good to be made clear to the Board Guard staff in Vainikkala railway station and putting advertisements in the sta-

tion is recommended. The second popular marketing communication channel was newspaper according to the survey so advertisements in local Russian newspapers in Vyborg and St. Petersburg are good to be highly considered. Furthermore, offside-road advertisements can be successful as well for example by the car queues on the Russian side of the border.

The three service related Ps: people, physical evidence and process need to be covered as well. The people in this taxi service are the personnel and the customers. The personnel consist of two persons, a man and a woman who both are tidy and decently dressed. Both speak Russian fluently and are highly motivated. Their salary and rewards are based on the amount of customers and on the success of the service. The customers are rather wealthy Russian travelers, either on a leisure or work trip. Other probable features were discussed in the chapter 1.1. Physical evidence covers the vehicle, Volkswagen Passat Variant, and the payment equipment. The overall process of the service is customized based on the customers' needs and wishes and the number of steps is most generally four. The steps contain the ordering of the service via the chosen method which is the first step. The second step is the order confirmation following with the actual service, the transportation from the wished starting place to the wished destination. The last step in the process is the payment which is done as the destination has been reached. The service can contain other steps, for example a stop in a particular place while the ride, but these are added according to the customers' preferences.

4.5 Plan of action

Guidelines for the starting taxi service of Taksipalvelu MPS Oy are the following. Advertising in different medias within the limits of resources is crucial already before the service actually starts and also after the establishment of it. The awareness is essential to be increased by discussing the service with different interest groups to ensure that as many people as possible knows about it and maybe recommends it forward. Also local newspapers in both sides of the border can be contacted in order to have an article of the new service into the papers. The know-how and the customer service skills need to be highlighted to the employee's right from the beginning and continuous learning and improvement are to be emphasized. In the beginning daily or at

least weekly negotiations concerning the so far success and the situation are as well crucial. Advertising and marketing communication are vital to be continued vigorously until certain awareness and customer amount is being covered. Furthermore, in case of possible excess demand the increase of the vehicles is to be severely considered in the limits of the overall regulation in the taxi branch in Finland. However, if the set goals in the amount of customers are not met in the target time, it is crucial to negotiate of the future and possible discontinuing of the service.

4.6 Monitoring

One way to control the conspicuousness of the service appreciation is by visitor counter on the service website. Also the inquiries made by phone daily give good impression of how well the customers have found the taxi service and how much increase there are in the amount of inquiries over time tells the company how well the marketing efforts have had effect on the target customer segment. (Sinkko, P. 2011) Furthermore, brief customer satisfaction inquiries are a good way to monitor the quality of the service and the performance of the employees.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Everything in a marketing plan can be seen as linked strongly together: everything affects everything. For example, if the market situation inspection is carried out loosely, the marketing strategies and action plans determined do not work the best way either. Furthermore, everything has to be linked together with each other in order to maintain the unity in the plan and avoid separated aspects that are not related to the others at all. Everything essential that has some effect into the other parts of the plan has to be covered.

An SME-company has to consider the effort of creating a marketing plan from different viewpoint: not all can be done in the same level than a multinational listed company does. Especially the goals set and strategies chosen are vital to be stated coherently and attainably when taking the situation of an SME-company compared to the market situation into consideration. Furthermore, the nature of services brings its own challenge to the marketing plan as well. Issues need to be looked from different viewpoint but also some aspects, such as the distribution channel may be irrelevant. However, the main points of the marketing plan: market situation, SWOT-analysis, strategies and controls are the same no matter of the company size or branch. The difference is more in the scope and contents of these main topics.

When talking about the study results, it seems that company representatives have different kind of vision concerning Russian visitors' possible demand towards taxi services than the Russians themselves. Many companies saw no need for a Russian-language taxi service as so few Russians have asked for one, even though the surveyed Russians could find one useful. Probably the company representatives base their inspections on the today's situation and due to that do not see any possible change in the traveling and transportation behavior. It seems that as the Russians do not have very good options to visit Lappeenranta area besides a car, they naturally have used very actively their own vehicles to cross the border and do for example shopping. If they would have other comfortable transportation possibilities, e.g. a customized taxi service or a combined train and taxi trip, they would maybe start using them instead. The situation brings doubts to mind over marketing commu-

nication and advertising made in Russia concerning the transportation methods to Finland. It is natural that the Russians could not have asked for other transportation methods if they have not known that there are other potential options to travel to Lappeenranta area instead of an own vehicle. As a conclusion perhaps more marketing communication should be aimed at the Russians in order to take them more into account as potential customers and to consider their great prospects as target market.

Differentiation of taxi services seems to have demand if considering the survey results. In Lappeenranta area the Russian visitors are very important to the economy and due to that they can be invested in with this kind of a new service. However, the target customer group needs to be quite significant that the service is profitable. Due to this the Russian travelers as target market are suitable for Taksipalvelu MPS Oy especially in the establishing phase. Finland is also a rather small country to take many possible target groups into account when talking about taxi services especially in case of the regulation. Nonetheless, the taxi service introduced could have potential in other cities as well, for example Helsinki being one of the cities that Russians could like to travel to, and it could have possible demand as well. The more common transportation method to Helsinki could be believed to be train apart from the Lappeenranta's situation. Furthermore, the service concept could be applied generally to all international visitors. Even though the public transportation is better in Helsinki than in Lappeenranta, Helsinki may lack a specific high-end service, and due to this the international travelers could value such concept.

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Do you use taxi services in Finland?

- a) Yes b) No

If you had a chance to use Russian-speaking taxi service targeted to Russians, would you find the service useful?

- a) Yes b) No

In which kind of routes you would find the taxi service useful? You can mark several options.

- a) Border crossing
- b) Till Vyborg/ St. Petersburg
- c) Between train and hotel
- d) Doing shopping
- e) Sightseeing

What kind of extra services you would find useful in a Russian-language taxi service? You can mark several options.

- a) Tourism brochures etc.
- b) WLAN
- c) Border crossing possibility
- d) Other: _____

If you had a chance to use this kind of taxi service, would you shift from using your own car to use this service?

- a) Kyllä b) Ei

Best advertising method for this kind of a service? You can mark several options.

- a) Newspaper ad b) Internet c) Recommendations of friends
- d) Hotels e) Other

Best way to order a taxi service?

- a) By phone b) Text message c) Via e-mail
- d) By internet form

Appendix 2: The results of the quantitative study

1. Gender	Male	Female
% -share	50%	50%

2. Age	0-25 years	25-35 years	40-55 years	55-70 years	70+ years
% -share	5%	42%	33%	19%	2%

3. Profession	% -share
Leading position	28%
Senior official	14%
Lower official	12%
Employee	14%
Entrepreneur	19%
Agriculture field	0%
Student	2%
Housewife/homemaker	2%
Unemployed	2%
Other; e.g. pensioner	7%

4. First time in Finland	Yes	No
% -share	0%	100%

5. How often the respondent visits Finland/Lappeenranta	% -share
Once a year	9 %
Couple of times a year	19%
3 to 4 times a year	16%
4 times or more per year	56%

6. Purpose of the trip	% -share
Shopping	67 %
Culture	19 %
Other leisure time	65 %

Work	7%
Family/relatives	5%

7. Duration of the trip	% -share
One day	40%
2 to 3 days	42%
4 to 5 days	5 %
6 days or more	7%

8. Transportation method	% -share
Automobile	51%
Bus	47%
Taxi	0%
Train	7%
Other	2%

9. Do you use taxi services in Finland?	% -share
Yes	19%
No	79%

10. If you had a chance to use Russian-speaking taxi service targeted to Russians, would you find the service useful?	% -share
Yes	56%
No	40%

11. In which kind of routes you would find the taxi service useful?	% -share
Border crossing	14%
Till Vyborg/St. Petersburg	26%
Between train and hotel	14%
Doing shopping	23%
Sightseeing tours	28%

12. What kind of extra services you would find useful?	% -share
Tourism brochures etc.	51%
WLAN	37%
Border crossing possibility	17%
Other	2%

13. If you had a chance to use this kind of taxi service, would you shift from using your own car to use this service?	% -share
Yes	53%
No	28%

14. Best advertising method	% -share
Newspaper ad	23%
Internet	67%
Recommendations of friends	17%
Hotels	23%
Other	0%

15. Best way to order a taxi	% -share
By phone	56%
Text message	14%
Via e-mail	35%
By Internet form	9%