Marketing management in the service industry: a service design approach

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Abstract

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This is a product-oriented thesis and its aim was to develop a tool that would help to improve marketing management practices in a company operating within the service industry. The case company in this thesis was One Bar & Restaurant which is a business operating in the city centre of Porvoo, Finland. The author chose to use service design as a development methodology.

The first part of the thesis presents a theoretical background regarding marketing in the service industry. The author reviewed general marketing principles such as defining target customer profile, value propositions, and mission statement. Characteristics of services and service-profit chains were also discussed, which led to identifying internal marketing as one of the most important aspects of marketing within the service industry. Internal marketing includes internal communication, human resource management, and employee motivation as factors important in developing a company's service culture.

The following chapter introduces service design as the development method used in the thesis. Service design is a human-oriented, collaborative, and interdisciplinary design method which aims to improve or create new services. The author created a service design model specifically for this thesis project by reviewing and comparing different models. It involved five project stages: Research, Define, Ideate, Develop, and Implement.

The thesis project implementation started by conducting interviews with the case company's employees which helped to identify the main marketing management challenges. The author concluded that it lacked strategic planning and business vision and created the service design process problem statement: what tool can help restaurant employees implement marketing tasks consistently and according to its vision and strategy?

The ideation and development process led to the creation of a marketing management planning template which is the final product of this thesis. The product aims to enable marketing management activities to be implemented more efficiently and consistently.

Keywords
Marketing management, service design, hospitality industry, services marketing

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1 Introduction

With the service industry dominating the global economy, the understanding of marketing practices shifted in the last few decades (Wirtz & Lovelock 2021, 7). With the service and hospitality industry getting more and more competitive, businesses have to keep up with the demand of providing the best value for possible customers. Understanding customer needs to build and communicate the value is more challenging in the service industry because of their features, such as intangibility or perishability. Because of that, service or hospitality businesses have to put a lot of effort into their marketing management. Good marketing planning can bring more success to the business, clarity and confidence to the employees, and more value to the customer. (Kotler & al. 2021, 30-34.)

This thesis aims to create a tool which would improve the marketing management practices in a service industry company. The author will use a case company during the thesis project to learn about such business challenges regarding marketing management. The case company of this thesis is One Bar & Restaurant, which is located in the city centre of Porvoo, Finland, and opened in December 2019. The author of the thesis has been an employee of the restaurant since its launch and is well familiar with the practices, challenges, and opportunities of the establishment.

Furtherly, this chapter will present objectives and scope, the case company, the need for the product, and the thesis project plan.

1.1 Case company and the need for the product

One Bar & Restaurant is a casual dining style restaurant which offers lunch during the workweek, à la carte menu in the evenings and at the weekends and serves a variety of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks and operates a garden-style terrace during the summer. The restaurant is neighboured by Old Town Pub, which is an Irish style pub located in the same building – both restaurant and the pub belong to the same company, so the restaurant occasionally serves food to the customers of the pub too.

The restaurant and the pub are occupying the first floor of the building, locally known as *Lamor Building*, and the floor level inspired the name of the restaurant – One. Lamor Corporation is an international waste management company which has its headquarters in the same building. The building also hosts CoSpace Porvoo on the second and third floors, a collaborative working facility. The basement floor has several meeting and conference rooms, as well as a sauna, which are primarily used by CoSpace customers,

however, the rooms can be turned into event venues, to which the restaurant can provide catering.

The restaurant closely collaborates with all the establishments in the building, especially the Old Town Pub, as it has its entrance from within the restaurant. This kind of cooperation enables unique service and promotion opportunities. Regarding promotion, the restaurant mainly uses social media channels and outside promotion, such as signs, boards and displays. Recently, the restaurant put up a new sign of the logo on the building and remodelled its entrance.

A while back, the restaurant had hired a marketing company which oversaw social media and digital marketing management, however, it worked with the restaurant only for half a year. Afterwards, the restaurant's social media channels naturally became less active and less consistent as there was no designated personnel to overlook these matters.

Lack of social media (marketing) management resulted in missed opportunities and a weaker digital presence in the local restaurant scene. This thesis project will aim to find a solution which could assist the restaurant with marketing management, eventually improving the quality and consistency of the content.

1.2 Objective, scope and expected outcomes

The objective of the thesis is to create a product that would improve the marketing management practices in the restaurant, enabling the employees to create effective marketing communication without an appointed marketing manager. Therefore, the thesis will not aim to create a certain marketing communication plan or a campaign, but rather design a tool that would allow the employee team to manage it themselves.

The result of the thesis project should be specific, clear, and understandable even for new hires. While the thesis will focus only on one case restaurant, the result could also serve as a good tool/example for other businesses which do not have a marketing manager, especially within the hospitality industry, where the employee turnover is high (Rehman & Mubashar 2017).

The development methodology used in this thesis will be service design, which is based on research and prototyping and aims to improve the experience of business, users, customers, or other stakeholders (Hormess, Lawrence, Schneider & Stickdorn 2018, 27).

One of the main principles of service design is constant collaboration and iteration while developing and testing a product or service.

The author chose to focus on the restaurant employees, including those who have social media channel managing experience, and those who do not. Ideally, the thesis outcome will improve the marketing knowledge and capabilities of more experienced staff and help the field beginners to become a part of the marketing management planning too.

1.3 Thesis project plan and structure

To achieve the relevant results, the author will have two main tasks: acquire knowledge about marketing management principles and implement the service design process. To accomplish the first task, the author will conduct a literature review on the topic; afterwards, the service design methodology will be reviewed and adapted to the case of the thesis. Once the process plan is established, the author will start conducting situation analysis, including employee interviews. Furtherly, the results will be analysed and used for problem definition.

Then, the development process will start – a product that can solve problems, as identified by the employees and situation analysis, will get designed. The author will regularly ask for feedback from the employees before the final product is delivered. Based on the outcome, the author might launch and observe the product for a set amount of time, to determine whether the thesis project was successful.

The structure of the thesis report will follow the established plan. The following chapter will include literature research on marketing management principles. Then, service design will be introduced and described as a product development method. The main chapter will describe the product development process in detail – from situation analysis to implementation. Lastly, the author will discuss the results of the thesis project and review their learning process.

2 Marketing management in the services and hospitality industry

In this chapter, the author will conduct a literature review of marketing management principles, with a focus on the hospitality industry. First, general strategic marketing principles will be reviewed, discussing the importance of defining a company's mission statement, identifying the target customers, and creating and communicating the value proposition. Then, the author will explore the concept of services and how they differ from products. The last part of the chapter will present the three types of marketing in services.

2.1 Strategic marketing principles

The strategic marketing plan is crafted by analysing the market and considering the company's opportunities within it. Based on that, the strategic planning identifies target groups and the company's value proposition (Kotler & Keller 2016, 44). Also, as each company aims to accomplish something, it must define the mission statement, which should be clear, focus on a limited number of goals, and be shared with everyone working in the company. A well-communicated mission statement can bring purpose, direction, and inspiration.

2.1.1 Defining the mission statement

Management consultant and educator Peter Drucker in his classic work *Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, and Practices* (1973, 49) explains the purpose of marketing by comparing it with selling: selling focuses on asking 'What do we want to sell?', while marketing asks, 'What does the customer want to buy?'. So, in comparison, sales are about what the product does, while marketing is about the satisfaction the customers search for, value, and need.

Moving onto the business mission, Drucker (1973, 56-69) proposes 5 questions every business must ask continuously: What is our business? Who is the customer? What is of value to the customer? What will our business be? What should our business be? While these questions sound simple, the right answers are not always obvious and easy to find. These questions might bring disagreements among the management members as every person might have a different opinion. Drucker furtherly suggests that to get the right answers to these questions, the business must look at itself from the point of view of the customer.

Modern thought leaders also emphasise the importance of mission statements and digging deep into the purpose of the business. One of the most popular thoughts in the

last decade has been ‘start with why’, popularised by author and speaker Simon Sinek. In his first book, published in 2009, Sinek proposes a Golden Circle model, which has the question ‘Why?’ right at its core, which is about the company’s mission or belief. The middle circle asks ‘How?’ and encourages business owners to name their point of difference. The outer circle asks ‘What?’ and it is for describing what kind of product or service the company offers. With these three questions answered, a modern business can create a strong mission statement.

Regarding the case company of the thesis, it became apparent that the lack of business vision and mission left the company with a lack of identity. The employees were confused about the style of the restaurant which impacts the consistency of the service and marketing communication.

From a marketing perspective, the business is defined by what the customer accomplishes by purchasing a product or service. The customer wants, needs, behaviour, and beliefs are a fact and not merely an opinion, which is why customer and market research is a crucial part of business management and its processes, especially marketing.

2.1.2 **Identifying target customers and market research**

When the company starts asking ‘Who is our customer?’, it begins the process of defining its target market(s). Usually, companies identify several most important market segments and craft a value proposition for each segment specifically. The market segmentation helps companies to understand the customer differences, usually within the scope of the four major variables – geographic, demographic, psychographic, and behavioural. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 117.)

In marketing, the demographic variables are the most used indicators for market segmentation as they are easy to determine and can tell a lot about a person’s needs and wants. For example, by knowing to which generation a person belongs, a marketer can know which movies, music bands, or other cultural elements have influenced them while growing up. This knowledge can be used by restaurant or hotel managers who can adjust the interior or choose background music based on the most common customer groups, as a result designing a better customer experience. Age, life-cycle stage, gender, income, and race are also important demographic variables. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 118-119.)

Geographic or demographic variables are crucial for digital marketing planning, but to truly understand the market, the business should conduct marketing research. While big companies have detailed systems and entire teams dedicated to research, smaller businesses can also conduct market research with low or no costs (Kotler, Bowen & Baloglu 2021, 142). Recording the number and type of customers at different times, directly talking to the customers, conducting experiments, and collaborating with local educational institutions are a few ways to gather valuable customer insight (Kotler & al. 2021, 172).

Market research should have four phases: identifying the problem, developing the research plan, implementing the plan, and presenting the findings (Kotler & al. 2021, 173-174). For example, the restaurant management identifies that the number of table reservations being received was relatively low. The management develops and implements a research plan, which aims to identify the customer touchpoints when making reservations. By discussing the topic with a few customers and benchmarking the competitors, the management realised that their process is too complicated. To book a table, the customers must send an email or give a call, however, the restaurant's contact information is only available on the website, prolonging the search process or even discouraging possible customers from trying. The marketing management starts providing this information more often in the communication mix and starts receiving more reservations soon after.

2.1.3 Creating and communicating the value

The main task of any business establishment is to bring value to the customer for a profit and one of the goals of marketing is to attract and keep profitable customers. It used to be thought that marketing comes in the middle of production and sales, but such a view is only true in economies with product shortages, where consumers do not take quality or details into account. In developed economies, the companies prioritise value delivery, as the markets have more complex perceptions and buying criteria. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 43, 83.)

To attract customers and build a loyal customer group, the businesses must have strong value propositions. The delivered value should be consistent, unique, and satisfactory – without delivering these results, the companies are risking losing their clients or not acquiring any (Kotler & Keller 2016, 80).

A study by Shulga & Busser (2020) aimed to analyse how customers accept different types of value propositions within the hospitality industry. The authors identified four value propositions that are summarised in Table 1. The suggested framework shows that hospitality businesses have several stages of the service life cycle, with each stage offering customers different value propositions.

Table 1. Value Propositions. Adapted from Shulga & Busser (2019).

Value proposition	**Stage of consumption experience**	**Definition**
Innovation	Pre-consumption	Offer to participate in the firm's process of developing a new product or service
Marketing	Pre-consumption	Offer to increase perceived value transferred from provider to customer
Production	Core-consumption	Offer to be directly involved in the creation of the service
Recovery	Post-consumption	Offer to actively participate in the realisation of problem-solving or provide feedback

Furtherly, the authors present the Theory of Acceptance, which includes cognitive, behavioural, normative, and emotional processes. For example, cognitive acceptance is related to trust – the customer trusts the provider to deliver the service promised by the value proposition. Behavioural acceptance means that the customer has the intention to act based on the degree of approval of the suggested proposition. Normative acceptance is about approving a proposition based on the customer's environment and system of norms. The fourth – emotional acceptance – is about the customer's positive reaction to a value proposition.

The results of the study showed that consumer levels of acceptance are varying across different value proposition types. The production had the highest level of acceptance, with recovery being second to follow; these value propositions are most strongly related to direct customer benefits. The most important types of acceptance showed to be cognitive and emotional.

Shulga's and Busser's study gives good insight to hospitality business managers on what to focus on regarding their value propositions. They should prioritise building trustworthy and emotionally positive experiences during the production and recovery stages, related to excellent customer service and problem-solving. The cognitive and emotional acceptance importance means that the customers must believe that the service is trustworthy, will provide them with a positive experience and be purposeful.

Another study by Almquist, Senior & Bloch (2016) has identified specific elements of value in services. They put all the elements into four categories: functional, emotional, life-changing, and social impact, and they can be applied to various industries. While the importance of certain elements differs across industries, quality is identified as the most substantial feature of any service. Some other highly important elements in food- and beverage-related business are sensory appeal, variety, design or aesthetics, and therapeutic value. The authors claim that elements of value work the best when they are seen as an opportunity for growth and prioritised within management. The key areas where the value should be improved are new-product development, pricing, and customer segmentation. Regarding the organisational dimension, the authors recommend assigning a person who would explicitly work with value management. (Almquist & al. 2016.)

These findings suggest, that while marketing might not be the most important value creator in the restaurant, it sets certain expectations for customer service and possible problem handling. The case company of the thesis should focus on delivering consistent service and utilising marketing to set the right expectations.

2.2 Defining and managing services

The three principles discussed in the previous subchapter were about the basics a company should consider when planning its marketing strategy. In the following part, the author will review the features of services and the service-profit chain.

2.2.1 Characteristics of services

Services are found in many different sectors, such as governments (hospitals, schools, police), retail (cashiers, salespeople), private non-profit (museums, charities), and business (banks, hotels, airlines). A definition by Kotler & Keller (2016, 184) describes services as an act of an offer that is intangible and does not provide the customer with ownership of anything.

Services have four characteristics distinguishing them from products:

- Intangibility: services cannot be seen or felt before purchase;
- Inseparability: services cannot be separated from providers;
- Variability: service quality depends on who provides them;
- Perishability: services cannot be stored and used later.

These qualities highly influence the way services are marketed. Regarding intangibility, the customers usually try to learn as much as possible about the service from various sources, therefore the businesses must devote a significant amount of time to managing

the tangible evidence (Kotler & al. 2021, 59). Such evidence includes the promotional materials, physical environment design, and even the employees. Tangible evidence paints an organisation's image, which then helps the customers to evaluate the service and make it more evident to them.

Inseparability means that the service is produced and used up at the same time. As a special feature of services, it results in provider-customer interaction. This feature indicates the importance of high-quality customer service, especially in the hospitality industry. For example, the hotel might have excellent facilities, first-rate rooms, and great breakfast food, however, negligent customer service might leave the customers with a poor overall experience.

Regarding variability, the most important jobs are quality control and consistency assurance. In the hospitality business, the service can vary based on several factors, such as changing demand, communication with the customer, or the provider's skill. Kotler & al. (2021, 60-61) provides three suggestions for hospitality business on how to decrease variability in their services: improving their hiring and training procedures; standardising the service process, and monitoring customer satisfaction.

Perishability of the services puts importance on demand and supply management. As Kotler & Keller (2016, 186) explains:

> *<…> the right services must be available to the right customers at the right places at the right times and right prices to maximise profitability.*

The hospitality businesses can adapt better reservation systems, implement better practices during peak demand times, and promote non-peak demand times with special and unique offers.

2.2.2 **The service-profit chain**

The second half of the twentieth century saw the rise of the service economy (Witt & Gross 2020), meaning that new frameworks in businesses started emerging. One of the most important concepts in service business management is the service-profit chain (Figure 1), which links internal service quality to profitability. The concept was proposed by Heskett, Jones, Loveman, Sasser and Schlesinger back in 1994 in a Harvard Business Review (HBR) article. It was again republished in 2008 as an HBR classic and has stayed relevant to this day.

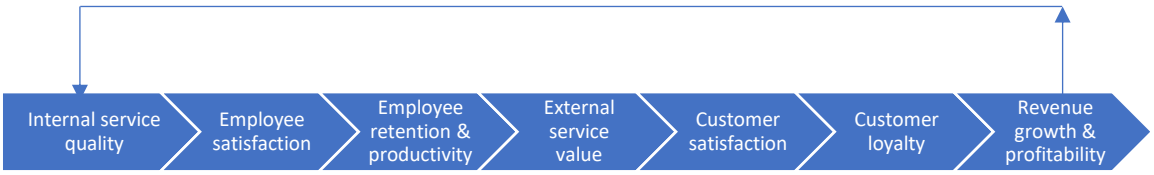

Figure 1. The links in the service-profit chain. Adapted from Heskett & al. 1994.

In short, the service-profit chain framework is about increasing the company's profitability and revenue by strengthening all the links:

- Customer loyalty driving revenue growth and profitability: loyal customers ensure revenue flow and bring new possible customers through positive word-of-mouth.
- Customer satisfaction driving loyalty: if a customer receives a satisfying service that meets their needs, they are more likely to use it again.
- Service value-driving customer satisfaction: value for customers means the results received concerning total spent costs, and the importance of strong value propositions.
- Employee retention and productivity driving service value: by retaining experienced and trained employees and devoting time to developing productive practices, the company can provide better service value to the customers.
- Employee satisfaction driving retention: the more satisfied the employees are, the less likely they are to leave the company.
- Internal service quality driving employee satisfaction: the empowerment of the employees by providing them with skills and authority to achieve results for the customers, also the attitudes employees have towards the company and each other.

The service-profit chain shows that employees play a significant role in the customer satisfaction value creation process. In return, customer satisfaction influences employee satisfaction which makes the process self-sufficient (Heskett & al. 1994; Kotler & al. 2021, 63).

The service-profit chain principles with their focus on employee and customer satisfaction are directly related to external, internal, and interactive marketing planning in service industries. These concepts will be reviewed in the next sub-chapter.

2.3 Marketing in services and hospitality

In services, there are different levels of marketing, which depend on relationships between the company, employees, and customers. The three types of service marketing are external marketing, internal marketing, and interactive marketing (Kotler & Keller 2016, 188). The relationship between the three types is visualised in Figure 2.

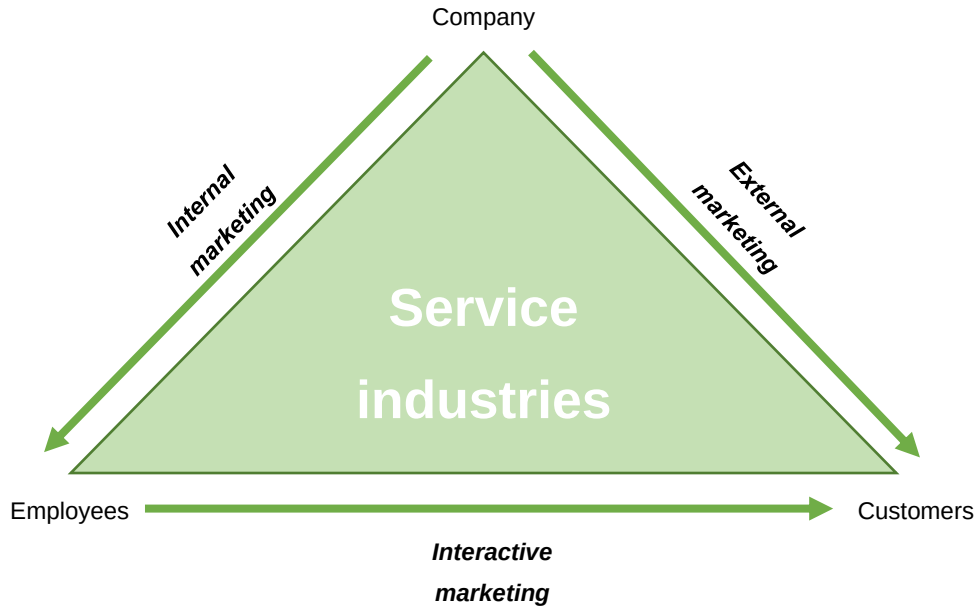

Figure 2. Three types of services marketing. Adapted from Kotler & Keller (2016).

External marketing is the company preparing and promoting the service to its customers. Internal marketing is the company's effort put into the training of employees and providing knowledge and tools to serve the customer well. Interactive marketing is related to the employees' skills in customer service. (Kotler & Keller, 2016, 188.)

The two types of marketing that are related to employees – internal and interactive – are crucial to any service company's performance. Kotler & al. (2021, 296) observes, that people usually associate the concept of marketing with external marketing efforts aimed at the market; however, a hospitality business' marketing efforts should be first focused internally on its employees.

In the hospitality industry, employees are usually a part of the provided product. Therefore, employees perform more marketing functions than the designated marketing departments in the hospitality business compared to product-focused ones. Also, it has been found that internal marketing efforts can highly influence a company's financial performance. (Kotler & al. 2021, 295.)

2.4 Internal marketing activities

Internal marketing is a concept with many definitions. Park & Tran (2018) conducted an extensive review of different conceptualisations; some definitions describe it as an internal communication strategy, process of education and motivation regarding the achievement of common organisational goals, management approach of integrating human resources

(HR) and marketing to improve company's service orientation, and even as a philosophy of HR where jobs are developed as products.

An empirical study by Park & Tran (2018) revealed that internal marketing motivates employees to participate in customer-oriented behaviours, which influences behavioural and results in performance. Relationship continuity, purchase intention, and positive word-of-mouth was named as customer actions significantly connected to employee behaviours.

Another review by Matanda & Ndubisi (2013) reviews the connection between internal marketing and brand orientation. Branding within the internal marketing context is related to communicating the company's values and goals to its employees so that they could communicate them forward to the customers. Additionally, Matanda & Ndubisi (2013) found that internal branding practices can assist in aligning the goals and values of the company and its employees which leads to higher employee motivation and commitment to the company and the role within it.

Internal marketing development within a business requires certain practices. Kotler & al. (2021, 298) name three steps: establishing service culture, using a marketing approach to HR management, and disseminating marketing information to the employees.

First, service culture is a system that establishes quality customer service as the main aim of the business. Strong service culture has well-defined values and functions, the employees are well-trained and knowledgeable. In this system, the customer-contact employees must be empowered by receiving authority to make decisions to solve the problems of the customers. In short, the customer is at the top of the service-oriented organisational structure. (Kotler & al. 2021, 298-301.)

Secondly, human resource management within the organisation should adopt some of the marketing principles when hiring and retaining their employees, for example, hiring managers should research the needs and values of possible and current employees, just like doing market research. It is also important to note, that in the service industry people should be hired based on their attitude rather than skills, as skills can and should be acquired during training. The right attitude of the employee is a great asset to teamwork, possible problem ownership, and the quality of the service. (Kotler & al. 2021, 302-304.)

Training is another important aspect of HR management and internal marketing. Initial training should include welcoming into the company, and organising an orientation about

the company's history, products, and services – it can include sampling the products or experiencing the services. Continuous training of the employees leads to a better-quality service, as well as a smaller employee turnover. If employees are not able to provide good service because of a lack of skills or knowledge, they will feel insecure about their role and have a higher chance of quitting. (Kotler & al. 2021, 306-308.)

Lastly, marketing information dissemination relies heavily on effective communication. Employees of the entire organisation should be aware of special offers or other marketing initiatives happening in the company. Employees should first hear about changes or plans from within the organisation as it gives a sense of inclusivity. An effective communication method is to hold briefings (daily or weekly, depending on the scale), where the staff is informed about special offers, marketing plans, and events, and can get their questions answered about matters they are not familiar with. Good communication within an organisation fosters service culture and employee empowerment. (Kotler & al. 2021, 311-313.)

As Matanda & Ndubisi (2013) summarises, internal marketing can ensure that the employees feel involved, valued, and able to deliver the value promised by the company to its customers. While external marketing can bring customers, internal marketing is responsible for bringing them back. It leads to positive customer retention and repeat purchases, helping businesses to achieve their growth goals.

The author's experience with the case company and the employee interviews (discussed more in Chapter 4) suggest that there is a need for the development of internal marketing practices. People have different opinions and understandings of the restaurant's style and direction, meaning that the business vision has not been effectively communicated. Without a common understanding, the restaurant struggles with its identity, and consistency, which makes it hard to foster a good service culture. The outcomes of this thesis project will hopefully let the restaurant find a direction, its core vision and mission.

3 Service design as a development method

This chapter will review the development method used for the thesis project – the service design. The author will discuss the method's definition and core principles, examine some different approaches to the process and review the main tools used in certain stages of the process. Then, the relevance of the method for this thesis project will be explained, such as service design's connection to marketing and the author's own experience with the method. The author will also present the framework of this thesis.

3.1 Service design definition and principles

As mentioned earlier, the shift to the service-focused economy meant that businesses had to adopt new frameworks. This instilled the need for new development methodologies that would focus on the overall experience of delivered services. With the field evolving, service design naturally emerged as a development method. Service design highly focuses on researching the customer, market, and the organisation itself, creating ideas, crafting solutions, and implementing them. (Moritz 2005, 39.)

Service design is still a young field; however, the development of the concept has been rapid. Many experts are not able to agree on a common description, with some suggesting that the service design differs based on the situation and views. Stickdorn & al. (2018, 21-22) list five different views: mindset, process, toolset, cross-disciplinary language, and management approach.

A service design mindset is about putting users or customers first by trusting their opinions and not their own bias. The process is guided by iteration – recurring loops of constant development. Service design can also be seen as a toolset – when designing, certain tools are a must to use to translate various data into something meaningful. Translating the findings and ideas into a common language is important as the method is also cross-disciplinary; experts from many different fields work as a team to develop better service experiences. Lastly, service design can be viewed as a management approach, for continuous improvement in organisational systems and customer relations. (Stickdorn & al. 2018, 21-22.)

Service design can be furtherly described through six principles, offered by Stickdorn & al. (2018, 27):

1. Human-centred: the process involves all the people who are involved with the service;
2. Collaborative: people with various backgrounds and expertise are working together in the design process;
3. Iterative: the process is experimental, flexible, and adaptive to challenges;
4. Sequential: the design process should be visualised and organised as a progression of interdependent actions;
5. Real: all actions should be researched and implemented in real environments;
6. Holistic: the process should consider the whole design environment, including the entire service and the business and all stakeholders.

Summarising various views and principles, service design can be described as a human-oriented, collaborative, and interdisciplinary design method, aiming to improve or create new service experiences. The method involves all stakeholders and activities touched by the services and helps businesses see the big picture and understand their customers and own processes better. In the next section, the author will review some of the most popular service process models.

3.2 Service design process models

In the last couple of decades, service design became a popular framework used for service development in companies globally. The popularity of the field influenced the development of service design research and new approaches, which, in turn, promotes service design furtherly.

Four approaches developed in the last two decades will be discussed in this section, with a concise analysis of the differences and similarities that occur. This review will provide a foundation for the thesis project – the author will later critically review which approach, or a combination of several, would be the best to adopt concerning the thesis topic and aims.

3.2.1 Model by Moritz

The first, and the oldest ones in this review, is the model suggested by Stefan Moritz (2005). In his work, Moritz took an academic approach and researched the development of services and design, and how both fields merged into one. Moritz puts significant focus on interdisciplinarity in service design. Expertise in marketing, research, various types of design, and levels of management play a significant role in successful process implementation, which shows the big variety of fields where service design can be used (Moritz 2005, 48-49).

Service design, according to Moritz, has six stages. It starts with SD Understanding, which is about gathering knowledge about the company, clients, market, and other relevant contexts. SD Thinking is a second phase, and it aims to develop a strategic direction for the whole project. SD Generating and SD Filtering are ideation and concept creation stages, followed by SD Explaining which helps the design team to assess the ideation outcomes through visualisations and prototypes. Lastly, SD Realising is the action stage, where prototypes and blueprints are tested out. (Moritz 2005, 123.)

3.2.2 **Model by Stickdorn and Schneider**

In their book, *This Is Service Design Thinking*, Stickdorn & Schneider (2011) highlight that service design is an iterative process, and while it is possible to outline a structure, certain outcomes of different stages might force one to go back to the previous stage or even start the process from scratch. The authors describe service design as a highly adaptable and flexible process but provide a framework nevertheless which has four stages: Exploration, Creation, Reflection, and Implementation.

During the first stage of Exploration, the aim is to gather understanding about the company, and its clients, and find the right problems to solve. The findings should be visualised to easier understand the services process – it assists in finding the problematic points. The following stages – Creation and Reflection – are representing the dynamic ideation, concept design, prototyping, and testing processes. Most iterations happen precisely in between these two stages. Ideation and concept designing requires the collaboration of many different stakeholders and experts in different fields. (Stickdorn & Schneider 2011, 128-131.)

Lastly, the Implementation stage puts the newly developed service into action. While testing and launching products are straightforward, the services are intangible, therefore this stage requires efficient change management. Clear communication, involvement of employees, documentation and evaluation of processes are some of the most important tasks of this stage. (Stickdorn & Schneider 2011, 134-135.)

3.2.3 **Model by Design Council**

The British Design Council contributed a lot to the development of the service design in the last couple of decades. Many publications about service design quote their definitions and methods (Moritz 2005, 34-35; Stickdorn & Schneider 2011, 126-127; Stickdorn & al. 2018, 19, 89) demonstrating their influence.

The Double Diamond process developed by the Council aims to illustrate and summarise the common activities of the service design process (Design Council 2015, 6). The Double Diamond shape represents the process of diverging and converging and is divided into four stages (Figure 3).

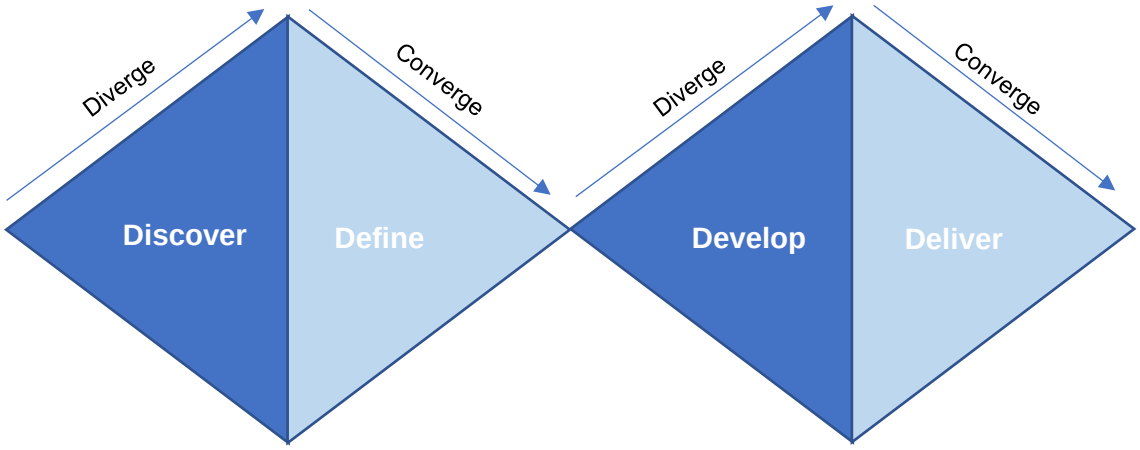

Figure 3. The Double Diamond method by Design Council (2015)

The Discover phase is meant for information gathering, problem defining, and customer and market research. This phase is divergent, meaning that the project team should aim to gather a considerable number of insights and ideas, have an open mind, and explore. In the following phase, the team converges the gathered materials and tries to define the clear problem and objective of the project. (Design Council 2015, 8.)

With a defined goal, the team again takes a divergent approach and starts developing possible solutions. Prototyping, testing, gathering feedback, and improving through trial and error are some of the actions taken in this phase. The last is the Deliver phase – by converging all gathered experience and feedback, the final solution is launched. In the last phase, the team observes the product or service in action and measures whether the solution effectively solves problems identified previously. Lastly, the feedback regarding the entire service design process should be communicated to the stakeholders. (Design Council 2015, 9.)

3.2.4 **Model by Stickdorn, Hormess, Lawrence and Schneider**

Since the release of the book, *This is Service Design Thinking* (the model described in this book was reviewed in chapter 3.2.2), Stickdorn and Schneider (2011) continued working on service design research and methodology development. In 2018, Stickdorn & al. released a follow-up of their previous book – *This is Service Design Doing.* This work acts more as a guidebook for designers and includes a wider input of field experts, new case studies, a bigger variety of tools and tips, and an updated model of the service design process.

The phases of this new model are Research, Ideation, Prototyping, and Implementation. The process of the Research phase usually includes a definition of the scope, data collection and visualisation, which results in key insights that would set the direction and objectives of the whole project. In the research phase, the goal is to gain a deep customer understanding and learn more about the context the team will be working in, whether it is specific industry knowledge, or the big picture of the market the company operates in. (Stickdorn & al. 2018, 96.)

After the Research phase, the design team should have a clear definition of the project aim and problem and then can move on to the Ideation phase. Using the diverge/converge approach, a big number of ideas should be gathered, evaluated, and the best few selected. The best ideas are brought into the Prototyping phase. By making elemental and fast prototypes, the team can quickly identify which solutions are feasible. Prototypes also help to communicate possible solutions to the stakeholders and users, enabling income of insightful feedback. (Stickdorn & al. 2018, 210-211.)

Lastly, the Implementation stage released the finalised prototype into real action. This stage emphasises the importance of effective adoption of the new solution, which requires careful preparation, observation, and maintenance plan. The implementation stage might even be planned through the same framework; research the context and challenges, ideate how to launch it effectively, prototype a pilot, and, finally, implement it. (Stickdorn & al. 2018, 272-274.)

3.2.5 Comparison of service design models

The previous sections reviewed four different models that can be used during the service design process. The model by Moritz (2005) identifies six phases, while the rest have four each. While all models use different terms for their phases, essentially, all of them follow the same structure: researching and understanding the context and the customer; defining the main problems; generating ideas; developing and improving prototypes, and launching the final solution. The models are summarised in Figure 4.

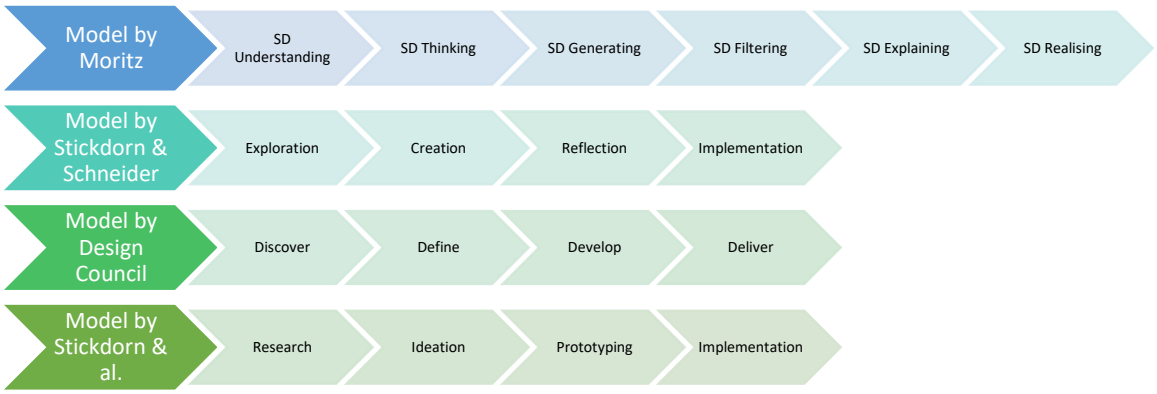

Figure 4. Comparison of different service design models

Though the models follow a similar process, what differentiates some of them are putting different actions in different phases. For example, Design Council (2015) puts the tasks of defining the right problem and ideating possible solutions into the Define phase, while Stickdorn & al. (2018) suggests defining the key problems in the Research phase.

Also, the model by Moritz (2005) identifies more steps than others. About other models, it can be recognised that the approach by other authors combines some of Moritz's phases: SD Understanding and SD Thinking are combined into Exploration/Discover/ Research stages, while SD Generating and SD Filtering together are similar to Creation/Define/Ideation stages. All reviewed models share the same two phases, identified by different names: making the prototypes and launching them.

A foreseeable similarity can be identified between models suggested by Stickdorn & Schneider (2011) and Stickdorn & al. (2018) as they were developed by some of the same authors. The apparent dissimilarities between the two models are the names of the first three phases.

3.3 Service design as an approach for the thesis project

Service design was chosen as an approach after thorough planning of this thesis project. Before starting the thesis process, the author was able to closely observe the marketing management practices of the case company One Bar & Restaurant and noticed development opportunities. Initially, the author planned to develop a marketing plan for the restaurant but after some consideration, it was decided to take a step back and first look into the management of the marketing itself.

During a discussion with the advisor, service design was suggested as a possible development approach. During her studies, the author took an Experience Designer specialisation course which resulted in the gain of comprehensive design thinking and service design methodology knowledge and experience.

Another reason for choosing service design is the adaptability and other principles of the process. The author knows the challenges of the case company; however, solution development would require extensive research, close collaboration with the restaurant's staff, and interdisciplinary knowledge. Because of the chosen direction of the thesis topic, the author could not immediately know what kind of a product would most effectively improve the marketing management processes in the restaurant. Therefore, the service design approach can be a suitable method to achieve the thesis project goals.

The case company is a restaurant which operates in the service industry. Additionally, the identified area for development is marketing which has a high relation to the service design approach. Service design acquired many methods and ideas used in marketing, such as identifying and understanding the customer and developing value. With the emergence of services, marketing became more customer-focused, with many new practices being adopted which are nowadays widely used by service designers. For example, marketing researchers developed blueprints, named the importance of service encounters and evidence, and service designers utilise these concepts while designing experiences. Marketing research identifies the needs and values of the customers, and for service design, these insights are crucial for customer understanding. (Stickdorn & Schneider 2011, 46-51.)

3.4 Preparing the service design model for the thesis project

Sections 3.2.1–3.2.4 presented four possible frameworks that could be adapted for the thesis project. The model research showed certain similarities between the models, and most authors emphasised the flexibility of the service design process. While any of the presented models could efficiently assist in accomplishing the project aims, the author decided to construct a new model by combining some of the different phases identified in the review.

Figure 5. A service design model of this thesis project

The author's model combines the phases named by the Design Council (Define and Develop) and by Stickdorn & al. (Research, Ideate, Implement), as seen in Figure 5. The author will also adapt the Double Diamond framework (Design Council 2015) to better visualise the process (Figure 6).

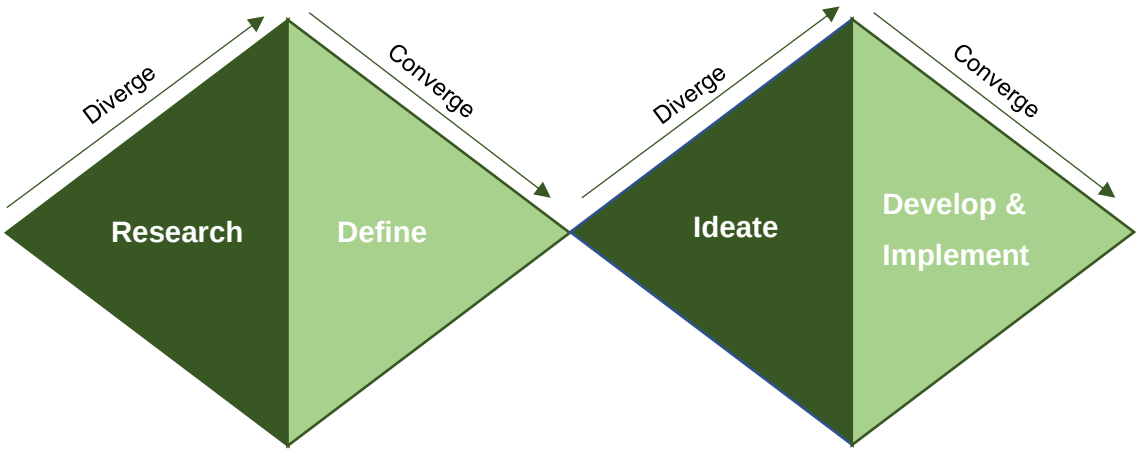

Figure 6. The process as a Double Diamond

The chosen framework will provide more clarity regarding the process steps and will allow us to see the big picture, enabling adaptability. The next section will introduce the methods and tools to be applied in each of the phases.

3.4.1 Methods and tools

While the service design process phases might overlap, each one of them utilises a different set of tools that helps to achieve the phase aims. The author plans to use these tools and methods:

Research phase: the goal of the first phase is to conduct **secondary research** about services marketing and conduct a broad **situation analysis** of the current restaurant's marketing practices. Once the context is established, the author will gain the target group's insights through **in-depth interviews**. Interviews will be conducted in a semi-structured manner to collect useful data (Stickdorn & al. 2018, 122). The author will aim to learn about the employees' perceptions of the restaurant, and their opinions and experiences about the practices and challenges in marketing and related fields.

Author plans to conduct 4-5 interviews with the restaurant's management and employees, and additional 1-2 interviews with outsiders who do not have prior knowledge about the restaurant. The goal of the outsider interviews is to gain unbiased perceptions about the restaurant's communication efforts. Interviewees will be presented with the content of the restaurant's communication mix (digital, social media, images of tangible evidence) and asked to describe what kind of opinion they formed about the restaurant. The outcome of these interviews will assist in defining the restaurant's value proposition.

Define phase: the main activities of the second phase are to visualise and analyse the data, which would eventually lead to a definition of the key problem and the direction for the rest of the process. The author will visualise the findings by creating a digital research wall which will help to identify patterns (Stickdorn & al. 2018, 128).

After identifying recurring problems and patterns, the author will raise How Might We style questions and start looking for solution opportunities within the insights (Stickdorn & al 2018, 179). The most important questions will be identified, turned into the project problem statements, and brought into the next phase.

Ideation phase: the goal of the ideation phase is to come up with a high number of diverse ideas, review them, and then reduce the options to the most feasible ones. A classic method is conducting a brainstorming session (Stickdorn & al. 2018, 180), and using a *Yes, And*… thinking while developing the ideas, and *Yes, but*… when reducing (Stickdorn & al. 2018, 87).

In this phase, the author will aim to collaborate with the restaurant's employees and will attempt to organise at least one common brainstorming session.

Prototyping & Implementation phases: it is challenging to plan the prototyping and implementation stages ahead of time as the methods used will be conditioned by the chosen ideas. However, it is important to establish, that the goal of prototyping is not

always to start creating the final product. The purpose of prototyping can vary from prototyping to evaluate your chosen options, to prototyping to present your project to the audience (Stickdorn & al. 2018, 212-213). Also, prototyping should always be expected to be iterative.

The implementation phase will be the final stage of the project. As this service design project will be carried out in the context of the services, the author will most likely encounter the change management field. The services are dependent on people, so new possible solutions will require a change of certain practices and behaviours (Stickdorn & al. 2018, 275). The first stage of effective change management is creating awareness of the problem, followed by persuasion, motivation, and education. Once prepared, the task is to facilitate and practice the desired actions. The last, yet one of the most important steps, is to sustain the behaviour change by communicating, reinforcing, reminding, and reviewing. (Stickdorn & al. 2018, 279.)

3.4.2 **Managing challenges and risks**

Service design is a highly adaptable process which can have limitless outcome variations. Its flexible and iterative nature brings forward certain challenges the designer must be aware of. Some of the challenges identified by Stickdorn & al. (2018) are choosing to solve the wrong problem, not being able to adapt and move forward while trying to iterate, not taking enough action, and letting your own bias in the way of ideating.

A study by Blomkvist, Rodrigues & Overkamp (2020) named six common challenges the service designers face:

1. Lack of understanding of service design;
2. Involving people (getting the right people and conducting user research);
3. Design within the organisation (dealing with adverse attitudes towards design);
4. Explaining the value of service design (communicating the value and impact of service design, applying the methods in practice);
5. Challenging the system (resistance to change, implementing the transformation);
6. Design identity (clarifying the role of design and designers within an organisation).

Literature provides good advice and reminders for the designers, yet one's own experience prepares for new projects the best. As mentioned in the 3.3 section, the thesis author has specialised in Experience Design during her studies. The author and her course team have compiled some of their learnings into a blog post (Laurinciukaite 2021)

which was published at the end of the specialisation programme and named three key lessons learned during the course:

1. Customer feedback should be the priority;
2. Get to know the company you are working with very well;
3. Have open team communication.

Based on the literature review and own experience, the author named some possible challenges and risks, as well as solutions, in Table 2.

Table 2. Possible service design project challenges and risks

Challenge or risk	Description	Solution
The service design process is implemented without a team	Literature (e.g., Moritz 2005; Stickdorn & al. 2018) emphasises that service design is an interdisciplinary process and requires a team. However, the author will attempt to implement the process individually.	Careful planning and documentation of the process, constant collaboration with the restaurant's management, regular feedback, and process review.
Lack of customer insight	The author plans to conduct several in-depth interviews. There is a risk that some of the interviews might be postponed, cancelled, or bring insufficient results.	Create thoughtful questions for the interviews, be flexible (be prepared for both face-to-face interviews and online interviews), be prepared to record the data, and agree on doing follow-ups with the interviewees.
Insufficient customer involvement	Customers, organisations, and other stakeholders must be involved in the process continuously throughout the ideation, prototyping, and implementation stages. Insufficient involvement might lead to solving the wrong problem, and eventually not providing the desired solution.	During all the stages, the author must continuously reach out for feedback. Some of the ideation or prototyping sessions can be done in the restaurant, together with some of the employees.
Lack of knowledge or skills	As the author is implementing the project individually, an encounter with the knowledge gap is possible and the author might struggle with creating certain solutions.	Choose the most desirable, viable, and feasible paths based on the author's abilities. Focusing on the problems and ideas that have the best chance of being implemented and making a positive impact.

In general, most challenges and risks in the service design process are related to customer insight and involvement. During the process, the author must ensure that the project's target group (the restaurant management and employees) are continuously involved in the design process, whether by having sessions together with them or asking for feedback about the ideas and possible solutions.

4 Implementation

In this chapter, the author will describe the service design process implementation and final product development. The chapter will focus on the process description – the reflection and discussion of the results will be outlined in Chapter 5.

4.1 Timeline

The entire thesis project lasted four months, two of which were used for the product development process. The project consisted of two main parts: conducting literature research and describing the service design framework (lasted from February to March) and implementing the defined framework (lasted from April to May). The timeline with specific tasks that were accomplished is described in Table 3.

Table 3. Thesis project timeline

Time	***Tasks***
February	Preparing thesis plan, writing the introduction, starting literature research and method description
March	Finishing literature research and method description chapters, conducting interviews with outsiders
April	Conducting interviews with restaurant employees, analysing the answers (Research, Define, Ideate phases)
May	Designing the final product, describing the development process, finalising the thesis, and presenting the results to the restaurant (Prototype and Implement phases)

4.2 Researching

The first part of the thesis (Chapters 2 & 3) provided the author with theoretical knowledge about marketing in the service industry. This helped the author to better understand the challenges the restaurant faces regarding marketing management. The theoretical analysis can also be considered a part of the research phase; however, employee insight is the most crucial part of the entire process.

Initially, the author planned to interview 4-5 employees, but after the first couple of interviews, it became clear that all restaurant employees should be talked to to gain proper insight. In total, 10 employees were interviewed.

With the challenge being related to marketing, the author also decided to conduct a few interviews with the outsiders – people who have never been to the restaurant – to find out how the restaurant is perceived solely through their online presence. Three people were interviewed regarding it, so a total of 13 people participated in the author's research.

4.2.1 Interviews with outsiders

First interviews for the research were conducted with the outsiders. The goal of these interviews was to gain an unbiased understanding of how the restaurant's digital communication is perceived by people. The people chosen for the interviews were young (22-24 years old), have never visited the restaurant, and had an extensive international background. One person currently resides in Lithuania, and another two are living in Finland but have lived in Northern America and Asia respectively. The international profile of the interviewees was seen as a strength by the author since One Bar & Restaurant can be considered international because of its personnel and internal and external communication.

The author provided the interviewees with links to the restaurant's social media channels, website, and review platforms. During the interview, these questions were asked:

- Look at the restaurant's social media channels, website, pictures, and reviews. What are your first thoughts? What catches your attention?
- What kind of impression did you get about the restaurant's style and offerings? What are the main products?
- What are your expectations about the restaurant based on what you've learned about it on digital channels?
- What else would like to know about the restaurant? What information is missing?

The interviews were done in a semi-structured manner. Essentially, it means that while the interviewer has a prepared set of questions, the interview is treated more like a conversation, which is achieved by having to follow up on questions or rearranging the order of them. The aim of semi-structured interviews is usually to gain a deeper understanding of a certain issue or theme, rather than get facts or statistics (Barbour 2008, 119-120.), which is why the author chose this research method.

These interviews were conducted remotely through Microsoft Teams and Google Meet video conference tools. Each interview lasted approximately 1 hour and was not recorded – instead, the author was transcribing the answers in real-time, following up on some unclarities. The author did not deem it necessary to record the meetings as they were not the main part of the research.

The author summarised the interview results in a presentation which was then sent to the restaurant's staff (the full presentation is attached as Appendix 1). This presentation aimed to provide the restaurant with an understanding of how its digital presence is seen by possible customers. The restaurant's marketing is mainly operated digitally, therefore such feedback is essential. Figure 7 shows an example of some of the feedback given by the interviewees.

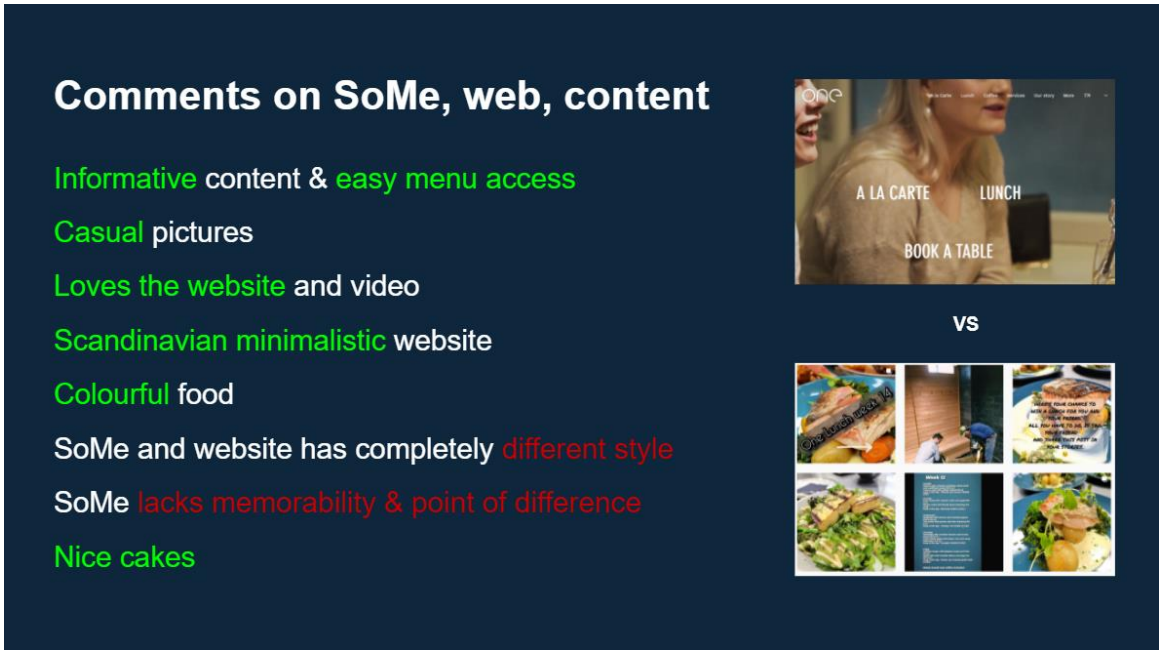

Figure 7. An example of the interview presentation results

The interview findings in a written form are also summarised in Table 4. The author separated the results into 5 different categories, that include comments on social media and website content, restaurant identity and main offerings, restaurant reviews, unclarities, questions, and other suggestions.

Table 4. Interviews with outsiders: insights

Social media and website content	All interviewees noticed that the social media content was informative and provided easy menu access. Social media presents colourful food pictures that were taken casually. One of the interviewees was impressed by the pictures of desserts. As for the website, everyone agreed that it is well designed and gives a Scandinavian vibe. The video that plays on the landing page was well-liked. However, everyone quickly noticed a big difference in the content style between social media and websites. It was also stated that the social media content is informative, however, it lacks memorability.
Restaurant identity and main offerings	Interviewees described the restaurant as cosy, and family-style, and saw it as a lunch restaurant. When asked about food style, they

	described it as Western and homemade. The main products noticed were salads, soups, fish, and burgers. This showed that the restaurant's marketing communication mainly revolves around its lunch offerings and does not focus on presenting the regular, a la carte weekend menu.
Restaurant reviews	The interviewees checked two platforms with the restaurant rating present – Google Maps and TripAdvisor. They stated, that would most likely use Google Maps to search for a restaurant based on location, if they were to travel to Porvoo, therefore the restaurant's presence on Google Maps is important. At the time of the interviews, the restaurant's rating on Google Maps was 3.8 – all interviewees agreed that it should be higher. They immediately noticed some of the low ratings and the first bad reviews noticed were about the slow service in the restaurant. However, the pictures posted on Google Maps give a good impression of the food.
Unclarities and questions	The interviewees got the impression that the restaurant's communication is aimed mainly at the customers who already know the place, there is a lack of promotion aimed at possible new clients. Because of the big differences between the social media and website content, people were confused about the restaurant's style social media suggests the restaurant is providing a laid-back experience, while the website shows a finer dining style. One interviewee noticed that while it says 'bar' in the restaurant's name, information about the drinks is not available anywhere. Another person noticed that all the communication on social media is done in English, so they wanted to know why – is owned by a foreigner, aimed at foreigners or? Additionally, people noticed that the information on the restaurant's website is not updated – some hyperlinks are not working, and old offerings are still being promoted (e.g., milkshakes).
Suggestions	When asked about suggestions, all interviewees mentioned two things the restaurant should focus on more in their communication: providing more information (e.g., drinks menu, extra services), and focusing on the stories and people (e.g., explaining the name of the restaurant, introducing the team). People once again mentioned the importance of Google Maps and suggested that more food pictures and information should be posted there.

These interviews showed that the restaurant struggles with providing a clear image of its style and offerings. The social media content has been focusing mainly on promoting the lunch offerings, overlooking the weekend menu. One of the interviewees, who is

experienced in communication and marketing, noticed that the content lacks structure, planning, and theoretical background in the promotion.

4.2.2 **Interviews with employees**

After talking to people outside the restaurant, the author proceeded to interview the employees and the owner. The interviews were again conducted in a semi-structured manner and were aimed to achieve three things: learn about the reasons behind inconsistency present in communication and elsewhere; find restaurant strengths for building the vision and image; and marketing management challenges.

Nine out of ten interviews were conducted face-to-face. These interviews, with the permission of the interviewees, were recorded with a mobile device, and the author was transcribing the answers in real time. The interview length varied from person to person – the shortest one was approximately 20 minutes, and the longest – was 1 hour.

The interview questions were as follows:

- It's been noticed that there is inconsistency in marketing and other fields within the restaurant operations. Do you agree and if yes, why do you think it's present?
- What could be done to achieve consistency?
- What are the restaurant's strengths and competitive advantage, or what is there potential for?
- What are the weaknesses of the restaurant?
- Can you describe the restaurant – its style, vision, mission, and values?
- What are the biggest challenges regarding marketing management?
- Imagine that you become the marketing manager of the restaurant. How would you approach that? What kind of knowledge/skills/tools would you require?

The interview results were transcribed and compiled into a master file. The interview answers are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5. Summary of employee interviews

It's been noticed that there is inconsistency in marketing and other fields within the restaurant operations. Do you agree and if yes, why do you think it's present?	Most agreed that there is inconsistency present. People stated that there is a lack of communication between various operations (management, front of the house and kitchen staff), as well as unclear roles. One person said that the roles of people are too loose and it is hard to understand who is the boss or the leader. Employees don't always know what is expected of them. Another reason for the inconsistency is a lack of a clear business plan and vision. It's been said that people have different ideas and

	understanding of the restaurant, which is shown in inconsistent communication, marketing, and service style. Information and updates sometimes don't reach the staff members properly or on time. There have been cases when the staff is not informed about new opening hours and learned about them either from social media or just before their shift. It was also mentioned that change management has not been effective - there's a lack of development and following up on tasks.
What could be done to achieve consistency?	Most suggestions given by the employees were related to communication. People said that communicating through WhatsApp is not effective and would like to communicate more in person. Sometimes, the weekday staff do not even meet those who work during the weekends only, so common staff meetings would improve the communication. Also, a clear business plan, vision, common goals, and strategy should be created and communicated to the whole staff.
What are the restaurant's strengths, competitive advantage, and potential?	The most mentioned things were food, staff, location, cosy and casual environment, and a good atmosphere among staff. The atmosphere is just right to build relationships with customers. However, some people thought that these strengths are not used to their full potential. A more specific style could elevate the strengths to a higher level. While the location is a huge strength, it is not used to its full potential. It's been noticed that more young people are visiting the restaurant on the weekends so more ideas on how to adapt to different people's needs should be implemented.
What are the weaknesses of the restaurant?	The biggest weakness, which was mentioned by everyone, is the unclarity of the concept, vibe, and style of the restaurant. It is hard for customers to understand what to expect. The restaurant doesn't have a niche and therefore it is hard to compete with others. A couple of people mentioned that the menu prices are high and that it doesn't match the product and service the customers are receiving. Inconsistency was mentioned again regarding service (different quality, not everyone has a customer service mindset) and food (different portion sizes, sometimes different ingredients in the same dish). While the location could be a strength, the restaurant building itself is not inviting.
Can you describe the restaurant – its style, vision, mission, and values?	Most people described the restaurant's atmosphere as casual, laid-back, and easily approachable. However, most said that they find it hard to describe its style or business vision. Some people would describe it as a lunch and family restaurant, a tourist restaurant during summer, while others stated that it is an evening restaurant.

	When it comes to the menu, it was described as European, Nordic, and local ingredient-based. It was suggested that the restaurant should find a clear direction because currently there is no clear style and vision in place. The restaurant now runs in two different directions – described by the employees as the *mussel way* (more fancy style and offerings) and the *burger way* (more casual style). According to the front of the house employees, the customers would prefer the burger way. The burger way would be easier to implement and provide a lot of opportunities to stand out and adapt the environment, food, service, and events.
What are the biggest challenges regarding marketing management?	Marketing management was described as inconsistent. There are no roles assigned and it is unclear what is expected of people when it comes to posting on social media. Sometimes there is nothing posted one weekend, yet a bunch of content another. There is no plan or strategy present for social media and other types of marketing.
Imagine that you become the marketing manager of the restaurant. How would you approach that? What kind of knowledge/skills/tools would you require?	As the first thing, people mentioned that they would like to gain more general knowledge about marketing and social media management, like guidelines, what is the best kind of content, what kind of text to write etc. They would like to post more pictures with people in it, both customers and staff, showing more behind the scenes of the restaurant‘s operations. Would like to encourage more discussions online. Some people also mentioned that they would need clearer information about the company, its goals, and its strategy. More careful planning and management – preparing content in advance, collaboration. It was also mentioned, that it would useful to know what are the exact tasks of a marketing manager as a role.

4.3 Defining

The next phase in the process was defining the problem. The author from the very beginning of the thesis project had a goal to improve marketing management but first had to figure out what are the exact challenges. It was known that the restaurant does not have a designated marketing manager or anyone with such background among the staff members. The solution would be to hire an external marketing service; however, it would require an extra budget which the restaurant struggled with because of the COVID-19 pandemic – which brought a lot of instability to the restaurant industry over the last two years.

As hiring someone externally is not an option and finding a staff member with marketing knowledge might as well prove to be challenging, the restaurant management needs to maintain the social media and other marketing aspects themselves. However, with several people taking care of the marketing, it requires more careful planning, which, unfortunately, was named as a reason behind social media management inconsistency.

While having the discussions with employees, the author started to notice some recurring themes which were put into five different categories that are shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Recurring themes/issues in the interviews

First, communication was mentioned a lot as something that could be improved. Staff members lacked communication as a team which would lead to inconsistency in service, marketing, and other operations. The lack of communication would be present because of very different shifts (weekday and weekend staff), not always being informed on time about important things (like working schedule or the restaurant opening hours). One person said that '*no one has time to communicate because everyone has a very big workload*'.

Several people contemplated that WhatsApp might not be the best communication tool – some suggestions for improvement were to have weekly staff meetings or have an

information board in the restaurant that would be always accessible, and the employees could put important information or reminders for the next shift while they are working.

Then, when asked about the restaurant's strengths and what are the biggest values to the customer, almost everyone mentioned good food as the main offering. A lot of people also stressed the fact that the friendliness of the staff is a big strength and helps to build customer relationships. However, it was noticed that while there are certain strengths, the restaurant still struggles to attract more customers.

Not everyone was able to name a particular reason for this issue, however, a couple of people guessed that the reason lies in the lack of identity and promotion. One person said '*possible customers don't know what this restaurant is or that it even exists*'. This person furtherly added that the exterior of the building does not look like the front of the restaurant, however, this is not an easy issue to fix as the restaurant lies on the edge of the Porvoo Old Town which has strict exterior design rules due to its heritage status.

Everyone agreed that the restaurant's atmosphere is casual, warm, and easily approachable. However, the author noticed that some people described the current restaurant style very differently. One person said that it is '*definitely an evening restaurant, casual dining with drinks'*, while another saw it as a '*family restaurant, lunch restaurant, and during weekends - family-tourist restaurant.'*

Also, the interviewees found it challenging to describe the restaurant's identity, or in other terms, vision. Some people mentioned that the vision is very vague and not communicated properly, with a couple of people assuredly stating that there is no vision present. Some would also describe it as a lack of strategy or business plan.

The lack of identity is a big problem not only for customers but also for the employees. It was noticed by some employees that different staff members have a different understanding of their tasks and distinct service styles – this furtherly strengthens the inconsistency. Also, some people stated that they know their role and tasks well, while others were not so confident about it.

And, finally, the focus of the interviews was to identify the marketing management situation and challenges. Lack of planning, unclear expectations, and lack of general marketing knowledge was named as the biggest issues. While most people would only mention social media and possible traditional media marketing, one person also took into consideration the tangible evidence aspect – an important aspect of services marketing

which was discussed in Chapter 2.2.1. This person said that the bar area often looks disorganised, and messy, and might not leave the best impression on the customers.

Some other things mentioned were the need to show the real atmosphere of the restaurant and focus more on the weekends, as currently, the biggest focus is on the lunch offerings. Again, lack of planning was stressed as a recurring marketing issue. Also, one person mentioned, that they would like to know what the exact tasks of a marketing manager are.

After conducting and analysing all the interviews, the author was able to see the big picture and was able to name problems that influence not only marketing but also other functions of the restaurant. The most important issue is the **lack of strategic planning** – it was even named by a couple of people. This is interrelated with the widely named **lack of vision.** It is hard to plan promotion, activities, marketing (both external and internal), and other things without having certain strategic goals, which should also correspond to a business vision.

Based on the interviews, the author predicts that the vision is not present because of ineffective communication and a lack of strategic planning. Therefore, the author chose the following problem statement for this thesis project, having the scope of marketing management in mind: **What tool can help the restaurant employees to implement marketing tasks more consistently and accordingly to the restaurant's vision and strategy?**

4.4 Ideating

For the ideation phase, the author had plans to have at least a couple of ideation sessions, preferably involving the employees of the restaurant. However, a certain principle of the service design process became present – the overlap of different phases. As the author was progressing with the interviews, she started to notice patterns, pick out the most important problems and ideas, try to think of possible solutions, and a clear idea for the final product was present by the end of the last interview.

People mentioned the lack of vision, planning, marketing knowledge, and communication as the biggest obstacles. A recurring thought that WhatsApp is not the most efficient communication tool led to deciding that the tool should be physical. Someone said that they lack the marketing knowledge, which means that the tool could also have guiding

qualities. Finally, the thoughts about lack of strategic planning and vision meant the tool should assist in planning marketing and have a clear business vision/mission.

During the very last interview, the author got an idea of designing a **marketing planning template** – this idea ticked all the boxes and can answer the problem statement. Though the author wished to do a separate ideation session, she decided to settle and develop the template.

While the author had a clear vision for the final product, there was a need to research. The author benchmarked similar templates, marketing planning and implementation principles, and other related things to get inspiration for her design (Figure 9). The author noticed that a lot of found templates have a strategic planning aspect to them – they would include business objectives, company goals, vision and mission.

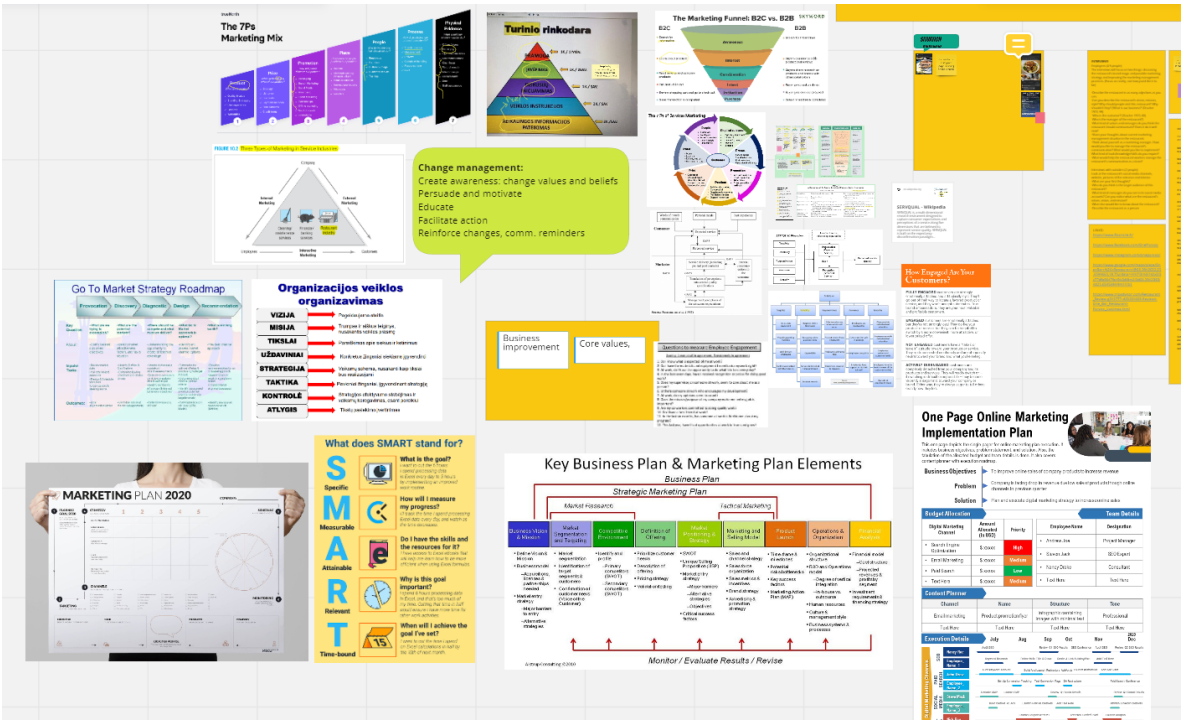

Figure 9. Snapshot of the author's ideation and benchmarking

As mentioned, ideation overlapped with both research and analysis phases, therefore the author was ready to sketch the prototypes quite fast.

4.5 Prototyping and implementing

The first prototyping step was to list some of the possible contents of the planning template. The author was looking into some ideas found during the benchmarking, but

also tried to list down other things that were heard during the interviews. Some of the thoughts can be seen in Figure 10 – a scan of some of the author's notebook pages.

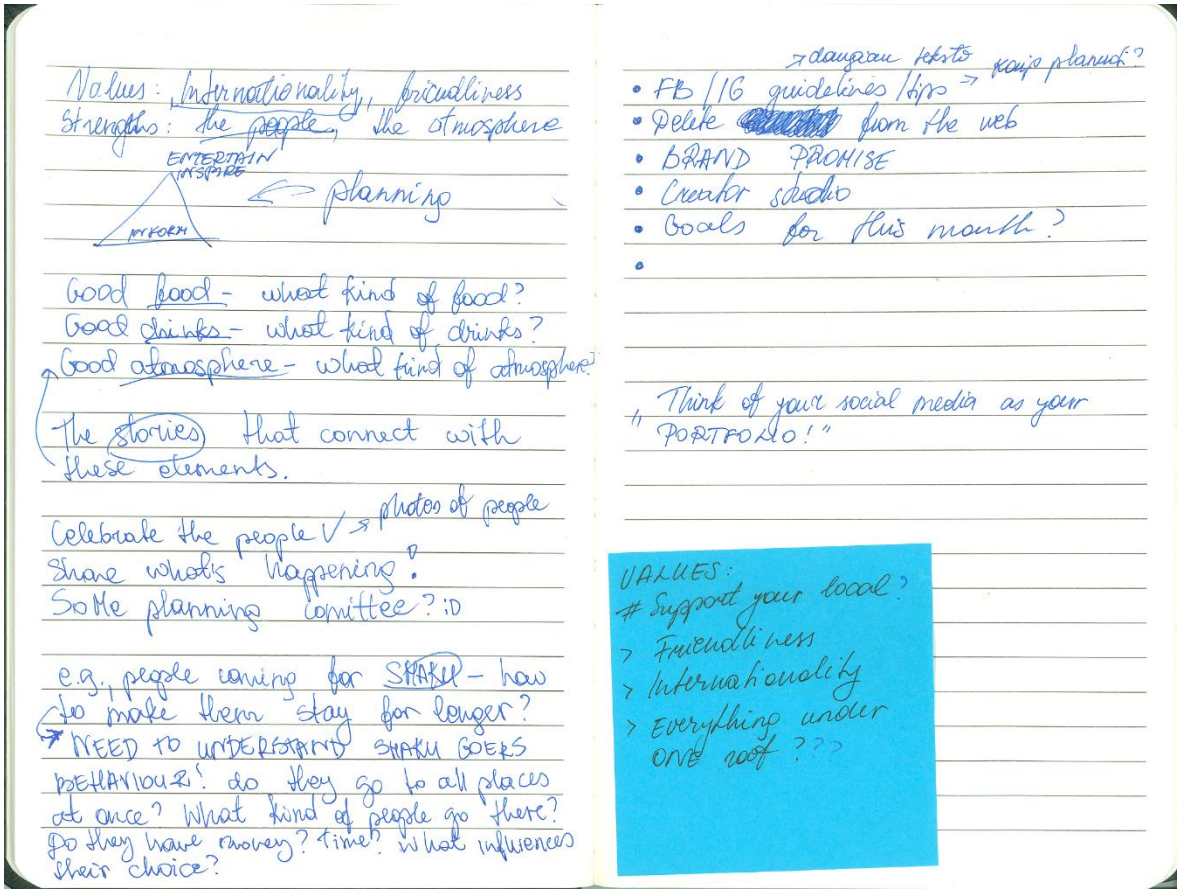

Figure 10. Author's notebook - thoughts about possible template qualities

Soon after, the author created the first sketch of the template. The vision was that the template would act as a monthly calendar, where a certain employee or a small team could plan marketing and assign various tasks. The template should be easily adapted to any month, so the days or week numbers could be filled at the beginning of each month.

The sides of the template would consist of various blocks which would have some sort of guidelines or things to remember, such as platforms, values, goals, special occasions, vision etc. The author would also try to add space for task delegation. The very first sketch/prototype can be seen in Figure 11.

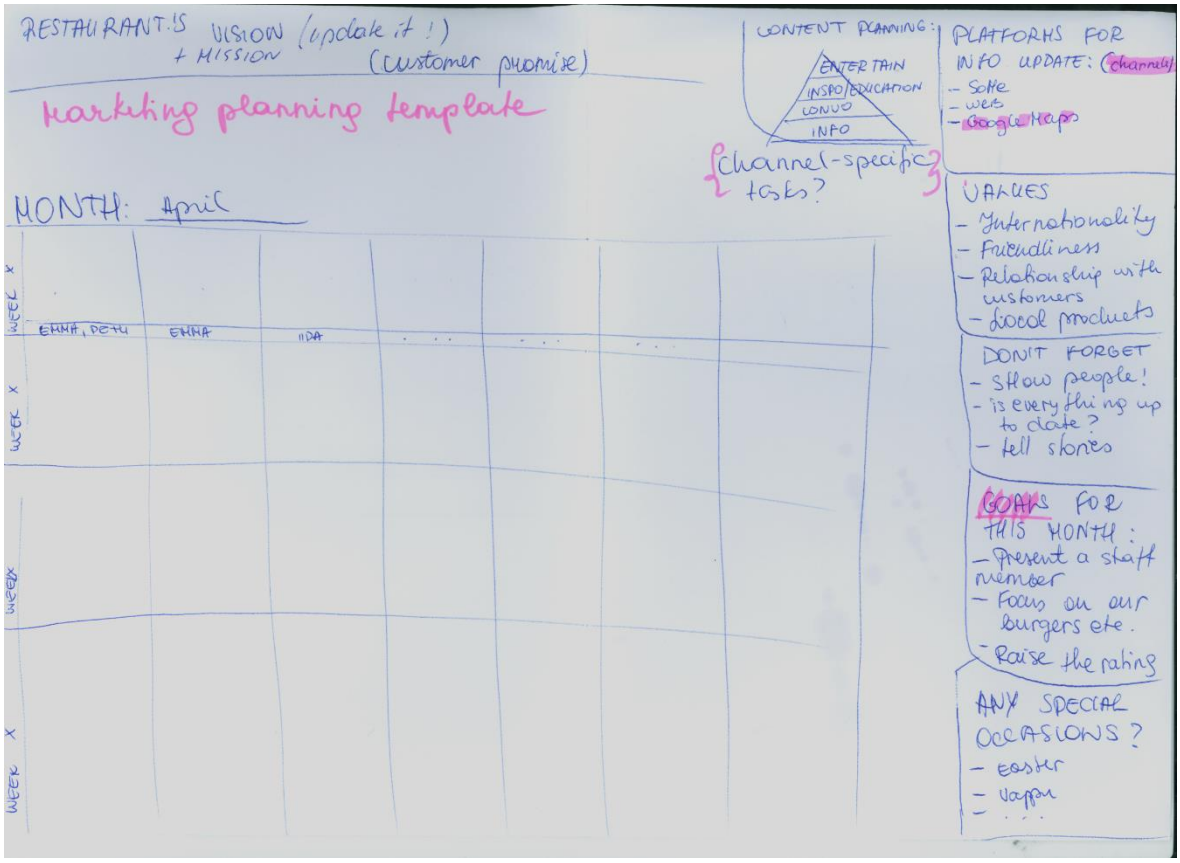

Figure 11. The prototype sketch of the marketing planning template

The author needed to hear some feedback from the employees. One of them agreed to share some thoughts and suggestions. The person said that they liked the content planning pyramid, a list of things to remember, list of special occasions. They suggested that the values could be somehow visualised, and the goals should be put directly into the calendar. The space at the bottom of each day was intended for writing the name of the person responsible for the day's tasks, but it was not clear, and the interviewee suggested making more space in the box instead.

To put business vision and mission statements at the top of the template was received very positively. Other suggestions were to provide more technical information about different social media platforms, such as the best time of the day or the week to be posting content. After receiving the feedback, the author resketched the prototype and then started designing it in PhotoShop.

The author was aiming to make the calendar part as big as possible, and everything else – clear, tidy, and minimalistic. The author took into consideration the tips given by the employee but was unable to fulfil one of them which was visualising values. While designing the template, the author realised that the most important hashtags should also

be included – hashtags can give consistency and help the restaurant be found on the internet easier.

The most important features of the marketing planning template are the business vision, mission, and values. The author created them based on the restaurant owner's wishes and interview results:

Vision: make ONE a place of happiness which would be a go-to place for locals and town guests to unwind after a long day of work or travelling.
Mission: serve quality food and tasty drinks made from local ingredients, and build long-lasting customer relationships by offering a casual yet quality service in a cosy home-like atmosphere.
Values: internationality, friendliness, and supporting local food and drink makers.

The final product (Appendix 2) was again shown to one of the restaurant's employees and received positive feedback. They liked the clean and minimalistic look, and the vision and mission statements seemed clear. The final product will be forwarded to the restaurant management for utilising.

The final product has two parts – an operative tool and a strategic planning guideline. The operative part is a simple weekly calendar that can be adapted to any month of the year. The left side has a space for week numbers and the name of the month. The author would expect the restaurant to print this calendar and hang it in the staff premises – if printed in A3 format, the calendar should fit the tasks and names of the ones responsible for accomplishing it.

The top part of the final design includes essential information needed for strategic planning. The literature research, the interviews with the employees, and the author's own experience showed that this business needs a common direction. Putting the restaurant's vision and mission on a marketing planning template is a must, as these two concise descriptions should be considered in any restaurant operation. Constantly seeing the business vision will help the employees to send the right, and most importantly, a consistent message in the marketing communication.

The next thing included is a small content marketing pyramid. It has been established previously, that the restaurant does not have a separate marketing manager, making marketing the responsibility of several, if not all, employees. Most restaurant workers are not familiar with marketing or social media management and are unsure what kind of

content they should post. The content pyramid is supposed to give inspiration to anyone planning the marketing activities for the month. It shows the importance of informative content, yet reminds that it has to be switched up with occasional entertainment.

Another section has space for notes. The restaurant workers can use that space for writing down the special occasions that should be considered when planning marketing activities. It can also be used for writing down specific goals for the month.

The author included hashtags that should be used when posting on social media The hashtags #SupportPorvooLokalt, #RavintolaPorvoo, and #VisitPorvoo are based on location. #OnePorvoo and #WeAreOne are the hashtags that are attached to the restaurant identity, so there is a balance between attracting newcomers and communicating with those that are familiar with the restaurant. Also, a reminder of identified business values is a part of the section.

Unfortunately, because of the author's project schedule, there was no time left to observe the product in use, therefore the implementation part of the design process had to be cut short. The way this tool is going to be utilised depends on the restaurant itself. It was created with the idea of having a physical, printed-out calendar put up somewhere in the restaurant, where all the employees could see it and update it during their work.

Lastly, the author believes that this template fulfils the objective of the thesis project, which is creating a tool that would help the restaurant employees manage and plan marketing activities easier, without having a designated marketing manager. The template can be used collaboratively, and it will remind everyone of the vision and mission they are working towards.

5 Discussion

This thesis process lasted four months – from the beginning of February until the end of May 2022. In this last chapter, the author will discuss the key results of the project, service design process and challenges, as well as her professional development and learning outcomes.

5.1 Results of the project

This thesis project reached its main goal which was a development of a certain product which could assist in marketing management within the case company. This outcome was reached by using service design methodology – researching the case company by interviewing the employees, analysing the answers, coming up with the idea, prototyping, and designing the final product.

The interviews helped the author to identify the main challenges within the restaurant's marketing management. The author's intuition also proved to be right – the author understood some of the challenges and the interview answers helped to better interpret them, therefore, the author chose the right questions.

The decision to additionally interview people who were strangers to the restaurant also proved to be useful. Their observations correlated with things mentioned by the employees, especially regarding the restaurant identity – outsiders stated that they were confused about the restaurant style, and different employees described it differently, which strongly supports the presence of an identity problem.

The author compiled the results of the outsider interviews into a visual presentation (Appendix 1) and forwarded it to the restaurant staff and management. The presentation consisted of feedback and suggestions for general online presence improvement. It was already finished and presented during the research phase.

The final product – a marketing planning template – is within the scope and answers the identified problem statement. It contains the definitions of the company's vision and mission, identified values, a calendar for marketing activity planning, tips for content planning, space for notes, hashtags that should be used, and the most crucial reminders. The product received positive feedback, unfortunately, the time did not allow the author to observe and evaluate the implementation of the product.

However, the author believes, that the most important result of the project is the identification of the restaurant's vision, mission, and values. The interview analysis clearly showed that the restaurant has been facing identity troubles which results in inconsistency across many different operations. Hopefully, this will lay a foundation for the rediscovery/creation of consistency in the restaurant and service style and marketing communication.

5.2 Feedback from the case company

After finalising the thesis, the author met with the restaurant owner to discuss the thesis outcomes and to present the final product. During the meeting, the author presented key insights, employee interview results, and explained the design of the marketing planning template.

While discussing the employee feedback, the owner said that the restaurant has been undergoing changes in operations and many things are on the path to improvement. For example, the restaurant has once again hired a marketing agency to take care of some digital marketing tasks for better online presence. The restaurant management has also been working towards improving internal communication, as well delegating tasks more actively.

The owner was very pleased with the presented vision, mission, and values of the restaurant. The author stressed the importance of communicating the common vision in order to achieve consistency.

The owner was also happy with the final product – the marketing planning template. He described it as a useful tool, perfect to utilise in a team. He mentioned that it is great to have a printed version, which could act like a note for everyone. Although the owner mentioned that it would also be nice to have a digital version which everyone could fill in online, he understands that some people prefer a printed version.

All in all, the owner is satisfied with the thesis project outcome. The author was invited to join a staff meeting in the near future to present the product to everyone – walk them through the design process, present the vision statement, and explain/give ideas on how to utilise the tool.

5.3 Service design process and limitations

The service design methodology proved to be the right choice for this particular development project. Though some of the design process steps have overlapped and had to be cut short, the author feels that the main principles of service design enabled the outcome to be successful. Early in the process, it was already identified that service design is flexible and can be adapted based on the project's needs and progress.

Two stages were not implemented as planned – ideation and implementation. The author was planning to have separate ideation sessions, perhaps together with the restaurant employees, but the ideation process was silently running in the background during the research and analysis stages. By the end of the last interview, the author already had an idea and since it was within the scope and the author's abilities to design it, it was decided to develop it further.

The very last stage – implementation – was cut short mainly because of the lack of time. In the end, the author had a tight deadline and more focus had to be put on finalising and editing the thesis itself. However, the product and other insights have been presented to the restaurant management, therefore the only thing missing from this stage is a deeper evaluation of the results and impact of the product.

In chapter 3.4.2, the author identified possible process challenges and solutions. Unfortunately, the author faced some of those challenges and they were harder to manage than previously thought. For the author, the most challenging thing was conducting the service design process alone. Service design is a highly collaborative process and working on such a project by oneself limits the possible outcomes and puts a lot of extra work and pressure.

Another challenge was the insufficient involvement of the target group in the design process. The author managed to conduct the interviews with highly beneficial results, however, the involvement was lacking in the later stages. This occurred mainly because of incompatible schedules, and the lack of communication and feedback between the author and the case company. Some of the author's communication efforts regarding prototyping were not responded to, therefore the product had to be finished with a limited amount of feedback. Also, in a couple of months, the restaurant underwent some changes in staff and operations, making it even more challenging to collaborate.

Even with these challenges present, it was a useful experience for the author and, hopefully, the case company. This process furtherly stresses the importance of in-depth research and customer insight not only in service design but in any field related to development in general.

5.4 Learning outcomes and reflection

For the author, this has been the biggest individual academic project to date. Though the process has been challenging and stressful at times, the author now feels more experienced and knowledgeable in several fields. Firstly, conducting the literature review provided the author with crucial knowledge about marketing in the services industry. In the future, the author would like to work in the hospitality or events field, so it gave a useful knowledge foundation.

The author has also been interested in human resource (HR) management and was very interested to learn more about internal marketing. It showed an interesting connection between HR and marketing management in the service industry, which can be useful knowledge to adapt to various kinds of jobs.

This thesis project also resulted in gaining insight into small business management and processes. Though some of the insights were left out of this thesis as they were not within the scope, the discussions with the employees helped the author to better understand the feelings, perceptions, and expectations of the employees regarding their role or work environment and why they differ from person to person. Again, it relates to HR management.

The author's biggest takeaway for future reference – one must be more realistic when planning a project on such a big scale. The author's initial plan was to finish the thesis in three months, but the result was four months – some stages lasted longer than planned, and the last part had to be cut short. However, it must be mentioned, that the author also had a full-time work placement during these months, so this was a great learning experience for effective time management.

The author thinks that, considering the time and resource limitations, the thesis project was successful. The main objectives were fulfilled, and the service design methodology enabled the author to dig deep into the case company and understand its challenges well. The author was able to adapt knowledge and experience gained in the previous courses and projects and feels more prepared for the career ahead.

Lastly, the author would like to thank the supervisor Annika Konttinen for guidance, feedback, ideas and rapid communication, One Bar & Restaurant employees for providing great insights, friends and colleagues from Finland and Lithuania who provided suggestions and helped to better understand the restaurant's online presence and fellow students and friends Kiira and Tanja for continuous support.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: first situation analysis presentation

Situation analysis results: Part ONE (pun intended)

What? Why?

I am writing my Bachelor's thesis about Marketing in the Services Industry and ONE is my case company.

The goal of my thesis project is to improve marketing management within the restaurant by finding the core values and identity, enabling better internal communication, creating great service culture, and reinforcing positive change.

It all starts with in-depth research.

First part of research

Three outsiders, who never visited or heard of the restaurant, were invited to a focus group and asked to look at SoMe channels, website, and reviews.

They were asked about:

Content

Identity of the restaurant

Unclarities

Suggestions

Comments on SoMe, web, content

Informative content & easy menu access

Casual pictures

Loves the website and video

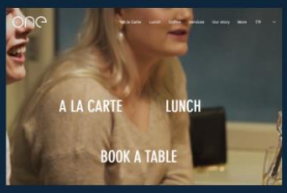
Scandinavian minimalistic website

Colourful food

SoMe and website has completely different style

SoMe lacks memorability & point of difference

Nice cakes



vs

Restaurant identity and main offerings

First impression - cosy

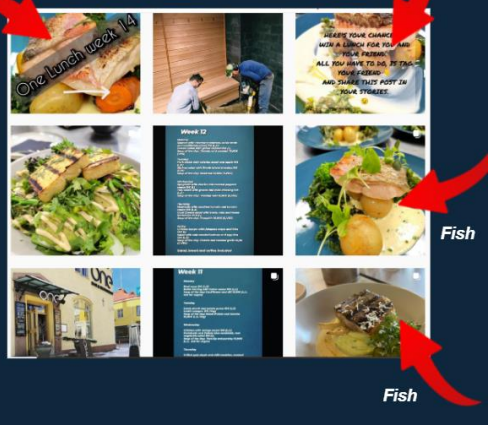
Family, lunch restaurant

Nice place for Sunday brunch

Western food

Salads, soups, and a lot of fish

Google Maps pictures give good impression



Reviews

Would use Google Maps to look up restaurants if visiting the location

Rating could be better

Some 1-star reviews are seen immediately

First thing noticed - slow service

Would trust SoMe and Google Maps more than the website

The only menu picture on Maps is from Feb 2020

Unclarities, questions, other comments

It says ‘bar’ but there is no info about drinks

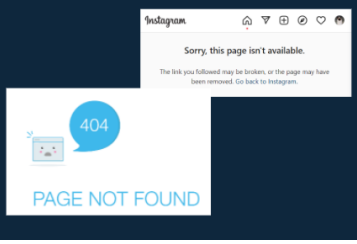
Because of differences between SoMe and web, unsure about vibe and style

Why is all of the communication in English?

More focus on internationality as one of our core values!

Looks like communication is aimed towards customers who already know the place

Information on the website is not updated and some links are not working



Suggestions

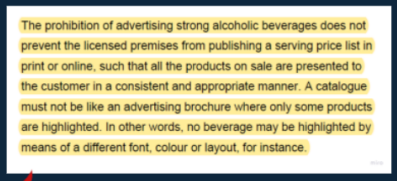
More storytelling - what does ONE mean?

Get to know the team and other inviting content that corresponds to the vibe

More pictures on Google Maps

Provide menu information on all possible channels + drinks menu

More pictures of nice cakes :D <3


The prohibition of advertising strong alcoholic beverages does not prevent the licensed premises from publishing a serving price list in print or online, such that all the products on sale are presented to the customer in a consistent and appropriate manner. A catalogue must not be like an advertising brochure where only some products are highlighted. In other words, no beverage may be highlighted by means of a different font, colour or layout, for instance.

Valvira Guidelines for Alcohol Marketing, p. 65

Summary

Nice website, casual SoMe, overall - unclear style

People value easily accessible and up-to-date information

SoMe channels and review platforms (Maps, TripAdvisor) are trusted more

Website should be updated and provide more information about menu, drinks, and other important info (e.g. being animal-friendly)

We still sellin’ milkshakes???

Some inspiration ;)

Content Marketing Institute. 5 Steps to Creating an Effective Content Mix.

This content marketing mix pyramid is one of the best tools when planning the content.

It will be even easier to plan once the core values and strengths are identified!

Consistency, planning, and communication are crucial for creating an identity that will draw people in.

What's next..?

Currently, I am doing second part of my research – talking to the employees.

Once I am done with these discussions, I will provide an in-depth overview of the results. Then, we all will look for the best solutions to identified challenges and ways to furtherly embrace the strengths!

Stay tuned…

Appendix 2: marketing planning template – the final product