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Tourism Marketing Development of Eastern Gulf of Finland Area

Case: Sapokka small port

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<p>This research-based thesis studied the tourism marketing development of the Eastern Gulf of Finland area with the main focus on Sapokka small port. The main purpose of this thesis was to provide marketing proposals to the Sapokka small port. The main objectives were to improve the visibility of the destination by suggesting marketing proposals to the destination in order to help it to attract more visitors from land and sea.</p> <p>Theoretical part of the thesis provided information on marketing and different aspects of it including digital marketing and social media marketing. Additionally, it presented general theories on two different analysis methods including SWOT analysis and marketing mix which helped to have a deeper understanding on the tourism marketing situation of the destination.</p> <p>The current tourism marketing situation of Eastern Gulf of Finland area and its visitor numbers were analyzed and by distributing a survey in the Sapokka's guest harbor, many useful information was collected from boaters in the area. Moreover, the competitors of the Sapokka small port were studied and compared to the destination considering their boat parking price lists and social media marketing activities. Additionally, by studying the two mentioned analysis methods, the author analyzed the internal and external factors of the Sapokka small port</p> <p>Considering all the theories and analyses, this thesis was concluded with suggesting marketing proposals to the Sapokka small port. As the destination has very little marketing activities, it needs to develop its marketing strategies specially through social media to make the place more popular and attract more visitors.</p>		
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1 INTRODUCTION

The commissioner of this thesis is Interreg Central Baltic CBSmallPorts project. This project has implemented energy efficient investments in various small ports in the Central Baltic Sea as well as marketing a big number of them (Website of CBSmallPorts 2022). Sapokka small port managed by Marina Café Laituri as the main focus of this thesis is one of the harbors in the Central Baltic area which has been promoted by the CBSmallPorts (Heikkinen et al. 2022). Therefore, considering CBSmallPorts as the commissioner, Marina Café Laituri company is involved in this thesis with the main focus of it being to develop marketing communication plan for Sapokka small port.

The aim of this thesis is to come up with practicable proposals to the Sapokka small port by studying the theory on marketing and marketing communication, as well as the current tourism marketing situation of the Sapokka small port. Moreover, this thesis studies the current tourism marketing situation in Eastern Gulf of Finland in general, in order to be able to conclude the thesis with better results. This thesis has the goal of gaining adequate knowledge of the Eastern Gulf of Finland in order to achieve the best results and to come up with the best marketing proposals for the Sapokka small port as an important harbor in the area.

This thesis will result in proposing marketing strategies for the Sapokka small port through Instagram particularly as well as other possible and practicable ways. As discussed with Marina Café Laituri company's entrepreneur as the manager of the company who is responsible of managing the services offered by the destination, Sapokka small port does not implement any marketing practices except sharing contents related to the café/restaurant in the Marina Café Laituri Instagram and Facebook pages. However, the Instagram account is not active on a regular basis due to the commissioner not having enough

time or adequate resources for it. Therefore, it created a great opportunity for this thesis to study the marketing deficiencies of the destination and propose new communication plans in order to benefit Sapokka small port.

The author's connection to the CBSmallPorts project is that after doing an 8-month practical training for the project as a part of marketing and communication team, he continued his work in the project as a full-time project researcher which makes it an over a year working experience for the project.

2 COMMISSIONER AND CASE STUDY

2.1 CBSmallPorts project introduction

CBSmallPorts project as one of the projects led by Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (SAMK) with the focus on implementing environmentally friendly investments in the Central Baltic Sea's small ports, is the commissioner of this thesis. The project is a cross country project which includes 10 partners from different countries including Sweden, Estonia, Latvia and Finland (including Åland Islands). (Website of CBSmallPorts 2022.)

The project has the responsibility of implementing energy efficient investments in 13 small ports in the Central Baltic area. Moreover, the project aims to market mentioned small ports as well as many other ports in the region with the purpose of attracting more visitors from sea and land. (Website of CBSmallPorts 2022.) CBSmallPorts implements environmentally friendly investments in the small ports in order to reduce energy usage as much as possible (Heikkinen et al. 2022).

The CBSmallPorts project focuses on promoting and marketing the 13 small ports with investments made through different ways including social media,

workshops and spreading leaflets. Moreover, there are plenty of other small ports in the CB area which have been promoted by the project. The overall goal of the CBSmallPorts project is to improve the environmental friendliness of the small ports of the CB area, improve the efficient use of energy, promote green sailing, increase awareness of the Central Baltic Sea and market the small ports in order to attract more visitors. (Website of CBSmallPorts 2022.)

CBSmallPorts started to work in 2020 and its investments have been finalized by the end of the August 2022. During the project, although it was overlapped with the COVID-19 crisis, the partners managed to proceed pretty well and to hold different events, webinars and workshops both in person and online. (Website of CBSmallPorts 2022.)

CBSmallPorts project as the commissioner of this thesis, helped collecting needed information on the Eastern Gulf of Finland area and Sapokka small port itself. In the result of that, this thesis suggests marketing proposals for Sapokka small port.

2.2 Sapokka small port and Marina Café Laituri introduction

Sapokka small port, which is the case study in this research, is the biggest harbor in the Eastern Gulf of Finland area and is located in the city of Kotka. The city of Kotka is located on an island and the Sapokka small port is located on the shores of the southeast of this city. Sapokka small port is a main port which includes a guest harbor, and it offers various services to visitors from both sea and land. (Heikkinen et al. 2022.)

In addition to offering berths to almost 60 guest boats, Sapokka small port offers services including café, restaurant, live music, showers, sauna, laundry room, rental bikes, barbecue area, Meriniemi restaurant booking for events and Tennis court booking (Heikkinen et al. 2022). The harbor also offers cold swimming during the winter from November 1st to May 1st. All the mentioned services are managed by the Marina Café Laituri company which has an office

located in the cafe area. Sapokka small port is owned by the Municipality of Kotka but the activities and operations in this destination are run by Marina Café Laituri. (Website of Marina Café Laituri 2022.)

3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

3.1 Research objectives

After studying and doing research on the theory of different aspects of marketing including destination marketing and marketing development, this research analyzes how to attract more visitors to the destination. Additionally, it studies how to promote the destination and improve its marketing and marketing strategies which are considered as the objectives of the thesis.

The research studies the target groups (boaters) who are interested in visiting the Eastern Gulf of Finland area and particularly Sapokka small port and the factors they consider for traveling to this area. In order to do that, during a CBSmallPorts workshop in Kotka in the end of July 2022, the author has visited the place and spread a physical survey in the area in order to have a better understanding of the tourism situation. Moreover, a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis and a marketing mix analysis are done in order to study Sapokka small port's positive aspects as well as the challenges and issues that may prevent target audiences from visiting this destination. Additionally, in order to have a deeper understanding, the current tourism marketing situation of the Sapokka small port and the general marketing acts of Eastern Gulf of Finland area are studied and many useful information are gained from project managers in the region as personal communications.

The results of this thesis will be utilized as the marketing communication proposals for Marina Café Laituri company. The benefits and outcomes of this thesis for the Marina Café Laituri will be to have a better marketing and therefore, more visitors in the area and for the CBSmallPorts will be to help the project having better marketing results in the Central Baltic area and gain more success in improving the visibility of this specific part of the Central Baltic Sea.

The main research questions:

1. How is the current marketing environment of the case study?
2. What are the marketing deficiencies of the case study?
3. What are the marketing proposals for the case study to develop its marketing and visibility?

3.2 Research methods

This thesis is a research-based thesis, and the marketing proposals are mostly based on qualitative research. Although, as it includes a survey, quantitative methods have been used throughout the thesis as well. This research studies the theory on marketing development and destination marketing as well as analyzing the overall tourism situation of the Eastern Gulf of Finland area and particularly, the tourism marketing situation in Sapokka small port as the main case study.

The thesis uses secondary data analysis method in the form of qualitative research. The reason for using this method is that this research uses the existing data in order to make the best marketing proposals and save time and avoid unnecessary effort (Website of Thought Co 2019). Moreover, the research analyzes the challenges that the area and the harbor are currently facing and in the result of that, it will include marketing proposals to the Sapokka small port. In addition, a SWOT analysis and a marketing mix analysis are done in order to have a better understanding of specially the tourism marketing situation of the destination.

There are a few ways which are used for data collecting during the thesis process. As suggested by the commissioner, a survey is spread in Sapokka guest harbor during Kotkan Meripäivät (annual festival in Kotka) with the goal of having a better knowledge of target groups who visit the area (boaters) as well as their main reason of visiting the area. Being aware of target groups' characteristics, results in making more accurate and practicable marketing proposals. Additionally, valuable data on the tourism marketing situation and acts in the Eastern Gulf of Finland area from project managers in Cursor Oy have been gained and used in the thesis. Cursor Oy is a company with the goal of promoting tourism in the Eastern Gulf of Finland area (Website of Cursor 2022).

The thesis analyzes the current marketing practices of the harbor both during the high seasons and the rest of year. Studying the theory part related to the marketing in general and through social media is the other step the author takes in order to familiarize himself more with the theory in order to achieve better results. Moreover, the competitors of the Sapokka small port and their tourism situations are analyzed as they have an important effect on this thesis' case study.

3.3 Analysis methods

3.3.1 SWOT analysis

One of the best ways to evaluate a business's marketing situation is SWOT analysis which studies four different elements of a business including strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (Figure 1). SWOT analysis is a good way to analyze the competitive position of a business in order to have a better understanding of how to develop its marketing strategies. (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen 2019, 88.)



Figure 1. SWOT analysis (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen 2019, 88).

SWOT analysis is an essential technique to analyze a business's situation and an overall view of it and its factors can be seen in the Figure 1 (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2019, 153). In this technique of analysis, strengths are defined as the elements that make a business unique and separate it from other competitors. Strengths are the positive points a business has or offers. Weaknesses are defined as the elements which slow down a business or stop it from approaching higher levels and/or more benefits. Opportunities are defined as the elements that exist in the external environment of a business which can help it to improve or gain advantages compared to competitors. At last, threats can be defined as elements that exist outside of a business which can damage it. (Kenton 2022.)

SWOT analysis can be divided into two factors, internal and external. The strengths and weaknesses are considered as the internal factors which occur within the business while the opportunities and threats are considered as external factors. The internal factors study different elements such as the

performances, advantages, deficiencies and lack of resources by considering strengths and weakness. On the other hand, external factors study whether there is room for improvements in a business and what external elements exist in its environment which could have negative impacts on the business. (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen 2019, 90.)

Internal factors: In general, internal factors are defined as the components which exist within a company. In a SWOT analysis, by studying strengths and weaknesses, all the internal capabilities, resources and limitations can be identified. This helps a business to identify and evaluate its internal elements. (Kotler & Armstrong 2017, 74.)

Identifying the tangible and intangible internal factors of a business, helps it to plan new strategies to grow. SWOT analysis is one of the most effective tools to analyze the internal factors. Moreover, it can help identifying the external factors and offer a business, a bigger picture of how it performs. (Website of Indeed 2021.)

External factors: In general, the external factors are defined as the components which exist in the outside environment of a company. In addition to identifying the internal factors, SWOT analysis is an effective tool to identify the external factors. This method can help a business to identify both the opportunities and threats in the external environment which are all the external factors a business can either take advantage of or avoid as they may present challenges to the business's performance. (Kotler & Armstrong 2017, 74.)

External factors are the external trends which affect a business's functions. As an example, the marketing trends can be defined as external factors. Those trends can be considered as the opportunities of a business in case they can help a business's performance, or they can be considered as threats to a business in case they cause issues and add obstacles in the business's functions. (Website of Indeed 2022.)

3.3.2 Marketing mix

Marketing mix can be considered as one of the main techniques in modern marketing which helps businesses to have a better approach to their target markets. Studying marketing mix, is the first step in order to create the best marketing strategy in a business. (Kotler & Armstrong 2017, 70.) This analysis method is made up of four different elements in marketing, called 4Ps which can be seen in the Figure 2.

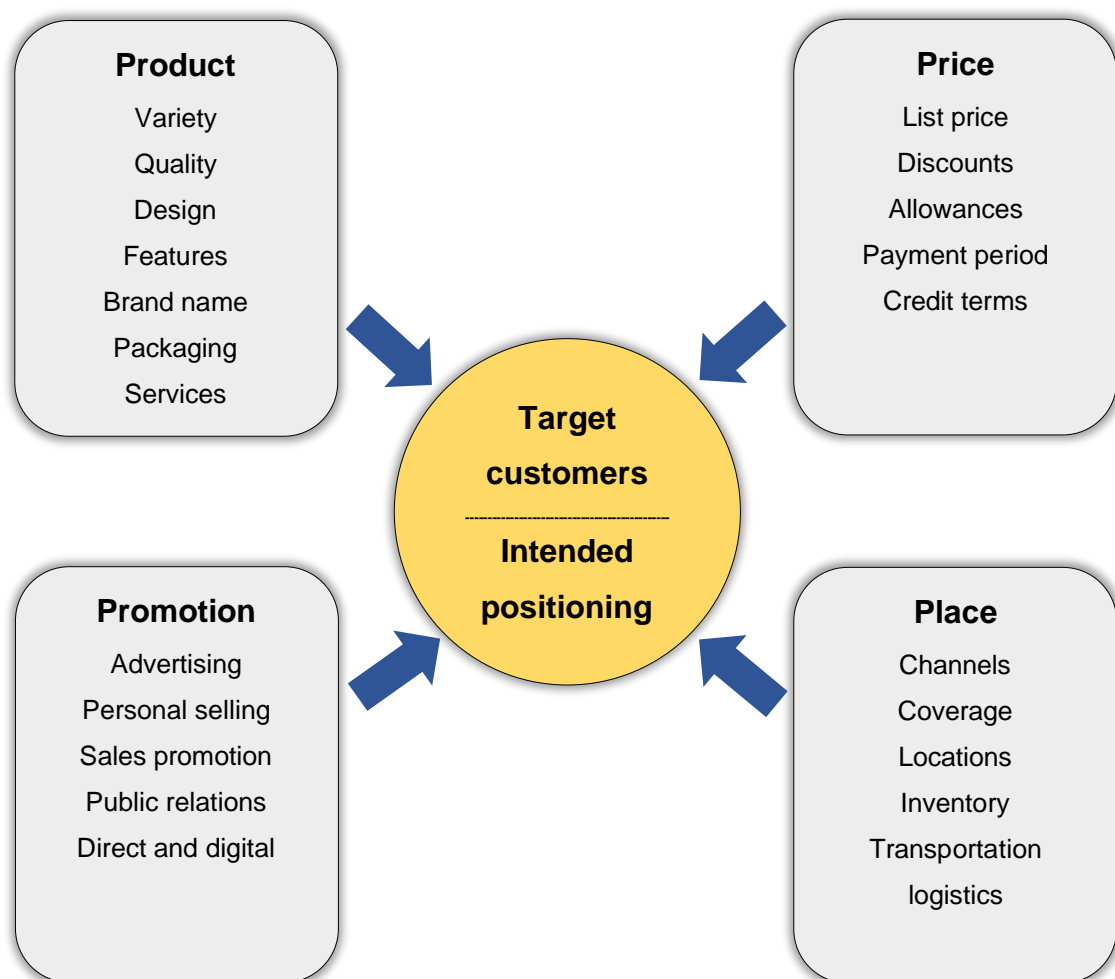


Figure 2. Marketing mix 4Ps (Kotler & Armstrong 2017, 73).

Figure 2 shows a glance of the 4Ps of marketing. In this research, in order to have a better understanding of the marketing mix, each factor is explained in more detail.

Product is the services or the products of a business which are offered to the customers. Product can be intangible in case it is defined as services or tangible in case it is defined as products. In order to have the best possible marketing strategies, it is essential to identify product in a business. (French & Gordon 2015, 87.)

Price is the amount of money customers pay in order to achieve/use the services and products of a business. When it comes to the price, it is considered as money but, in some cases, it can be considered as elements such as time or effort that customers spend to receive products. (French & Gordon 2015, 87.) In developing marketing strategies, a marketer needs to consider the real value of the products, discounts, competitor prices and other elements (Kenton 2020). As an example, in some cases businesses increase their products' prices in order to make them more luxury while in other cases, they may lower the prices to be able to attract more consumers. Therefore, it is very important to consider how to put prices on products depends on the business's situation to approach the best marketing strategies. (Twin 2022.)

Place is defined as the place that a business plans to sell or distribute their products and services. It can be physical such as stores or virtual such as online shopping. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2019, 212.) Place can also be defined as the distribution channels which are the process of selling or distributing the products. Therefore, in some cases advertising the products through right channels and platforms is considered as place as well. All the activities of a business in order to sell or offer their products and services are under the "place" element. (French & Gordon 2015, 87.)

Promotion refers to advertising, promoting, marketing and all the activities which make the customers to purchase/use the products and services of a business and draw the market's attention. Promotion is pretty essential in marketing as it can convince the customers that the products are well priced, and they need to purchase them. (French & Gordon 2015, 87.) For developing

marketing strategies of a business, it is very essential to combine place and promotion elements to be able to approach the consumers (Twin 2022).

4 MARKETING DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Marketing definition

Marketing is defined as all the activities of a company or a business with the purpose of promoting products or services. It is an essential way to connect the customers to the sellers or the businesses. (Website of Ama 2017.) Marketing and promoting as the most known aspects of businesses, can be implemented through different methods such as advertising in order to attract audiences' attention. Therefore, there are different types of marketing which can be used depending on a business and its environment. (Twin 2021.)

All the activities within marketing, have the purpose of drawing customers attention and to create good connections with them as well as making and keeping profitable relationships with them. In other words, marketing is simply defined as all the activities that result in attracting customers while growing a business's profits. (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen 2019, 5.)

In order to gain more customers, a business needs to promise, provide and deliver values and satisfaction to the customers. Marketing looks for potential customers who are interested in the products or services that a business offers. Therefore, matching the products or services to customers is a main task in marketing which will result in more benefits for a business. (Twin 2021.) Moreover, marketing is not just about selling services/products to customers but as mentioned, it needs to provide customer satisfaction as well. In order to achieve that, a business needs to know the customers, be aware of their

needs, develop the products or services, promote them and at last sell them. (Kotler & Armstrong 2017, 22.)

In general, marketing is a process that within it, businesses and customers create profitable relationships. Therefore, businesses or organizations engage customers, create relationships and build customer value through marketing. It should be mentioned that a good marketing results in an increase in demand for services/products that a business provides. (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen 2019, 4.) Nowadays, successful companies and businesses are totally focused on their customers/target groups as well as marketing. They aim to attract new customers constantly while trying to keep and also develop current customers. Attracting new customers, needs creating and promising values and keeping already existing customers, needs delivering those values. (Kotler & Armstrong 2017, 22-25.)

While the most known parts of marketing are advertising and selling products, marketing is much broader than those. In today's marketing, creating satisfaction and keeping the consumers satisfied could be considered as the most essential parts of marketing. In fact, businesses need to create relationships with the consumers and develop their products or services and in the result of that, offer them customer values. (Kotler & Armstrong 2017, 25.)

As mentioned, the businesses' relationship with customers is pretty important in marketing. A good marketing considers the customers in the center of its attention and aims to attract loyal customers and in the result of that, creates values in a business. (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen 2019, 4.) The marketing process which results in creating value for customers can be seen in the Figure 3 (Kotler & Armstrong 2017, 25).

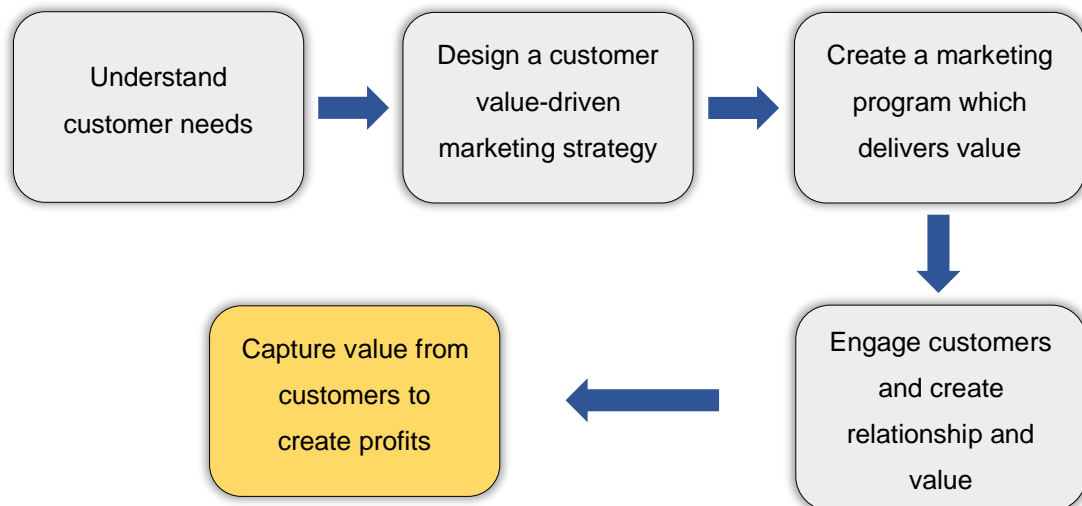


Figure 3. Marketing process (Kotler & Armstrong 2017, 25).

Figure 3 shows the five steps which need to be done in order to create and capture values from customers. Understanding the customers and their needs, creating marketing strategies based on values, creating marketing plans to provide and deliver values and creating relationships with customers are the four essential steps in marketing process. (Kotler & Armstrong 2017, 25.)

As mentioned earlier, marketing considers the Four Ps of marketing mix which are product, price, place and promotion. All four elements are quite essential in marketing of a business. (Twin 2021.) In short, *product* can be defined as a package of features/uses which can be either tangible or intangible and it can be services or goods. *Price* is clearly the costs or the quantity of money to acquire products and services. *Place* is the distribution channel and where the products are sold. *Promotion* is the strategy which is used in order to encourage customers to use or purchase products and services. (Website of Ama 2017.) “Marketing mix” is explained in more detail under the “Analysis method – Marketing mix”.

4.2 Marketing strategy

Marketing strategy could be defined as a plan to find potential customers who are interested in products or services that a business offers. This plan needs

to be able to seek the consumers who are interested and develop them into customers of a business. (Barone 2021.) By using marketing strategy, businesses are able to find their customers and create customer value in order to have profitable relationships with them. Therefore, it helps the businesses to identify their customers and provide them with suitable services/products with the purpose of satisfying them while gaining profits. (Kotler & Armstrong 2017, 68.)

A well-planned marketing strategy needs to have enough data on different elements such as target audience. Additionally, a marketing strategy must have the ability to cover the Four Ps of marketing mix. (Barone 2021.) In order to create the best possible marketing strategy for a business, it needs to study marketing mix as marketing analyses help businesses to have better marketing plans (Kotler & Armstrong 2017, 69).

4.3 Marketing development

Business or companies can expand their services/products to the new markets in order to develop their marketing strategies. In other words, they can provide their existing services in the new markets or the markets that have not been invested in yet. (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen 2019, 81.) Another way of marketing development strategy for businesses is for them to improve their existing services/products for their existing target markets. This shows the importance of the marketing development plans for businesses as it can grow them and help them approach new markets and new customers. (Website of Indeed 2021.)

In order to start planning and to create marketing development strategies, all different opportunities need to be considered and analyzed. This is the most important step in marketing development and expansion into new markets. Businesses have many opportunities in different situations and identifying those can provide needed information for developing new marketing strategies. (Website of Indeed 2021.)

Expanding a business into new markets needs identifying the new targets/audiences (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen 2019, 81). This means if the business is planning to grow by providing services to the new markets, it needs to analyze for example, the new market's interests and motivations. In addition, a SWOT analysis could be a really helpful way to analyze the market and the competitors. At last, spreading a survey is a good way to have more data on the market and its needs. (Website of Indeed 2021.)

After identifying and analyzing the opportunities, a business needs to consider how to either expand into a new market or provide new services/products to the existing market (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen 2019, 81). Basically, it needs to be decided in what areas the business plans to grow. This can be growing by focusing on sales, products or even new geographic area. The next step is to create marketing strategies by planning deadlines to approach goals. An essential element that needs to be considered before creating marketing development strategies, is what resources the business can use, as any business growth plan needs specific resources such as equipment, marketing material and of course time. (Website of Indeed 2021.)

The last step is to create the marketing plans considering all the mentioned elements in order to reach the target markets (Chen 2022). A big variety of marketing channels exists which could be used depending on the business and the new strategies. Marketing could be done through printed or digital materials such as leaflets, local marketing, blog posts, social media and all the digital marketing platforms. This depends on the target markets and the channels they use. (Website of Indeed 2021.)

4.4 Digital marketing

Digital marketing has been improved constantly since World Wide Web has been created, and it gradually became a quite essential part of marketing (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2019, 5). Websites, social media and smart phones

as the main aspects of technology, have become main cores of modern marketing. By using these technologies, companies/businesses have been able to engage with their customers easier and faster than ever. (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen 2019, 11.) In order to have a better understanding of digital marketing, Five Ds need to be considered which can be seen in the Table 1. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2019, 5-6.)

Table 1. Five Ds of digital marketing (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2019, 5-6).

Five Ds	Definitions
Digital devices	Target audiences use different digital devices in different situations. They use for example mobile phones, tablets and desktop computers.
Digital platforms	Target audiences use both websites and apps. They access websites via browsers, and they use a variety of Apps such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and YouTube.
Digital media	There are different channels to interact and communicate with target audiences such as emails, messages, social media and advertisements.
Digital data	Target audiences' profiles and interactions with businesses need to stay private and keep protected.
Digital technology	Digital technology is the marketing technology that businesses use.

Digital marketing which involves all the Five Ds shown in Table 1, focuses on interaction with the audiences (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2019, 5-6). This marketing method includes all the elements of marketing which are implemented through digital channels such as social media, apps and websites. Nowadays, as most people use smartphones, marketing has been made easier for businesses and customers to quickly use their phones to make purchases or make use of different services. (Barone 2022.) In other words, all the activities such as communicating and delivering which are done through digital technologies are considered as digital marketing. Through digital

marketing, customers communicate with the businesses (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen 2019, 11).

Although digital marketing is a new method of marketing, it is changing and developing constantly. The growth of technology has made significant changes to the traditional marketing and transformed it into the marketing using the main cores of the technology. (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen 2019, 11.) Currently, businesses use different channels to implement digital marketing. The main channel of the digital marketing could be the websites and **website marketing**. Websites offer different services to target customers and are the main channels for digital marketing with the possibility to be used by mobile phones. **Email marketing** is the other digital marketing channel which is still a good and effective way. Through this marketing channel, businesses can be in touch with their potential customers and the ones who are interested in their services. There are a big variety of businesses and brands which use email marketing as one of the most useful ways to grow their businesses. (Barone 2022.) Although, it should be mentioned that this digital marketing channel should be used consistently and at the same time it should not be disturbing to the customers. Therefore, the contents of email marketing should be useful and somehow interesting for them. (Gunelius 2018, 20.)

The other digital marketing channel is **social media marketing** which includes different platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. Social media marketing can be considered as one of the main ways of increasing the awareness of a business as it lets businesses to engage with a large global audience easily. (Mahoney & Tang 2017, 180.) It can be used as a marketing platform and even a direct tool of selling products and services. Those marketing activities can be implemented by creating campaigns, effective contents and promoting posts. (Barone 2022.)

Digital marketing's main focus is on customers. Businesses can gain more profits while identifying the customers' needs using digital marketing. At the same time, customers can have easy access to information on the businesses

and purchase their products or services. Moreover, it is pretty important how the businesses offer their products on the internet channels as they need to pay special attention to customer service, easy accessibility and so on. Therefore, digital marketing offers essential benefits for both customers and businesses as well as providing businesses with the opportunities to grow their businesses. (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen 2019, 14.)

5 DESTINATION MARKETING

5.1 Social media marketing

In general, social media channels such as Facebook and Instagram have had a huge influence on businesses within the last few years and the rise of social media has had significant impacts on marketing (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen 2019, 11). Therefore, businesses have started to use social media channels to market their products and services. Through social media marketing, they have been able to communicate with their customers and also promote their products further in order to gain new customers. (Hayes 2022.)

Social media channels provide businesses with a variety of different promoting strategies and even customer engagement strategies. In social media marketing, there are five main elements which can be seen in the Table 2. (Hayes 2022.)

Table 2. Five key elements of social media marketing (Hayes 2022).

Five Elements	Definitions
Strategy	Planning the goals and contents that will be shared through social media.
Planning and publishing	Creating drafts of what will be shared on social media including the types of the contents (videos or photos) and the timing of the posts to be shared.
Listening and engagement	Observing and keeping track of what customers' opinions are about the business. Many businesses use different tools to track their social media's engagements.
Analytics and reporting	Analyzing the customers' engagement and reporting them.
Advertising	Advertising and acquiring advertising tools on social media are a very useful way of promoting a business.

The five elements shown in Table 2 need to be considered in order to include them in the social media marketing. It needs to be identified which element to be used in order to solve the issues a business is facing. (Hayes 2022.)

Through social media businesses can engage with their customers. They can make the customers aware of services they offer and get them interested in them. Moreover, through social media, businesses can listen to their customers and easily have access to their feedbacks and insights which can be by checking posts' likes, comments and even direct messages. (Coles 2015, 30.)

As one of the main channels of social media, Instagram has become an essential part of any business's marketing plan. Nowadays, in case a business does not use Instagram as a marketing tool, it can be judged as an incomplete business. Therefore, Instagram can be considered as the best channel to display visual content of businesses which is a need for any type of businesses or organizations. Through Instagram, businesses can have storytelling.

Moreover, businesses can approach a very big number of people and targets as well as engaging with several communities. (Robertson 2018, 5.)

Although Instagram is a tool which is used by people to be in touch with their families and friends, 90% of Instagram users follow a business that they are interested in. As brands and businesses use Instagram Ads to promote their services/products, 50% of Instagram users are more attracted to a brand when they notice them as Ads which shows the importance of brand promotion on this platform. In addition, Instagram Reels which are short videos made in Instagram, are a very effective way to promote businesses as the videos have the opportunity to be seen globally by a big number of people. (Website of Instagram Business 2022.)

The other important social media platform which needs to be considered for social media marketing is Facebook with over 2 billion active users which makes it the largest social media platform. Same as Instagram, Facebook is the best place for people to follow the brands/businesses they are interested in while engaging with their family and friends. As Facebook offers ad campaigns for different targets, it is a good place for businesses to market their services or products. Through Facebook, businesses are able to significantly increase awareness on their services, release, introduce and sell their new products and offer customer service by approaching the customers in need via Facebook Messenger which is used to send messages through Facebook. (Diamond & Haydon 2018, 13.)

5.2 Target marketing

Target market is a pretty essential element to consider in marketing and it can be defined as a group of people who have the same characteristics or interests which can be considered by a business or a company as customers or possible customers in the future. By having more knowledge on the target groups, a business can plan better and more accurate marketing strategies. (James 2021.)

Target markets can be categorized in different ways. They can be categorized either specifically or widely such as being categorized based on their ages, locations or even incomes. (James 2021.) Target markets are generally categorized based on four different segments including demographics, geographics, psychographics and usages (Kolb 2017, 139).

Demographics as the main category include different groups which every target can belong to a specific group such as age group, gender group, income level and ethnicity group (Kotler & Armstrong 2017, 90). Geographics are including locals, nationals, internationals and regionals. Psychographics are categories related to lifestyles and interests including nightlife, excitement, relaxation and adventure. The last and forth segment of target markets is Usages which includes day visitors and traditional tourists. (Kolb 2017, 139.) In this research and within the survey spread in Sapokka small port, all four segments have been considered in order to have a better understanding of the target market in the area.

Some businesses offer products which can be appealing to everybody or a very broad range of customers. Therefore, a business needs to consider the target audiences based on the products or services it offers. As a result of that, there are many businesses and organizations who spend a huge amount of money on some marketing strategies such as social media campaigns, offers or advertisings in order to define their intended target market. (James 2021.)

Gaining knowledge on target market is one of the most important parts of marketing development and building marketing strategies. Therefore, in order for a business to offer the most convenient products or services, it needs to know and consider the interests and needs of its target audiences which are visitors of the place in case of a tourism destination. (Kolb 2017, 136.)

A business or an organization needs to identify the market and target segments which it can gain the most profits and customer values. Smaller

businesses or the ones with small number of resources could rely on only one or just a few segments while, the larger businesses could have larger range of services for a big variety of markets, and they may be able to satisfy different types of customers in different markets. Moreover, a safe decision for businesses is to choose one specific segment when they start investing in a new market. (Kotler & Armstrong 2017, 69.)

5.3 Value proposition

In order for a business to plan the most effective and beneficial marketing strategies, it needs to identify its value proposition to provide best services to customers (Kotler & Armstrong 2017, 31). Value proposition is what makes a business different than competitors and is defined as the benefits it offers to customers. Businesses need to offer values to the target markets and the people who use their services/products which makes it a really important element in marketing. (Twin 2022.) Considering value proposition, businesses' main focus should be on customers, and they need to be able to attract more customers, satisfy them and keep growing them. It needs to be mentioned that the first step for businesses to create value proposition is to identify customer's needs. (Kotler & Armstrong 2017, 69.)

Value proposition is the main reason why target markets use the services offered by businesses, and it needs to be introduced to them directly via the marketing channels that a business uses. In other words, if a business uses a website to promote its services, it needs to be easily noticeable what is the value proposition and why the customers need to buy or use the services. Additionally, value proposition needs to be unique to a specific business which makes the business different than competitors and is the reason that makes the business stand out. (Twin 2022.)

Value proposition needs to clearly explain how different the services/products are compared to other similar ones. The reason why customers use the

services needs to be communicated with customers in a direct way. (Twin 2022.)

6 SAPOKKA SMALL PORT ANALYSIS

6.1 Marketing in Eastern Gulf of Finland area, Kotka and Sapokka small port

The Eastern Gulf of Finland area consists of an archipelago located in the Baltic Sea which is characterized by several small islands that makes it a unique place for visitors from Finland and abroad. This area's most important destinations are including Hamina, Loviisa, Virolahti, Pyhtää and Kotka. (Website of Visit Finland 2022.)

In the Eastern Gulf of Finland area, Kotka as its biggest city is a very popular destination for visitors from land as well as boaters. This destination offers beautiful city parks, a nice city architecture, maritime museum, Maretarium aquarium and much more. (Website of Visit Kotka Hamina 2022.) Because of the unique attractions that Kotka offers as well as it being the main port in the Eastern Gulf of Finland area, it is very important to study its tourism marketing situation and how the whole area is being promoted in order to have a better understanding of the situation in Kotka's small port area (Sapokka).

According to project manager M. Selin (personal communication 14.9.2022), Kotka and Eastern Gulf of Finland area's main marketing strategies are being done mainly through digital marketing. The Visit Kotka Hamina website is the main marketing platform and includes all the needed information on the Eastern Gulf of Finland area, which is available in English, Finnish, Swedish, Russian and German. Therefore, the main promotion plans of the area are focused on this website. Moreover, the area is pretty active on other social media platforms including Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and YouTube. The

area is pretty consistent in sharing visual contents on the social media pages specially on Instagram and Facebook and they have recently started to be more active on TikTok as well. (Website of Visit Finland 2022.) Although the marketing team in the area is working pretty well with good plans and strategies in order to promote the area, the eastern part of Finland is not still as popular as western part including Turku archipelago, Mariehamn and Åland Islands. As M. Selin suggests, the area will be more known if the marketing is consistent enough within the next few years. Creating bigger audience and attracting more target groups needs a consistent marketing strategy which could be really helpful in this case (Diamond 2016, 241).

As COVID-19 pandemic has affected most businesses, it has had many impacts on the tourism industry and visitor numbers in the Eastern Gulf of Finland area as well. In order to have a better understanding of the tourism situation before, during and after the pandemic in Kotka area, Visitory website has shared many useful information on the tourism situation and visitor numbers which can be seen in Table 3 and 4. As the high season for tourism in the area is during summer, visitor numbers during July and August are analyzed in this research. Table 3 shows the visitor numbers in July in Kotka from 2019 to 2022. (Website of Visitory 2022.)

Table 3. Visitor numbers in July 2019 to 2022 in Kotka (Website of Visitory 2022).

Year	Month	Total visitor numbers	Domestic visitors	Foreign visitors
2019	July	12,800	10,900	1,900
2020	July	12,800	12,500	310
2021	July	17,200	16,800	340
2022	July	12,700	11,900	820

In the Table 3 it can be seen that interestingly, during the pandemic the total number of visitors has not faced a big change and it not only has not been decreased but, the total number has had a significant increase in July 2021.

On the other hand, the number of foreign visitors in Kotka has been significantly decreased. It has changed from 1900 people in July 2019 to 310 people in July 2020 and even in the 2022 it has not totally recovered yet. At the same time the number of domestic visitors is increased during the pandemic. In the Table 4, the visitor numbers from August 2019 to 2021 can be seen. (Website of Visitory 2022.)

Table 4. Visitor numbers in August 2019 to 2022 in Kotka (Website of Visitory 2022).

Year	Month	Total visitor numbers	Domestic visitors	Foreign visitors
2019	August	9,600	8,000	1,600
2020	August	8,700	8,400	320
2021	August	9,100	8,700	350
2022	August	8,800	8,100	730

In the Table 4, it can be seen that overall visitor numbers in August 2019 to 2022 have dropped while the foreign visitors' numbers have significantly decreased with an increase in domestic tourism similar to the numbers in July during the same years. Additionally, according to Visitory, the top four international visitors in Kotka during summer in order of the biggest visitor numbers to smallest are Russia, Germany, Estonia and Sweden. (Website of Visitory 2022.) Overall, by studying the visitor numbers within the last few years it can be clearly seen that during the pandemic and in the summertime which includes the most visitors in the area, domestic tourism has faced an increase while international tourism has considerably decreased in Kotka which is in the result of the travel restrictions and other issues during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the target market in the area is including both boaters and land visitors, the mentioned numbers in Table 3 and Table 4 do not specify how many of the visitors are from the sea. According to project manager M. Selin (personal communication 14.9.2022) in 2022 the general number of boaters in the area

is much less compared to the last few years. Moreover, as it is shown in Table 3 and Table 4, the total visitor numbers in summer 2022 have dropped compared to even before the pandemic. There may be different reasons for that but, the main reasons could be the significant increase of fuel prices for boaters in 2022 as well as the Saimaa Canal being closed to the boaters. The Saimaa Canal, which is 43 kilometers long, runs from Lake Saimaa and is an essential canal in Finland. Over half of this canal is located in Finland and the other half in Russian border. Therefore, sea transportation from Russia to Finland and other European countries used to take place in this canal. (Website of Go Saimaa 2022.) According to project manager A. Merilinnä (personal communication. 23.9.2022) the main reason for the decreased number of visitors (both boaters and visitors from land) in the area could be the lifting of the travel restrictions due to COVID-19 which resulted in the domestic travelers who traveled the area during the pandemic becoming international travelers.

As mentioned, Kotka and the whole Eastern Gulf of Finland area are pretty active in marketing and promoting the area through digital marketing but, at the same time, Sapokka small port also has a few activities in promoting the visitor harbor, its services and café as well. Marina Café Laituri which manages the visitor harbor and all the services offered in the area, promotes its brand through digital marketing. The platforms used for the marketing purposes are Instagram and Facebook as well as a website which includes all the information on the harbor, café and all other services. The website is available in Finnish and in English for the visitors from abroad and as it is easy to use and includes easy to access information, it can be considered a pretty good marketing platform. (Website of Marina Café Laituri 2022.)

The Instagram and Facebook pages are named Marina Café Laituri and their contents are mainly focused on the café/restaurant/foods with a few exceptions which are related to the live shows/events as well as other harbor services. In addition, Facebook page includes more content related to the events compared to the Instagram page. The most social media activity is

during the summertime specially when there is a live show or an event in the area. But overall, the platforms are not really active both in summertime and other seasons. (Website of Instagram 2022; Website of Facebook 2022.)

In addition to the mentioned services offered by Marina Café Laituri, it manages the bookings for different events such as weddings, birthdays and meetings. in the Meriniemi restaurant which is located next to the Marina Café Laituri. Although this restaurant which is an old and famous place in Kotka has been closed for a while, it can only be booked for events while on normal days it is closed. (Website of Marina Café Laituri 2022.) Marina Café Laituri is responsible for managing all the booking related tasks including bills, giving keys and so on. (Laine, Personal communication on 7.6.2022).

In Sapokka's guest harbor, normal parking price for boats is 25 euros per day and for the bigger boats who use side mooring the price is minimum 50 euros per day which is the price for boats under 15 meters. Every meter overing 15 meters costs 5 euros more for the boater. If the boat is left at the harbor without the need of using any services such as water and electricity, the parking price would be 5 euros for maximum 3 hours and 10 euros for maximum 8 hours. Moreover, as an offer, short time visitors who use café services, do not need to pay for their short stay at the harbor. (Website of Marina Café Laituri 2022.)

6.2 Survey

During the Kotkan Meripäivät (Kotka Maritime Festival) 2022 which is an annual four-days summer festival including many different activities, the author visited Kotka with the CBSmallPorts project team (Website of Meripaivat 2022). During this visit, he spread a survey in the Sapokka's guest harbor (which is attached to the appendix) in order to have better understanding of a part of target groups who are boaters.

The survey was made online, and it was available both online with a link and physical on papers. The participants of the survey are 100 boaters who were

docking their boats and staying in the Sapokka's guest harbor during the festival. This survey and its results can provide good data for this research to have a deeper understanding of the situation in the harbor as well customer satisfaction. In the Figure 4, the age group of the participants can be seen.

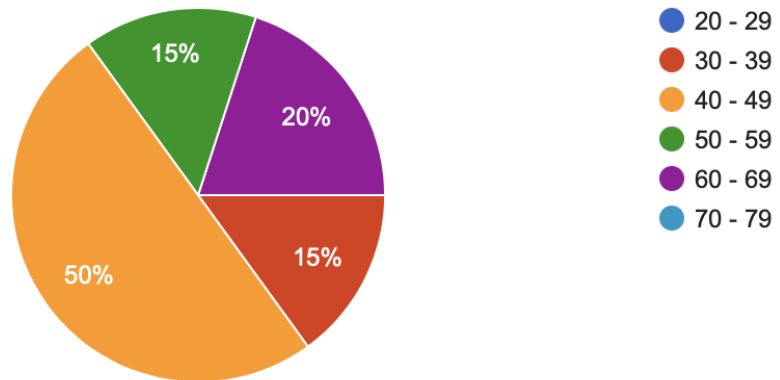


Figure 4. Age group of the boaters who visited Sapokka small port during Kotkan Meripäivät.

As it is shown in the Figure 4, the participants were 30 to 69 years old and half of them were in their 40s. Therefore, it can be concluded that most participants were middle aged boaters and additionally, according to the survey, they were all from Finland which based on the mentioned statistics, shows that the number of international visitors or better to say boaters in the area is not much (Website of Visitory 2022). In Figure 5 it can be seen whether the survey participants were visiting Sapokka small port for the first time.

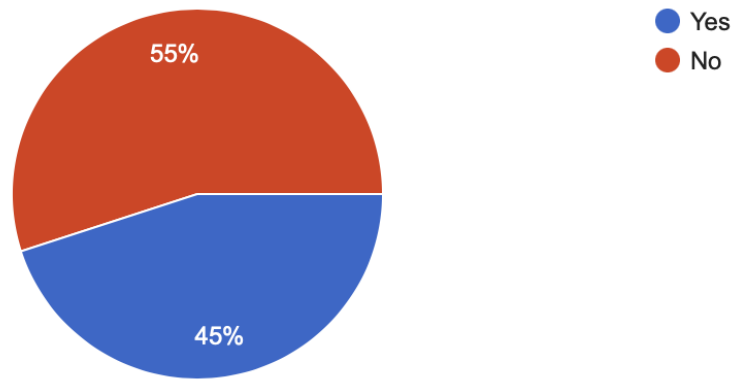


Figure 5. The percentage of the participants who were visiting the Sapokka small port for the first time.

As seen in Figure 5, over half of the participants (shown in red) have had visited the harbor before and 45% of them were visiting the harbor for the first time. According to Manager J. Laine (Personal communication on 7.6.2022) there are many visitors in Sapokka small port who have become boaters during pandemic and started to sail within Finland as domestic travelers. Therefore, the boaters who visited the area for the first time could be the new boaters who have just started to sail within the last couple of years. In the Figure 6, The reason of visiting the area by boaters can be seen.

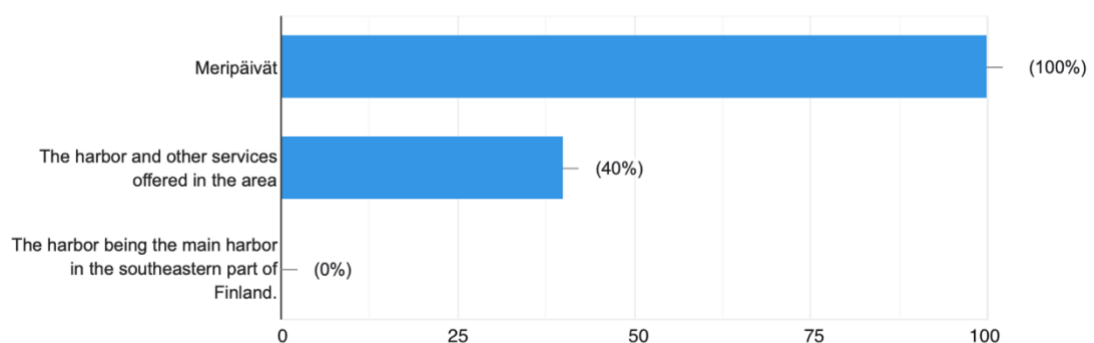


Figure 6. The reason of visiting Sapokka small port.

As it is shown in the Figure 6, all the participants of the survey were visiting the port in order to visit the area during Meripäivät and 40% of them had

additionally another reason to visit the area which is the harbor and the services it offers. Clearly, as the survey was spread during the Meripäivät, most visitors from land and sea could possibly be visiting the area because of the festival. In the Figure 7, it is shown which services in the Sapokka small port are used by boaters who participated in the survey.

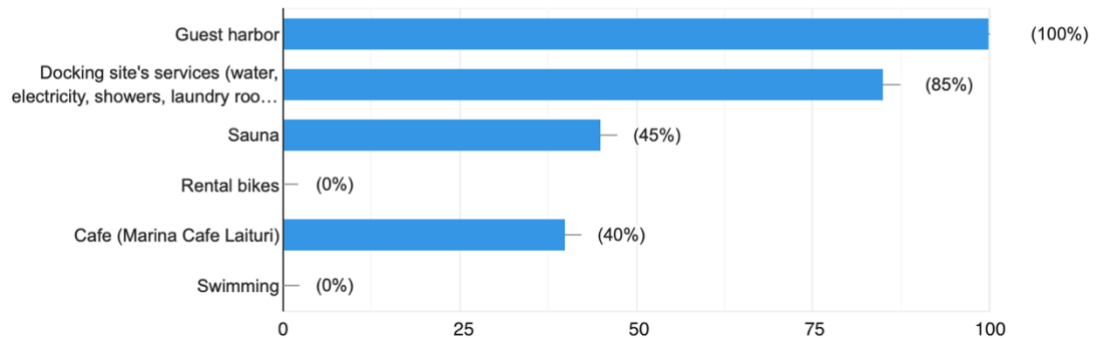


Figure 7. The services in the Sapokka small port which were used by boaters.

Figure 7 shows most of the survey participants used the guest harbor and its services such as water, electricity and showers, and almost half of them used sauna. Under 50% of people from the participants who were all boaters visiting Sapokka's guest harbor used café services (Marina Café Laituri). The café is pretty close to the guest harbor which makes it a convenient option for the boaters to eat and use café services. During Meripäivät, there have been many different restaurants, street foods, cafes and bars around the harbor and in Kotka which could be the reason why more survey participants did not use the café services. At last, the satisfactory grade from survey participants is shown in the Figure 8.

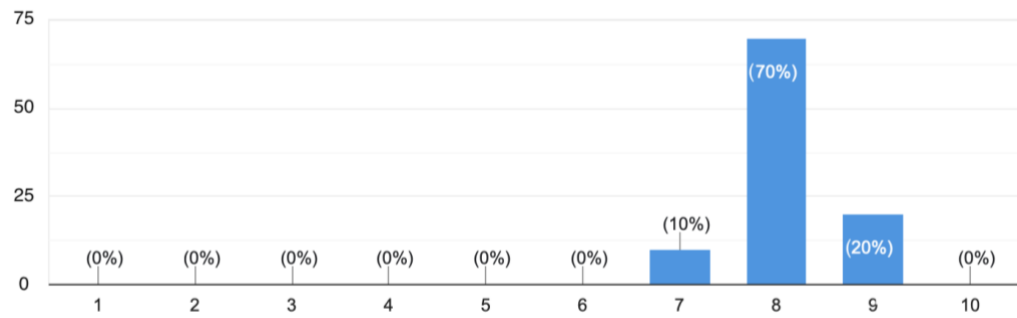


Figure 8. Satisfactory grades (out of 10) from survey participants.

The survey participants graded the overall offered services in the Sapokka small port and the results of the grades range between 7 and 9 out of 10 which can be seen in Figure 8. This shows the customers were satisfied of the services although there could be still room for improvements.

6.3 Comparing analysis to other small ports

As mentioned, the Western Gulf of Finland area is a very popular tourism destination specially for boaters. This area includes many islands and different places to visit including Turku archipelago and Åland Islands and in addition to that, accessibility to other European countries such as Sweden from this area is pretty easy. In the result of that, the overall tourism situation of the area is better than the eastern part of Finland with higher number of tourists. During July 2019, Turku archipelago had 20,900 total visitors while in the same period in the eastern part of Finland, Kotka, Hamina and Loviisa regions as the main areas of the eastern part, all together had 17,300 total visitors. Moreover, in August 2021, the western part had 16,400 total visitors while, the eastern part had 14,700 total visitors. For a deeper understanding of the tourism situation in these areas, visitor numbers in Turku archipelago and in Eastern Gulf of Finland area (Kotka, Hamina and Loviisa) in the same periods are compared in Table 5 and Table 6. (Website of Visitory 2022.)

Table 5. Visitor numbers in July 2019 to 2021 in Turku archipelago (Website of Visitory 2022).

Year	Month	Total visitor numbers	Domestic visitors	Foreign visitors
2019	July	20,900	18,700	2,100
2020	July	24,700	24,000	640
2021	July	29,200	28,500	700

Table 6. Visitor numbers in July 2019 to 2021 in Kotka, Hamina and Loviisa regions (Website of Visitory 2022).

Year	Month	Total visitor numbers	Domestic visitors	Foreign visitors
2019	July	17,300	14,000	3,300
2020	July	19,600	18,900	710
2021	July	27,900	27,100	810

As shown in Table 5 and Table 6, Turku archipelago is in a better tourism situation with higher tourist numbers compared to the Eastern Gulf of Finland area. Therefore, the western part of Finland could be considered as the main competitor of the eastern part.

In order to analyze Marina Café Laituri, it is essential to study its competitors as well as comparing them to each other. The western competitors of Sapokka small port which are studied in this research are three different regions in Turku archipelago including Seili Island, Airisto Marina and Kansäs. Moreover, one other competitor is studied which is Kaunissaari, an island located in Pyhtää in the Eastern Gulf of Finland area. In the first part, the harbor pricing in all areas is compared to each other and in the second part, their social media activities are compared.

6.3.1 Harbor pricing analysis

Seili Island is a pretty famous place in Finland which because of its history and old hospital and mental asylum as well as beautiful nature has many visitors specially during summertime. The harbor in Seili which is one of the ports that CBSmallPorts project has implemented energy efficient investments in, includes a guest harbor that offers different services such as water, electricity, new renovated Sauna by CBSmallPorts project and laundry, and all the services are available from May to September. The boat parking pricing for the harbor is 30 euros per day, and day visits which means visiting the guest harbor by boat only for a few hours are free of charge. In addition, guests who stay over and pay 30 euros, are able to use all the harbor services free of charge. (Website of Visit Seili 2022.)

The other important harbor in Turku archipelago is Airisto Marina which is another small port included in the CBSmallPorts project. This small port is located in Stormälö Island in Pargas, Finland. CBSmallPorts project has installed new floating piers as well as solar panels in this small port. Airisto offers many different activities such as minigolf, tennis and jet ski rental. This place provides boaters with 110 berths including a guest harbor that offers services such as water, electricity, sauna and shower. (Heikkinen et al. 2022.) All the mentioned services make this place a popular place for visitors. The pricing for the guest harbor in Airisto Marina is 26 euros per day in order to stay over and this price includes the free usage of harbor services. The visiting price for docking boats in the harbor is 4 euros for four hours as long as the boat departs before 20:00. (Website of Airisto Marina 2022.)

The third region is Kasnäs which is located in western part of Finland. The guest harbor in Kasnäs with 100 berths is close to the beach and it provides visitors with different activities such as minigolf, tennis and nature trails. The services in the guest harbor such as sauna, laundry, electricity, water and restaurant are included in the docking prices for boats which is 30, 40 and 50 euros per day depending on the boats' length. This price during wintertime is

28 euros for all kinds of boats which includes the free entrance to a gym and spa. (Website of Kasnäs 2022.)

The fourth destination is Kaunissaari Island's harbor. The harbor in this island is located in the southern part of it which offers plenty of berths (Website of Pyhtaa 2022). Kaunissaari offers different services including "Kaunissaaren Maja" restaurant which also offers a sauna, a café, a store as well as guest harbor services including water, electricity, shower, toilet and barbecue. The harbor pricing in this area is 25 euros and 30 euros for boaters who stay overnight, and the prices depend on which piers are being used. The price for visiting the guest harbor is 10 euros for a maximum of four hours stay. (Website of Kaunissaari 2022.) An overall view of the harbor pricing in the four regions and Sapokka small port can be seen in Table 7.

Table 7. Overview of the harbor pricing in Sapokka, Seili, Airisto Marina and Kasnäs.

Harbor	Price per day (Euro)	Price per day for bigger boats (Euro)	Visiting price (Euro)
Sapokka	25	Minimum 50	5 (3 hours) and 10 (8 hours)
Seili	30	---	0
Airisto Marina	26	---	4
Kasnäs	30 summers and 28 winters	40 and 50	---
Kaunissaari	25 And 30	---	10 (4 hours)

As shown in Table 7 to have a better understanding of the harbor prices, docking prices for staying overnight are pretty similar in all the harbors with Sapokka small port being one of the cheapest ones. For bigger boats this price is almost similar in Sapokka and Kasnäs while there is no specification

available for the prices in Seili, Airisto and Kaunissaari. Therefore, it can be concluded that at least Sapokka and Airisto have similar prices for docking of the bigger boats. At last, the prices of day visits without the need of staying overnight is (not available in Kasnäs), free of charge in Seili, 4 euros in Airisto, 10 euros in Kaunissaari and 5 to 10 euros in Sapokka depending on the length of stay which can be totally free of charge if boaters use the Marina Café Laituri services which can be a really good offer as it encourages them to visit the café as well.

All in all, the harbor pricing in Sapokka small port can be considered as strength of the place. The prices are very similar to competitors and there is no need of them being changed. They are even a few euros cheaper than the competitors in the west Finland which can be maintained like that for now in order to attract more boaters.

6.3.2 Social media activity analysis

Seili island does not have a specific social media page and all the content related to the destination are shared on @VisitSeili Instagram and Facebook pages. The contents are related to all the aspects of the island and its tourism attractions. There are about 36 posts shared on @VisitSeili Instagram and Facebook from June to September 2022 with almost daily stories which shows the destination has a good activity on social media as the main technique of their marketing.

Airisto Marina same as other competitors, shares its contents on @AiristoMarina Instagram and Facebook pages. The activity is not as much as @VisitSeili pages with about 19 posts and not many stories shared from June to September 2022 on both platforms. The contents are nice photos from restaurant and other services of the harbor.

Kasnäs, uses Instagram and Facebook as the marketing platforms under the name of @kasnasmarina_official for Instagram and “Kasnas Marina” for

Facebook. From June to September 2022, they shared about 3 posts on their Instagram and 11 posts on their Facebook page which shows they do not have enough activity on social media for marketing purposes. Their contents are related to the restaurant and other harbor services with not so nice photos shared.

Kaunissaari Island has no activity in social media and the marketing content related to this area is shared in the Pyhtää's social media platforms. Pyhtää uses different platforms including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube and is pretty active with sharing content.

In Marina Café Laituri the social media platforms for marketing purposes are Instagram (@marinacafelaituri) and Facebook. From June to September 2022, 13 posts have been shared on Instagram and few more on Facebook (mostly related to the events such as live shows). The social media pages are named after the café and the contents are mostly related to the café and summer live shows as well as a very few posts related to the harbor itself.

To compare the three western regions and Kaunissaari to Marina Café Laituri, Seili has a good social media activity as the destination uses @VisitSeili Instagram and Facebook for social media marketing which is a destination management marketing (DMO) and is different than a café/guest harbor business. On the other hand, Airisto Marina, Kasnäs and Marina Café Laituri, all have lack of activity in social media. They do not share posts and stories consistently even during summertime, which is a high season for tourism, and in case of Marina Café Laituri, the profile picture and the shared photos do not seem to be attractive enough specially posts related to the café and its services. Although, Airisto Marina does not have enough activity to promote the destination, it offers slightly more attractive contents on social media which can be considered as advantage.

All in all, the Marina Café Laituri needs to have more activity in social media specially because social media is the only channel they use for the marketing

purposes. As mentioned, the overall tourism situation in the western part of Finland is better with higher number of total visitor numbers which makes it more essential for the eastern part of Finland and specifically, Sapokka small port to put more effort to promote and market the destination.

6.4 SWOT analysis

As mentioned, SWOT analysis in marketing is an effective analyzing technique in order to evaluate the tourism marketing situation of a business. In this research, this analysis method helps to have a deeper understanding of positive and negative elements from within and outside environment of Sapokka small port (Marina Café Laituri). By studying a SWOT analysis on the case study, all the deficiencies as well as performances are analyzed which include internal and external factors which are impacting the destination from outside environment. Therefore, this analysis method helps to identify the functions of the case study. A glance of the four elements of the SWOT analysis in the Marina Café Laituri considering all the services this destination offers, can be seen in Table 8.

Table 8. SWOT analysis of Sapokka small port (Marina Café Laituri).

<p style="text-align: center;">Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Big variety of services offered ▪ Good quality services ▪ Customer satisfaction ▪ Use of digital marketing ▪ Offering a large pier ▪ Low number of employees ▪ Café special offer ▪ Good pricing ▪ A known harbor in Eastern Finland ▪ Proximity to Helsinki ▪ English version on website 	<p style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not active marketing ▪ Use of one social media page for all the services ▪ Lack of social media campaigns ▪ Not so attractive content and content designs ▪ Confusing purpose of the social media pages
<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have better marketing ▪ Provide more unique offers ▪ Use more marketing channels 	<p style="text-align: center;">Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dropped number of foreign visitors ▪ Dropped number of total visitors in 2022 ▪ Short tourism high season ▪ Lower visitor numbers in Eastern Gulf of Finland area compared to west ▪ Eastern Gulf of Finland area being less known compared to west ▪ Proximity to Russia ▪ Saimaa Canal being closed

Marina Café Laituri has plenty of main strengths as seen in Table 8. Offering a big variety of services to the customers could be one of them. As mentioned, it offers guest harbor and harbor services such as water and electricity as well as café services, sauna and other services which all could be considered as strengths of this place. According to Manager J. Laine (personal communication on 7.6.2022) who has the responsibility of managing all the services, during the cold seasons which there are less or no boaters in the harbor, the main revenue is from the café. This is an essential strength as the business can be active all year. Moreover, the harbor uses digital marketing through Instagram and Facebook as the main marketing platforms which is

pretty good as this is the best technique in the modern marketing. The harbor is well known in the area as it is the main and biggest port with a large pier and additionally, the customer satisfaction is in a good range based on the survey done in the guest harbor. Additionally, proximity to Helsinki both from land and sea is an advantage compared to western part of Finland and Turku archipelago.

The main weakness in Marina Café Laituri is to not to being active enough in marketing and through social media pages. In order to grow the place's business and have more visitors from land and sea, it is pretty important to invest more in marketing specially through digital marketing and social media. In addition to lack of activity on social media, the photos and contents if the pages do not seem to be interesting enough.

The opportunities that Marina Café Laituri has is to improve its marketing strategies by using new marketing channels. As this place and all three of the mentioned competitors use the same digital marketing channels which are websites, Instagram and Facebook, Marina Café Laituri can take advantage of using new social media platforms which may help the business to place itself ahead of its competitors eventually. Moreover, Marina Café Laituri has the opportunity to have more offers other than the one already exists. Offers can help to draw more attention from the visitors.

The threats that are damaging the destination or may damage it eventually, are lower visitor numbers compared to the western part of Finland. This could be because of the western part being more known and the easy accessibility to other European countries from that area while, in the Eastern Gulf of Finland area and specifically Kotka, there is no access to other European countries except Estonia and additionally, the area's proximity to Russia is another threat that damages eastern part due to the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022. At last, as mentioned, Saimaa Canal is closed which is another threat worth mentioning. This results in having less boaters from east.

6.5 Marketing mix analysis

As an important technique to market and promote a business or the products/services of it, marketing mix should be considered. In this case, the 4Ps of the marketing mix in Marina Café Laituri are studied.

Product: As mentioned, product can be tangible and intangible. The tangible products of Marina Café Laituri are the guest harbor offered for boaters, the café and its service, all harbor service including sauna, water, laundry, electricity, showers, bathroom, bicycle rental, outdoor grill, Meriniemi provided for events and weddings through bookings and a tennis court ready for the reservation on Meriniemi's court. Moreover, the winter swimming is another product of the place worth mentioning. (Website of Marina Café Laituri 2022.)

Price: As mentioned, the price for docking boats varies depending on the boat length and the length of stay. The sauna is free of charge for the boaters who stay overnight and there is also the possibility of use it privately which needs to be booked beforehand. The sauna is suitable for 4 to 10 people. Moreover, the Meriniemi restaurant building can be booked for events as well as the tennis courts in the restaurant building. (Marina Café Laituri 2022.) The prices are shown in the Table 9.

Table 9. Price list of all Marina Café Laituri services (Marina Café Laituri 2022).

Services	Price (Euro)
Boat parking per day	25
Boat parking per day (bigger boats)	Minimum 50
Boat parking for a few hours	3 hours: 5 8 hours: 10 If café services used: 0
Bicycle rental	3
Adapter use	Deposit: 20
Private sauna	Weekdays: 200 Weekends: 300
Sauna for Marina customers	Per hour: 30
Towel rental for marina customers	5
Winter swimming	Normal price: 6 Children (5 – 12 years old): 3 Students: 5 Morning swim (7 – 10 am): 3 Winter season tickets (10+1): 60 Morning season tickets (10+1): 30
Meriniemi restaurant booking	Mon-Fri: 500 Fri-Sat: 900 All weekends (Fri-Sun): 1900
Meriniemi restaurant cabinet booking	Mon-Fri: 250 Fri-Sat: 400 All weekends (Fri-Sun): 900
Tennis court booking for members	Per hour: 6

As it can be seen in the Table 9, Marina Café Laituri offers winter swimming as well which the tickets can be purchased as seasonal tickets. Additionally, there are different prices for the students, children and morning swims.

Place: Sapokka small port could be considered as the main harbor in the East Gulf Finland area and the most popular one in the area. Additionally, Kotkan Meripäivät festival attracts a large number of visitors from land and sea to this area annually during summer which helps to make Kotka and the Sapokka

small port more known. This makes the place a suitable destination to offer the services such as the guest harbor and its services as well as the café.

Promotion: Marina Café Laituri promotes its business through digital marketing channels. In social media, it shares the stories and the information on events or working hours. Moreover, a summary of the Sapokka small port, Marina Café Laituri, the harbor services and link to boat docking reservation is available on the Visit Kotka Hamina website (Website of Visit Kotka Hamina 2022).

7 MARKETING PROPOSALS AND CONCLUSION

Within this thesis, by studying the theory on marketing and different methods of analysis, the tourism marketing situation of the Sapokka small port (Marina Café Laituri) is evaluated. Analyzing and studying the competitors of the destination and their marketing acts as well as developing a survey helped to have a better understanding on the tourism marketing situation in order to conclude this thesis with marketing proposals for the case study.

In the result of considering the competitors' tourism marketing situation, they are in a somehow similar situation with the exception of Seili Island since a destination management organization (Visit Seili) has the responsibility of promoting it. They lack consistency and activity in their social media marketing. Marina Café Laituri offers a well-made website including all the necessary information of the port and its services which is easy to access and navigate with the possibility to access the information in English. Although, the information on booking tennis court and sauna are still only available in Finnish. On the other hand, as mentioned, the case study is not active enough in social media even during the summertime which is considered as the high season for tourism. As the main marketing strategies of the Eastern Gulf of Finland area are being implemented through digital marketing and social

media, it is a very effective way for Marina Café Laituri as well to promote its business through social media and to be more active. (Website of Marina Café Laituri 2022.)

According to Manager J. Laine (Personal communication on 7.6.2022), in summertime there are about 8 to 10 employees who work to offer the services and this number in wintertime is about 3 employees. During all seasons the manager and also his wife work in the place as well, although they do not work behind the desk. Therefore, there is not enough time and resources to spend on improving social media neither during summer nor other seasons.

As a marketing proposal, an effective way for the Marina Café Laituri to improve its marketing is to start talking and making agreements with one or a few universities depending on their situation such as SAMK and XAMK. This can be done by sharing on social media as well in order to inform visitors if they need trainees. By doing so, the universities can offer the students to work in the Sapokka small port during the high season as practical training. Marina Café Laituri can allocate the marketing related tasks to the students. They can share daily and weekly posts and stories and even prepare some contents for the wintertime, which is when they have finalized their work, in order to make it easier for the case study to keep being active even during wintertime. Moreover, with the help of students, the case study can develop its marketing to other platforms such as YouTube and TikTok. In the result of that, Marina Café Laituri does not necessarily need to spend budget on improving its marketing and there is no extra time needed from the manager or other employees. It is a certainly useful experience for the students who study business, marketing or tourism related programs as well. Additionally, due to impacts of COVID-19 pandemic, there are many businesses who do not need students or interns anymore, which makes it difficult for the students to find a place for their practical trainings. Consequently, this idea helps students every year to find a good place to work and gain experiences.

Marina Café Laituri can spread surveys in order to have a better understanding of the customer satisfaction and deficiencies in its services. It can gain more information on its tourism marketing situation and therefore, improve its marketing strategies even further. The survey can be spread annually during high seasons or even during Meripäivät festival. This task can also be done by the trainee student/s in case Marina Café Laituri offers place for practical trainees.

The other marketing proposal for the Marina Café Laituri is to provide more packages and offers to visitors from land and sea. The offer that already exists is pretty good which helps the boaters to park their boats in the area for a few hours and use café services without the need to pay for the parking.

All in all, Marina Café Laituri has certainly the opportunity to improve its marketing. This place provides visitors with different activities and services, and it can increase its visibility. As Eastern Gulf of Finland area is making more effort on growing the tourism situation of the area, Marina Café Laituri can also develop its tourism marketing situation in order to gain more visibility.

8 COMMISSIONER FEEDBACKS

Minna Keinänen-Toivola who is the CBSmallPorts project manager has given feedbacks as this thesis' commissioner. The commissioner's opinion on the thesis' topic goes as follows;" Mr. Khabbazi's thesis consists of 47 pages on small port marketing development using Sapokka small port as a case. The theme of the thesis is based on the Interreg Central Baltic CBSmallPorts project theme and key goal: to market Central Baltic area's small ports to attract more local people and visitors to the ports. Due to short season and limited resources, marketing activities in the many small ports are very limited. The theme is very relevant, as small ports provide an environmentally friendly opportunity for tourism." (Keinänen-Toivola, 2022.)

The commissioner has mentioned whether this research is satisfactory to the CBSmallPorts project. The feedback goes as follows;” The work and the thesis itself, has been clear in process and well planned. The research methods are well selected and used in practice. The marketing development consists of relevant aspects and destination marketing is well planned. The questionnaire made provided the customer aspect, including sailors, boaters and other visitors to small port. The interview to Sapokka small ports provides view of the small port operator. Comparing the Sapokka to other small ports deepens up the analysis on marketing. Marketing proposal to Sapokka could be a bit longer or structured to a “to do list” for small ports.” (Keinänen-Toivola, 2022.)

At last, the commissioner has mentioned whether this research could be useful for the CBSmallPorts project and whether it could help the project to achieve its goals;“ The thesis has added value to CBSmallPorts project as a commissioner, as well as to Sapokka small port as a case. The thesis met CBSmallPorts project’s goals, and the thesis is very useful to small port developers. Mr. Khabbazi has been self-oriented in the thesis process and in writing of the thesis. It has been very nice to co-operate with Mr. Khabbazi within his thesis work.” (Keinänen-Toivola, 2022.)

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APPENDIX 1

The survey used during the Kotkan Meripäivät



Kotkan Meripäivät 2022

Survey on Sapokka port area and the services it offers

What age group are you from? *

- ☐ 20 - 29
- ☐ 30 - 39
- ☐ 40 - 49
- ☐ 50 - 59
- ☐ 60 - 69
- ☐ 70 - 79

APPENDIX 2

What country are you from? *

Your answer _____

If you come from other countries, how did you get to know Sapokka port area?

☐ I got to know this place because of Kotkan Meripäivät event.

☐ From Instagram

☐ From Facebook

☐ From websites

☐ Other: _____

APPENDIX 3

Is it the first time you visit Sapokka port area?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other: _____

What does/did attract you to Sapokka port area? (Or the main reason to visit ^{*} this area)

- ☐ Meripäivät
- ☐ The harbor and other services offered in the area
- ☐ The harbor being the main harbor in the southeastern part of Finland.
- ☐ Other: _____

APPENDIX 4

What kind of services do you use in the area? *

- ☐ Guest harbor
- ☐ Docking site's services (water, electricity, showers, laundry room)
- ☐ Sauna
- ☐ Rental bikes
- ☐ Cafe (Marina Cafe Laituri)
- ☐ Swimming
- ☐ Other: _____

How satisfied are you with the offered services? *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○