



Digital Marketing in SMEs: Enhancing Business Strategies through Student Collaboration - A Case Study of Somejoutok

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Abstract

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<p>This thesis investigates the integration of an innovative digital marketing strategy in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the role of student collaboration in this context. Focusing on a case study of the Finnish company Somejoukot, the research explores how the company can harness digital marketing to enhance its business models and value propositions to attract SMEs. It delves into the unique challenges and opportunities inherent to SMEs in the digital marketing landscape, highlighting the potential of student involvement as a means to cost reduction.</p> <p>The study combines quantitative and qualitative methods, including surveys and interviews, to provide a comprehensive view of the current state of digital marketing among Finnish SMEs and students' practical involvement. The key findings showcase the case company's unique business model to include students and it proves the rarity of in-house marketing enhancement availability in the market. It registers interest in such company offers.</p> <p>The primary findings highlight the significant demand for customised services to target the broader niche market segment effectively. Additionally, strategic approaches and cost considerations are essential in successfully converting leads. Furthermore, there is a notable lack of capability among SMEs in executing effective marketing strategies. Students' proficiency in marketing, particularly in areas such as paid advertising and content creation, is the most suitable service capability. Key challenges include ensuring timely access to learning resources for clients and the complexity students face in delivering diverse marketing services across various sectors.</p> <p>The conclusion validates the business idea and marks a co-creation possibility between all three parties, case company, students and SMEs, a fit. In addition, it highlights positive recommendations for business improvement, which would enhance the business model. A concrete plan of services, SWOT analysis, customer profile and a framework fit.</p>
Keywords SME- Small and medium enterprises; DM-Digital marketing; Students;

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1 Introduction

This thesis explores the complexities of business development that stand at the intersection of digital marketing solutions for SMEs with the collaboration of students. The research was in-pinned by the pioneer and Co-founder of the company Somejoukot, Noora Lainio. Through a comprehensive exploration, the writer aims to verify the challenges, benefits, and transformative potential that can influence the business model and its value proposition to mould improved business decisions for the targeted digital marketing market and student collaboration. In the context of abbreviation, SMEs stands for small and medium enterprises, which are companies with under 250 employees with a turnover of under EUR 50 million a year. Digital marketing, or DM, will be later reviewed under the literature review.

1.1 Background and Context of Case Company- Somejoukot

The following research focuses on a case study for a yet-to-be-confirmed start-up or small company business development. The difference between both conveys that Startups typically concentrate on developing and testing new business models that can disrupt or initiate markets. In contrast, small businesses usually operate in more founded markets and rely on verified business models (SARWAY, 2022) . Comprehending what to name "Somejoukot" business development will be addressed after a meticulous market and value proposition comparison. The current company's value proposition is to offer solutions and coaching in digital marketing at small and medium enterprise levels. To do so, "Somejoukot" will address students as its employees, supporting their career initiation or/and studies side by side with engaging, flexible, remunerative, and professional coaching in the practical marketing business world. SMEs and students must receive advantageous inputs to validate their success while undamaging the case company. Because the company is in a very early stage, there is no concrete plan and model. However, the angle of approach is to empower students to do 360-degree marketing for outbound organisations, meaning all its marketing services, while enhancing outbound companies' in-house marketing with a marketing mentorship programme of two to four hours a week plan choice. See Fig 1.

Social Media packages

	Light - 2 hr / week	Medium - 4 hr / week
Social media plan based on goals and target groups	✓	✓
Web site content healthcheck and basic updates	✓	✓
Google etc search healthcheck		
Content creation and publishing on own Social Media accounts	✓	✓
Producing pictures and videos/vlogs*		✓
Dialogue with customers (answering to comments etc)		✓
Publishing content on other relevant Social Media groups		✓
SoMe Specialist training and coaching 15-30 minutes per week included	✓	✓
Report on activities and results bi-weekly	✓	✓
Other activities: Newsletter to customers, customer communication rewriting, blogs – agreed separately		✓

Figure 1. Case company initial plan by Noora Lainio

1.2 Research Problem and Objectives

Small and medium-sized enterprises correspond to about 90% of business and over 50% of employment worldwide, which form the pillar of many economies (Weerakkody, 2021). In Finland, the number of businesses has grown fiercely in the last decades, reaching its peak in 2020 with 294,965 companies, of which merely 0.2% are large enterprises. Of all companies in Finland, 93.1% have less than ten employees and 69% account for single-person business owners (Statistics, 2020). In calculations, SMEs generate over half (58%) of the 445 billion euros in total turnover for companies in Finland (Avikainen, 2023).

In the rapidly growing digital age, the significance of digital marketing cannot be overstated. In the US, 47% of enterprise owners run the marketing independently, and 46% of SMEs fail because they are unsure whether their marketing strategies are working (Zhou, 2023). Despite the pivotal role of SMEs in the market, these enterprises frequently lack the expertise to harness the full potential of digital marketing strategies. The common saying, "If a business isn't on Google, it might as well be invisible", rightfully captures today's consumer mindset. It highlights the importance of using digital platforms for brand presence and consumer engagement.

This gap presents a unique opportunity for innovative businesses to step in and form a bridge on such divided fronts. As such, "Somejoukot" will tailor digital marketing solutions for SMEs, recognise the unique challenges and opportunities inherent to SMEs, and craft effective and valuable strategies. However, the dynamism of the digital marketing landscape demands constant innovation and fresh perspectives. This is where the vacant

potential of student collaboration comes into play. Students, especially those immersed in business, marketing, and technology, bring a contemporary perspective. Their fresh academic exposure, combined with a Generation Z native understanding of digital trends, makes them invaluable assets for business development in marketing. By collaborating with students, "Somejoukot" not only gains access to innovative ideas but also fosters a culture of continuous learning and development within its company while supporting the build-up of new professionals. Although students present a high importance for the business model, it's not as simple to have them juggling between work and studies. Working students encounter numerous obstacles in such a lifestyle and can very easily become overwhelmed and snowball into substantial health problems. Some of the problems can be seen in time management, burnout, lower GPA, and dropouts (LUMUGDAN, 2022).

In short, the problem explored by this thesis is that SMEs lack the full potential of digital marketing in their success, and students' collaborations must be tactful not to ruin their lives. That's where the case company angles a validate fit.

The main question for the thesis:

Do SMEs perceive a service like 'Somejoukot', which involves students managing digital marketing initiatives while improving in-house marketing skills, as a fitting solution for their digital marketing needs?

This question aims to address the initial idea's appeal of the case company and its validation fit under the characteristics of the willingness of companies to purchase the service, the identification of an ideal market segment, the understanding of customer preferences and barriers, and identification of initiating a pilot program company. In addition, it seeks to acknowledge how and why the students might fit into the case company's business model. For that purpose, a review of factors related to students' working hours, remuneration expectancy, and what skills the University in marketing degree offers students will be analyzed.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Thoughtfully, this research shall galvanise insights into individual enterprises at the national level in Finland with a high chance of influencing worldwide reasoning, offering a comprehensive exploration into the multilayered challenges and opportunities in both SMEs on digital marketing and working students environment.

As previously reviewed, in today's dynamic academic and professional landscape, Finland stands at an intersection of the ever-increasing digital marketing presence, and having SMEs often fail to progress with its capabilities isn't a good sign (Zhou, 2023). Although predominantly "Somejoukot", as the case company for this exploration, has tailored benefits, the findings are particularly pertinent for other shareholders in Finland, small businesses/start-ups and educational institutes. By strengthening the academic, professional, and digital marketing growth of working students in SMEs, Finland ensures a well-educated, experienced, digitally skilled future workforce and prospers companies. This holistic approach promises sustainable economic growth, business development, and a thriving, inclusive society (Bhosale1, 2020).

Moreover, in the study-working realm, this document understanding can aid in developing, but not limited to, targeted training programs, flexible schedules, mentorship initiatives, health counselling, and financial aid, ensuring that student employees can contribute efficiently while also performing at a high GPA and positive health.

For instance, Noora Lainio, who is at the front of the case company, has stated her initial talk with Laurea University of Applied Sciences to align with her program, and this document might enlighten the path to appeal to other University of Applied Sciences like Haaga Helia. Nevertheless, the study will benefit other shareholders aligned with education: Vocational schools, Financial institutions (Kela), Student union associations and Governmental entities, such as the National Union of University Students in Finland (SYL) and the Ministry of Education and Culture, to voice policy-making initiatives.

Students themselves will benefit from the significance of the study. Since this document will have high input from students, it will serve as self-reflection and as a guidebook for others on the same path. Giving a vast understanding of best practices on work insertion.

Beyond the previously mentioned study-working realm are corporate gains. Considering that this paper will hear the saying of SMEs from the perspective of their association with digital marketing, it is safe to say that those and others will gain high insight for self-reflection and a valuable understanding of how digital marketing can boost their growth when, for instance, aligned with "Somejoukot" or similar enterprises value propositions. This study offers a deep dive into digital marketing adapted to the unique Finnish market, offering practical insights and competitive advantage.

1.4 Delimitations & Scope

The scope of the study is anchored in Finland, predominantly in the Uusimaa region, on a specific time frame. The writer will collect a unique socioeconomic and educational landscape snapshot that might not reflect on other countries/regions as of changes in the industries, technologies, and social conditions post-period-study. While the research casts a vast range of targets in SMEs and education institutes, large enterprises, high schools, and vocational programs are off the hook.

Although the study explores marketing for SMEs, the writer's expertise is limited to its basics. This means that while the digital marketing realm is thoughtfully examined, the broader detailed strategies are not part of the equation, and more particularly, traditional marketing is left in the shadow. On the other hand, the writer is more proficient in business administration, so the centred focus is on business development.

From the theoretical perspective, the research will lean heavily on specific theories, not exhausting exploring all possible options. The same goes for the methodological standpoint, where certain techniques and tools like surveys, personal interviews, and case studies will play a bigger role, overlooking observation and experimental data analysis.

Furthermore, the writer has a language barrier in the country, limiting its sources and channels to common-speaking languages. The writer also lacks a vast network in the country, which can affect the extent of the research.

Finally, because the thesis concentrates on two particular objectives, DM (digital marketing), on SMEs and students, it is to underline that both are treated as equal worth, and one is not more important than the other, meaning equivalent attention and effort for the investigation.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

The thesis commences with an introduction that offers a glimpse of Noora's vision for her company. Within the introduction, the writers lay out driving problems and objectives, highlighting the pivotal role of the study and its contribution to a bigger cause. In addition, this chapter exposes the boundaries of the research, emphasising delimitations on marketing strategies as a key point. Lastly, a brief overall review of the structure is acknowledged.

Transitioning from the introduction is the literature review, where the material investigation

begins. In this chapter, the writer follows up on existing field studies to expose familiarisation and accommodation for his own goal. The narrative unfolds the role of digital marketing in SMEs with opportunities and challenges. More to the matter, the characteristics of successful business development and concrete working-students' revisions. In addition, sizable theoretical associations towards digital marketing and students will be assessed.

The methodological chapter will picture the data collection design and data analysis procedures.

As the narrative continues to the empirical part of the study, things get very interesting, offering qualitative and quantitative insights into the findings. The empirical chapter dissolves in three mindful tactics: divergent for covering the surroundings, convergent for findings interpretation within the case company and transformative as of the recommendations to take into consideration.

First divergent, the spotlight shifts to start-ups in digital marketing tailored for SMEs with an overview of the international and Finnish landscape. The same chapter evolves into strategies that can shape a competitive edge, identifying niche markets and business models in digital marketing.

Second, divergent, analysing and founding a value proposition for recruitment, needed skills and universities' contribution to seamless working student foundations.

Third, convergent data analysis and merger of insights gathered. Will explore a discussion of the findings in correlation with the thesis's literature and case company operations.

Last but not least, the cliché chapter is the conclusion, serving as a transformative view, where a summary of the key findings is highlighted in contributions to the broader field of knowledge and its implications to the case company. This chapter will also offer recommendations, improve business model propositions, and lay the ground for future research directions.

The narrative is rounded off with a comprehensive list of references and appendices, providing depth and context to the research journey.

2 Literature Review

This literature review aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the existing body of knowledge on the thesis topic. It seeks to identify, analyse, and synthesise the key theories, concepts, and research findings, offering a foundation for the current study and a holistic understanding of the synergy in its divided angles. Because of the extension of this document, the writer divided the body into themes, digital marketing and its integration on SMEs, and students in working life. The literature will explore past and modern journals' and credible and recognized authors. In addition, the targeted information is to be as close to the Finnish ecosystem as possible.

2.1 Digital Marketing and its integration on SMEs

2.1.1 Overview

Definition

The etymology of the Digital Marketing (DM) word often leads to combinations of “Internet marketing”, “online marketing”, “e-marketing” and others. Although they are not synonyms, the concept is relatively similar. Upon the analysis of other pieces of literature, the writer's most complete and suitable definition was .by the Institute of Direct and Digital Marketing.

"Digital marketing is an integrated use of information channels in the virtual space to support the marketing activities of the organisation, focused on generating revenue and customer retention by recognising the strategic importance of digital technologies and developing a comprehensive approach to improve online service delivery" (Ivan M. Gryshchenko, 2022)

Digital marketing's modern importance and its landscape

The digital revolution has steered a new marketing era, where online channels and technologies are leveraged to reach and engage target audiences. A holistic perspective of the numbers is presented by Bankmycell, who updated figures on mobile users worldwide, indicating 6.92 billion in 2023 and predicting an increase to 7.33 billion by 2025 (Ash Turner , 2023). As of October 2023, Statista displays 5.3 billion users with access to the web; of them, 4.95 billion are present in social media (Petrosyan, 2023). Sam Carr states that back in the 70s, on average, people would see from about 500 to 1600 ads a day,

which was traditional marketing - billboards, TV promotions, and newspapers (Carr, 2021).

Then again, as companies work in ingenious ways, the thinking of positioning its brand/product/service in the consumer's mind was inevitable and came early with the expansion of technology and access to the internet. The first boom in advertising can be linked to the year 2000 after Google launched its AdWords. Since then, digital marketing has seen a massive expansion, and Google has managed to grow its advertising revenue every year for the past 22 years and made over \$223 billion in 2022 alone, just from advertising. In 2007, the market research firm Yankelovich surveyed 4110 people and estimated that the common consumer saw up to 5,000 ads per day, and we can only assume by now it has doubled (Carr, 2021) (Statista, ei pvm).

Small businesses today have access to an unprecedented range of marketing opportunities. A significant development in this landscape is highlighted by an infographic from MarTech, a company specialising in connecting various 'enterprise' tools for digital marketing management. Its infographic shows a remarkable 6,521% growth in the marketing technology sector from 2011 to 2022, with nearly 10,000 unique companies offering diverse solutions within MarTech's network (Scott Brinker, 2022). While the accessibility of marketing automation tools and social media platforms presents vast opportunities for smaller entities, it also creates a complex ecosystem that can overwhelm SMEs.

2.1.2 Theoretical concepts

The following Table 1 links the writer's reviewed theories in association with digital marketing importance. These theories collectively provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of digital marketing, emphasizing the importance of user engagement, generational influences, strategic advertising, and content relevance in the digital domain.

Table 1. Theories reviewed associated with digital marketing

<i>Author & year</i>	<i>Theory</i>	<i>Key Concept</i>	<i>Correlation with Digital Marketing</i>
<i>(BANTON, 2023)</i>	Network Externalities	The value of a product or service increases as more people use it.	The more users on a platform, the more valuable it becomes for both users and advertisers. For users, the value lies in connectivity and content variety. For advertisers, a larger user base increases the potential reach impact of their marketing campaigns and sharing trustworthiness through reviews gives credibility.
<i>(Durkin, 2013)</i>	Social Network Theory	Theory helps uncover patterns and their effects on attitudes.	It gathers and examines how customer engagement affects brand image and promotional effectiveness. Its theory helps influence individuals, known as "potential users," and holds significant manipulation in networks and strategies. (Durkin, 2013)
<i>(Karen Smola, 2002)</i>	The Generational Theory	Suggests that the period when a person is born and grows up can influence their view of the world.	In the current digital age, characterised by technology and social media, generational theory becomes relevant in understanding how different generations engage with available information and their own values, narrowing customer behaviour predictions and consumer mindsets.
<i>(Lavidge, 1961)</i>	Hierarchy of Effects Model	Develop and explain how advertising works and influences consumers. Very similar to the AIDA model * (link)	<p>The theory proposes guidance with the assistance of a framework to move consumers through certain stages in the online consumer view, from clicking an ad to buying the product.</p> <p>Awareness: The first stage is where the consumer becomes aware of a brand or product.</p> <p>Knowledge: The consumer learns about the brand, its uses, and its benefits.</p> <p>Liking: The stage where a consumer develops a favourable attitude towards the brand.</p> <p>Preference: The consumer starts preferring the brand over others.</p> <p>Conviction: A strong belief develops in the consumer about the brand.</p> <p>Purchase: The final stage where the consumer decides to buy the product.</p>
<i>(Tapan, 2013)</i>	Search engine optimisation (SEO) and extension search engine marketing (SEM)	Practices of optimising web content so that a website is more likely to be found by users searching for relevant keywords on search engines.	It's crucial for website developers to focus on SEM and SEO to ensure high visibility, as most users tend to click on the top results in their search queries. Additionally, a successful online marketing campaign often relies on creating web pages that are not only engaging but also persuasive to attract and retain the attention of internet users effectively.
<i>(Royle, 2014)</i>	Content marketing theory	Communicate and build a deeper relationship with customers,	Digital channels are often linked to personalised experience and emotional connection. Companies in the publishing business share compelling brand stories to achieve business goals related to customer conversion, acquisition or retention, brand visibility and value, or increased sales.

2.1.3 Relationship of Digital Marketing with SMEs

On average, SMEs have 2-5 employees focused on marketing (SemRush, 2022). A 2017 Infusionsoft and Leadpages report evaluating over 1,000 small business owners highlighted their digital marketing goals and challenges. In the results, the primary importance of marketing services was the drive of sales, and second, with nearly 50% focusing on brand recognition. Notably, 20% had no digital marketing plans, and 63% found their strategies ineffective. Primary challenges included lead conversion and web traffic generation. (INFUSIONSOFT, 2016) .

The primary outsourced marketing services are paid advertising, web development, SEO (search engine optimization), and content marketing, detailed in Appendix 1 (Team D. , 2021). A Canadian study (Anaya, 2022) and a Moroccan study (Saida Filali, 2022) echoed these findings and, more concretely, emphasised sales as the primary goal.

The Infusionsoft report also revealed that over 70% of SMEs use websites as their primary tool, followed by social media and digital advertising. Despite being ranked third, email marketing is praised for its ROI, with 68% of SMEs benefiting from it, compared to 32% from social media (INFUSIONSOFT, 2016) . The Canadian report offered a different perspective, placing email marketing lower and emphasizing social media. Email stand-out preference might stem from the cost-effectiveness and targeted marketing approach.

Appendixes 2 and 3, accordingly, “ The importance of different digital strategies as ranked by Canadian SMEs” and “Which digital platforms are SMEs updating the most often ?”, highlight strategy importance and the time considerations for marketing agencies in relation to potential customers. (Anaya, 2022)

In a big vs small relation to digital marketing, most SMEs professionals agree that big companies have favoured advantages in the digital age. However, the resilience in SMEs digital marketing competitive edge strives from big enterprises to drive growth in the market. While consumers often have the first attention, upon re-purchasing products/services, the shift and search for secondary options goes into SMEs. One other angle of positive view in this relation is learning from others' successes and failures. Thus, this dynamic can be pinned as positive, empowering customer awareness, growth in the sector and constructive drive (Anaya, 2022).

When looking ahead, several literature SMEs plan to increase their investment in websites and social media platforms. This decision aligns with the broader trend of digital marketing becoming a central focus for small businesses and often paying off. (Anaya, 2022) (INFUSIONSOFT, 2016) (Team D. , 2021).

Although the results are prominent, the combined pieces of literature reviews raise challenges and threats not limited to the constraints of time, unclear objectives, limited use of e-marketing, fear of brand damage, information leakage and no financial viability (Danzen, 2022) (SemRush, 2022).

(Danzen, 2022) According to Olazo, SMEs are advised to focus on three pillars:

- Specific digital marketing skills and techniques.
- Enhanced decision-making abilities in the realm of digital marketing
- Current knowledge of ongoing trends and advancements in the digital marketing domain.

2.1.4 In-house vs Outsourced Marketing

The debate between in-house and outsourced marketing revolves around cost, control, and expertise. In-house marketing involves internal management of marketing tasks, including costs of tools, strategy marketing and hiring and training to meet high-end results (Marketing, 2020). Outsourcing, as defined, refers to the practice of engaging an external vendor through a contractual agreement to perform certain business functions. (Zhou Yong-Pin, 2010).

Although some seek help, others tend to prefer maintaining their services in-house due to greater creative control over the end-to-end digital process, proving to be more data-driven in real time and result-based when cohesive and aligned with overall business strategy (EMR, 2021).

One might think outsourced digital marketing has established relationships with multiple hiring company competitors, enabling fear of information leaks and conflicts of interest. To answer such a thought is to rephrase Neil Patel, who effectively highlights that by choosing to outsource digital marketing tasks, a company gains a committed partner focused on delivering results. Digital marketing agencies are typically oriented towards achieving tangible outcomes, and their continued collaboration with a company may depend on their success to mutual benefit (Patel, 2023). Such benefits produce an economy of scale for the hiring company, which also benefits marketing agencies since their focused service has capabilities to execute tasks rapidly without the need for recruitment, training, and experience that diminishes failure. It is worth mentioning that both parties benefit from cost-effective compilation due to lower industry tools and bulk advertisement costs (O'Rourke, 2023). Ultimately, the choice to outsource digital marketing is strategically influenced by economic factors, competitive dynamics, and environmental considerations (Hutt, 2010). The process of selecting the right digital marketing agency involves evaluating their past work, team expertise, reputation, and alignment with the values and goals of the business (Patel, 2023).

A hybrid strategy, combining in-house and outsourced marketing, is pondered in Fig.2 (Group, 2023).

Factors to consider	Outsourcing	In-house Development	Hybrid approach
Cost	Cost-efficient: Pay for services as needed, no full-time staff costs	Higher upfront and ongoing expenses	Balanced cost-efficiency and control
Expertise	Skilled professionals with deep .NET knowledge	Limited talent pool, may lack specialized expertise	Synergy of in-house expertise and outsourcing
Speed	Quick turnaround due to dedicated teams	Quick adaptability within internal processes	Speed and adaptability when needed
Control	Reduced control over project management	Full control over project direction and execution	Coordinated control with shared goals
Communication	Possible language and time zone barriers	Smooth internal team dynamics and communication	Centralized communication for coordination
Quality	Quality may vary, requiring careful oversight	In-house quality control and adherence to standards	Quality checks and knowledge sharing
Security	Dependency on the outsourcing partner's security practices	Enhanced data security through internal protocols	Balanced security measures
Scalability	Limited ability to scale quickly and easily	Potential for scalability with the right resources	Flexible scalability for varying project needs

Figure 2. Outsourcing vs In-house vs Hybrid (Group, 2023)

2.1.5 Outsourced DM service for SMEs – Focused on Finnish cases

In a Finnish research project, the author aimed to explore SMEs' general perceptions and experiences regarding e-commerce outsourcing for a specific case company, Shoppaamaan.fi. From the 50 participating responses, on a scale of 1-5, the majority rated their experience with outsourcing a plain 3, corresponding to a satisfactory level. Fig 3 represents the most crucial part of the document, which regards the motivation and expectations of prospective users.

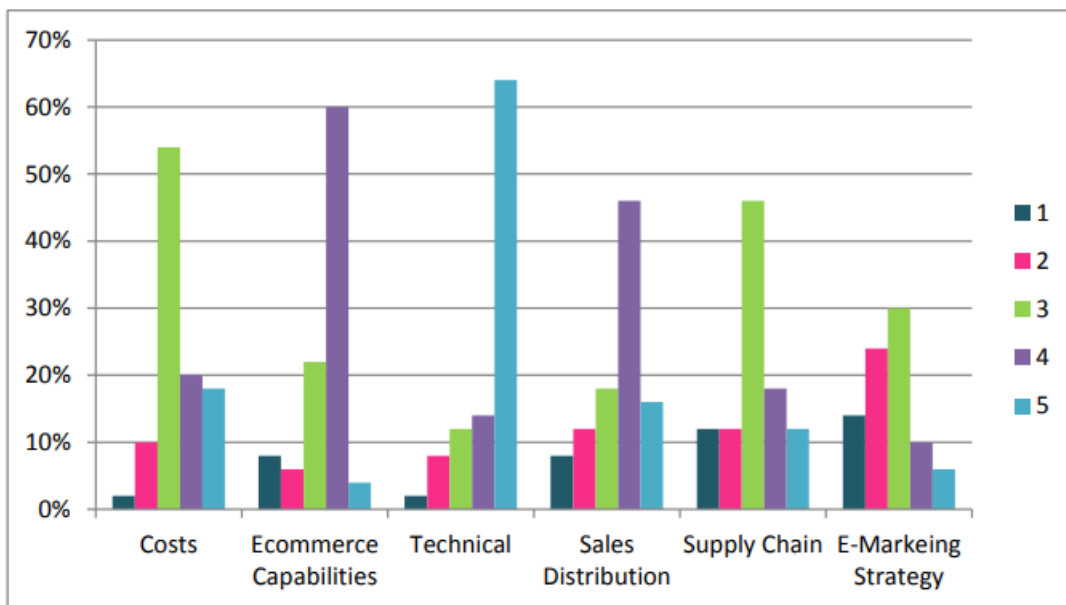


Figure 3. Motivation and Expectations of Prospective Users (Lihong, 2012)

The findings reveal that technical issues are crucial in E-commerce outsourcing, mainly to bridge the IT gap. However, digital marketing is less of a motivator (Lihong, 2012). The reasons behind these trends in e-marketing are not fully explored in the study.

Nevertheless, research on Finnish companies indicates a growing trend in outsourcing across various industries, with companies favouring vendors that offer quality services at reasonable prices (Budhathoki, 2016).

2.1.6 How companies selected Digital marketing agencies

Although the literature is inconsistent with particular budgeting for marketing, often 10% seems plausible, roughly speaking, 2500 euros monthly (SemRush, 2022). The reason for searching for outsourced services tends to be related to three metrics: insufficient in-house expertise and resources needed to scale marketing activities.

Strategy, recommendations, and word of mouth are key factors in choosing a marketing agency. The pursuits and final decision-making often lie with the marketing director or CEO without one. (SemRush, 2022)

Most of the leads are nurtured with one-to-one interaction and email. Over two weeks is how long it takes to convert a lead into a client. This fact is associated with the most significant challenge marketing agencies experience: finding the proper strategy, tactic, or offer.

The biggest turn-offs for businesses that negatively impact an agency's likelihood of success are poor communication, lack of transparency, overpromising results, inability to stay on the same page and achieve mutual understanding, and rushing into tasks without a proper plan (SemRush, 2022).

ROI is the primary success metric for a collaboration, but the pricing services for a digital marketing agency are mixed. It is essential to consider different services for different objectives, see Table 2, (Team D. , 2021). Project-based and retainer are famously practised among collaboration (SemRush, 2022). Price per click is another famous option.

Table 2. Prices for digital marketing services (Team D. , 2021).

Hourly Charges	Best for projects with uncertain timeframes, ensuring operational costs are covered, with extra hours included for budget flexibility.
Project-based Charges	Ideal for specific tasks like social media campaigns, beneficial for initial engagements with new clients, potentially leading to larger, recurring projects.
Retainer Prices	Suitable for ongoing work with established clients, providing financial stability through regular income, though care should be taken to keep prices reasonable.
Recurring Pricing Model	Commonly used for long-term works such as SEO, fostering lasting client relationships and a steady revenue stream over time.
Performance-based Pricing	Preferred by agencies confident in their ability to deliver measurable results, such as increased sales or website traffic, offering scalability but with the risk of no payment if goals aren't met.
Value-based Pricing	Chosen by firms confident in delivering substantial value or solving complex problems, though challenging due to the inconsistency in achieving ambitious goals.
Customized Pricing	Allows for flexibility in charging for various digital marketing services, offering transparency and affordability, and can be adapted to hourly or recurring billing models.

SEO (search engine optimization) is a critical lead-generating tool for both parties, with 75% of the top 100 "marketing agency" keywords having commercial intent (SemRush, 2022). Agencies should focus on niche markets and local community presence for a competitive edge (SemRush, 2022).

2.1.7 Outsourced marketing strategy implementation

Lusch and Vargo in an article called "Evolving to a New Dominant Logic" where in its conclusion, it stated "times have changed. The focus is shifting away from tangibles and toward intangibles, such as skills, information, and knowledge, and toward interactivity and, connectivity and ongoing relationships." (Stephen L. Vargo, 2004).

Unlike its predecessor, Service-Dominant Logic (S-D) logic does not just focus on the tangible aspects of products and services. Instead, it emphasises the importance of the services and value that underpin these products, placing greater weight on the experiences and relationships between brands and consumers, levitating its core definition as Co-Value Creation. S-D is highlighted for this document with a more dynamic view, in which a triangle of co-creation value is paramount. On one side, between students and the case company, the student with the consumer, and the last consumer with the case company.

The core ideas of S-D logic have the writers formulate the Fig 4 foundational statements. These statements guide the premises of a positive co-value creation.

S-D logic axioms and foundational premises	
Axiom 1/FP1	Service is the fundamental basis of exchange.
FP2	Indirect exchange masks the fundamental basis of exchange.
FP3	Goods are a distribution mechanism for service provision.
FP4	Operant resources are the fundamental source of strategic benefit.
FP5	All economies are service economies.
Axiom 2/FP6	Value is cocreated by multiple actors, always including the beneficiary.
FP7	Actors cannot deliver value but can participate in the creation and offering of value propositions.
FP8	A service-centered view is inherently customer oriented and relational.
Axiom 3/FP9	All social and economic actors are resource integrators.
Axiom 4/FP10	Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary.
Axiom 5/FP11	Value cocreation is coordinated through actor-generated institutions and institutional arrangements.

Figure 4. S-D logic axioms and foundational premises (Stephen L. Vargo, 2004)

Robert Lusch intriguingly differs co-production as an optional act, expressing not all parties have the time and will to be involved with their own time and resources. On the other hand, he argues that co-creation of value is not an option but occurs by the very act of consumers using a firm's aids and integrating it without other resources to create value with the firm. (Robert Lusch, 2009).

Simplified, opportunities are co-created through developing value propositions, which must be communicated with external parties. Open-mindedness in who is leading the proposition is required. In the "Somejoukot" practical case and business model, the students could implement new efficiencies that may prove to be satisfactory. Research on student co-creation points out three insights: the value for educational institutes, students, and, when in business, for competitive advantage. From the study focus groups, dialogue and trust are key metrics to enhance student co-creation. (Roberta Pinna, 2023).

In a framework for co-value, phase four implies that each ecosystem acknowledges value differently, not only by trading or possessing goods but also by personal experience. Thus, it is important to broaden the conceptualisation of opportunities for co-creation with the dynamic of market variations and be ready to form and reform value to meet repeated mutual beneficence. (Peter S. Whalen, 2015).

Forbes, Chief Marketing Officer from HomeAdvisor, suggests moulding the 3`C framework to marketing outsourcing. The three Cs stand for competency, capacity, and cost. Competence refers to the skills and expertise required to fulfil marketing objectives; capacity is the volume and frequency of marketing activities; and cost is the overall expenses and the return on investment (Lowrie, 2016). This framework gains power in addressing the right questions when contemplating co-creation.

The writer reviewed the hybrid strategy, but in practice, this approach involves an internal marketing or project manager who crafts the strategy, while practical tasks or creative/research work are outsourced to an agency. Responsibilities are allocated based on specific terms and objectives. This method offers flexibility, performance benefits, and advantages of internal control and external insights. (Neuwerth, 2021).

Marketing is a dance where two or more parties try to achieve their goals within the constraints of the market and each other's actions in a simple game-theory foundation. Game theory helps with a visual framework for a non-written collaboration that forms co-creation. In a nutshell, it is a mathematical and economic concept that studies strategic interactions among individuals or entities. It provides a framework for understanding how decision-makers (players) choose strategies to maximise their outcomes while considering the decisions of others. For instance, a non-zero-sum game is a concept that describes a win-win situation (HAYES, 2023). Understanding and applying its concept can be viewed in service pricing angle, customer segmentation or other variables. For example, "game theory can be used to determine the impact of discounts and promotions on consumer behavior, and to identify the most effective pricing strategies for different products and customer segments. " (B2Biz.io, 2023)

The game theory implies that not all companies need to engage in outsourcing DM services to the same extent, but in the game theory, all will be affected by it, because of the nonverbal co-creation action input, is to assume, often giving a competitive edge to those who do recur to outsourcing services.

Interestingly, a study on the comfortability of companies that outsource digital marketing out loud remote work is here to stay (SemRush, 2022) . Data indicates that many companies are

comfortable with remote work between both parties. In addition, the importance of marketing automation is becoming more valued, with 80% of top-performing companies using it. The availability of affordable and scalable solutions makes it an opportune time for small business owners to implement systems that have been instrumental in the success of larger corporations (INFUSIONSOF, 2016).

2.1.8 Navigating the Complexities of Early-stage Business Development

It is challenging to pinpoint the exact period or age a company seeks to search for external marketing agencies, as each has different goals, resources and needs.

However, the article from Harvard Business Review titled "The Five Stages of Small-Business Growth" was the first to dive into these early critical phases for Startups. In an 83 small companies study, authors (Lewis, Neil C. Churchill and Virginia L., 1983) present a comprehensive framework outlining the five stages of traditional small business growth and their characteristics for management, see Fig 5. Understanding these stages in their unique exhibits is crucial for entrepreneurs and other parties to make the best decisions and prepare for needed pain relief.

On stage four, the author states, "depending on the competence of the development, marketing, and production people, the company becomes a big success or an expensive failure". Upon reviewing the study results, stage four presents exponential picks, which are highly relevant for this document, as it aligns with the timing a marketing agency shall collaborate with a company in need of the service to relieve them from pains and provide solutions.

A reflection in the picks suggests a correlation between what outsourcing offers and management needs. In the critical phase, cash flow translates as price-wise offers from outsourced marketing agencies. Strategy, previously reviewed as a key reason for a company to outsource, is deemed again to meet in this phase, proving to be of extreme necessity in conquering the lead. Owners' ability to delegate and quality with diversity increase correlates with needing external assistance. Lastly, cheery on top, owners' ability to do decreases importance, proving difficult to keep up with all administrative tasks, something already reviewed when owners are solely engaged in marketing, which tends to result in failure. Thus, again, raising the need for outsourced pain relief.

In essence, stage four is the most suitable engagement period; further research must be conducted to identify and characterise stage four companies.

Exhibit 5: Management Factors and the Stages

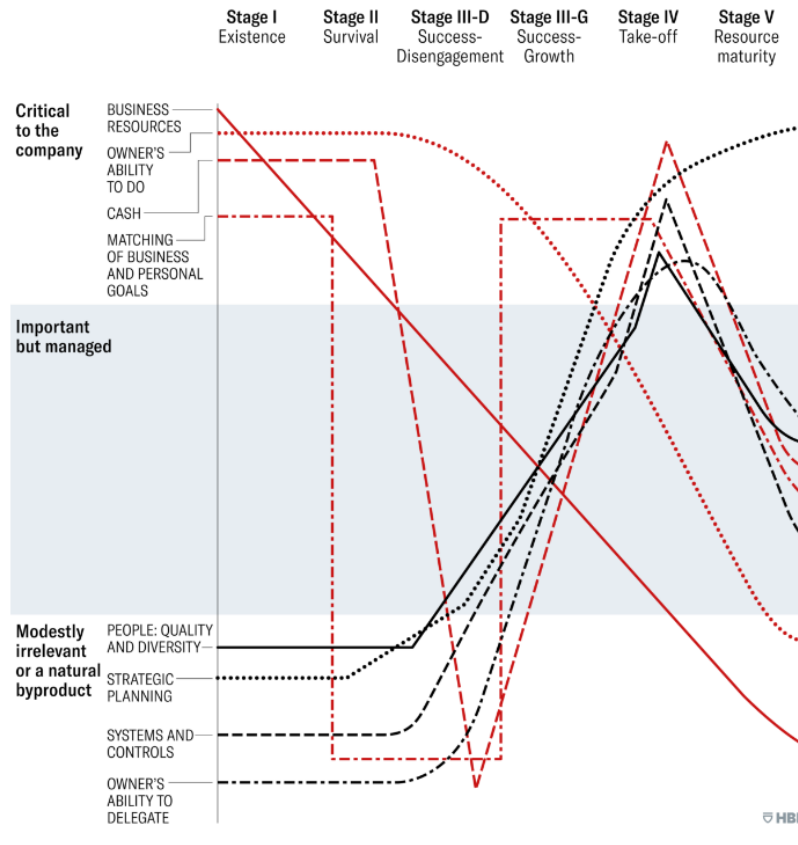


Figure 5. Management Factors and the Stages (Lewis, Neil C. Churchill and Virginia L., 1983)

Understanding the stages is just one piece of the puzzle. Information rounds the bigger picture and sets the tone for market research. According to Harvard Business Review, market research is essential for businesses to make data-driven decisions.

According to "Marketing Management" book, market research is defined as "the systematic design, collection, analysis, and reporting of data and findings relevant to a specific marketing situation facing the company" (Kotler, 1984).

It is long known that market research is the foundation of knowledge in all business parts, from business plan and strategy to more peculiar parts such as product, price, placement, promotion, people, process and physical evidence called marketing mix or the 7 P's of marketing (McCarthy, 1960). Each targets unique areas to analyse and ensures strategies are grounded in reality, customer-focused, and designed to achieve measurable objectives for marketing purposes and all managerial levels (Understanding The 7Ps of The Marketing Mix, 2020).

Without market research, businesses would blindly navigate the complex world of trade, making them more inclined to miss opportunities and fail abruptly, sometimes without even starting. Currently, articles and studies bring more than the 7p's of marketing, including competition edge,

marketing and sales. After all, market research cannot be overemphasised, especially when navigating the early stages of a business (Ayuba, 2015).

2.2 Students in working life

2.2.1 Overview

In 2021, Finland witnessed an increase in student employment, with the employment rate among students aged 18 to 64 rising by 2.9% compared to the previous year. Statistics Finland highlighted this trend, which reported that over half of the student population engaged in work alongside their studies. The fields of study where student employment was most dominant were business, administration, and law (Cruz, 2023).

2.2.2 Theoretical concepts

The working student's theoretical concepts are multilayered, and a closer look to the learnings, developments, adaptation and dynamics of interaction in the context of working is further review.

Table 3, acknowledge that working environment conditions, specifically in multiple peer-learning, are inevitable and impact one's professional-formation. Thus, is crucial to make it right. Encouraging excellent role models and the overall environment will also impact productivity in a company. Programmes of extracurricular engagements are highly valued, the same as their knowledge input, which is considered a most critical resource of a company. It is also acknowledged that each individual have learning preferences, and self-directed is the primary method on present students.

Table 3. Theories reviewed associated with working students.

Author	Concept	Key message	Findings
(Lave, 1991) (Calvin Smith, 2014) (Coll, 2011)	Work Integrated Learning (WIL)	Internship, apprenticeship and entrepreneurship programmes, familiarise the “newcomer” to the practices and languages of a workplace (Lave, 1991)	In an extensive report, Calvin Smith demonstrated that students who participated in WIL programs reported higher levels of job readiness and employment outcomes post-graduation compared to their non-WIL counterparts. Students gain clarification on career paths and better assessment on offered tasks requirements (Calvin Smith, 2014)
(Imed Bouchrika) (Heick, 2015)	Andragogy or Adult Learning Theory	Explores how people learn. A Spectrum of educational strategies that evolve from the teacher as led instructor to self-learner-driven exploration	Andragogy is directed mostly to young adults, who bring their own experiences and needs to the learning process. The educator serves as a facilitator, encourages individuals to set their own goals resources, and evaluate their own progress (Heick, 2015). In a 2019 study, over 40% of students from Generation Z and millennials prefer self-directed learning. 6 axioms: self-concept, readiness, motivation, experience and orientation.
(Barney's, 1991) (Curado, 2006)	Knowledge-based theory (KBV)	The relationship between organisational knowledge and the firm's competitive advantage is influenced by its capacity to integrate and apply knowledge. (Matusik, 1998)	In Carla words “ <i>The nature of the most critical resources within the KBV of the firm is mainly intangible and dynamic.</i> ”, it contributes to learning organisation and is a resource that doesn't depreciate and can generate increasing returns. (Curado, 2006). Working students, through their academic pursuits, bring fresh insights and contemporary theories that can stimulate innovation within the firm.
(Levy, 1999) (Laal, 2012)	Collective intelligence	Enhanced capacity created when people work together and learn in synergy.	Key to its effectiveness are diversity, independence, and contributions, which, when properly managed and aggregated, can lead to superior outcomes compared to what individuals could achieve alone (Levy, 1999). (Laal, 2012) concludes that enhanced efficiency, nurture, support, and dedicated interactions, as well as improved mental well-being, social adeptness, and self-management. (Schmidt, 2023) (Tammet, 2009) (Vieira, 2010)
(Cameron, 2015)	Productivity motivation	Productivity is increased when six essential traits are well applied	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nurturing a sense of camaraderie and personal investment in the well-being of co-workers as if they were friends. 2. Offering a supportive presence to peers, extending empathy and understanding during challenging times. 3. Choosing to search for fault-finding and to pardon errors. 4. Encouraging and motivating each other in the workplace. 5. Highlighting the significance and purpose of the work being done. 6. Interacting with colleagues with a foundation of respect, appreciation, trustworthiness, and honesty.
(Bandura's Bobo Doll Experiment, 1963)	Social Cognitive Theory	Working students in a collaborative environment but primarily as observing and imitating one's behaviours	76% of individuals repeat one's behaviour. When punishment was added to one's bad behaviour, a decline in imitating patterns decreased.
(Senge, 1999)	The book, “The Dance of Change”	Sustaining organisational learning over the long term.	Companies struggle with students for multiple reasons: have no time to invest, priority issues, commitment or training. Organisations have to evolve into a constant learning organisation. (Jashapara, 1993)

2.2.3 Employment in marketing

There is no minimum wage in Finland. However, students usually earn between 9 and 13 Euros per hour depending on the nature of their work and the sectors they work in, roughly speaking 1700 euros when working 160 hours per month (Agarwal, 2023). The University of Helsinki recommends following Kela's monthly minimum wage for trainees at € 1,331. In contrast, Haaga Helia recommends following a collective agreement in their field, usually 70-90% to the lowest on-the-table salary.

The following table dictates five typical entry-level marketing jobs and their task (Team I. E., 2023). The lowest average wage is 2,440 EUR (Team S.)

Table 4. Marketing job titles and their simplified tasks and responsibilities (Team I. E., 2023).

Job title	Task
Digital marketing	Managing digital marketing involves reviewing campaigns, gathering customer feedback, tracking timelines and budgets, overseeing team tasks, and executing new campaigns. It also includes optimizing marketing workflows, allocating resources effectively, implementing change management, and mitigating risks in digital marketing projects. (Team W.)
Marketing Assistant	Monitors marketing campaign performance, suggests improvements, assists in key marketing projects and can collaborate with the managerial level.
Social Media Coordinator	Social Media Coordinators develop strategies to increase online engagement, track website traffic, engage with followers, and gather feedback on the company's offerings.
SEO Specialist	Optimizes a company's webpages to improve its rank on search engine result pages
Marketing Analyst	Market research on competitors and consumer behaviour. They monitor and predict the results of trends within marketing and sales and underscore new promotions offered by companies in their industry.

A working student's salary is lower than the price to pay for an entry-level professional. Considering a full-time graduation, this makes sense, and in hypothesis, more knowledge and experience.

2.2.4 Students at Haaga Helia marketing major

This chapter will review whether working students can perform digital marketing tasks and its responsibilities, particularly, Haaga Helia University of Applied Science students.

At Haaga-Helia, the Marketing and Sales major includes a set of compulsory courses and a range of recommended complementary courses. See the table below.

Table 5. Haaga Helia marketing specialization courses (Helia, 2023).

The compulsory courses	Recommended complementary courses
Integrated Marketing Communication	Basics of Graphic Design and Tools
CRM and ERP for Sales	Website Design
B2B Sales Skills	KREA Strategic Concept Design and Storytelling
Strategic Branding	Experiential Marketing
Data-Driven Marketing	Innovate Circular Economy and Sustainable Future
Service Design and Co-Innovation	Digital Marketing

While reviewing the course's extensive content, the major Marketing and Sales Programme proves to be of extreme value for Case Company and capable of taking responsibility on the task. An example of an assessment of grade 5 in the Digital marketing course presents:

"The student understands the different aspects of digital marketing The student can identify and analyze major trends in consumer behavior and social media. S/he knows the pros and cons of various social media channels and can analyze case company's social media presence in detail. Marketing strategies, tactics and actions are well discussed in the plan, backed up with a range of concrete examples from business life. The report includes a description of online performance measurement and monitoring tools." (Helia, 2023).

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

Given the nature of the documents, combining qualitative and quantitative research, a mixed-method approach would be beneficial. This method enhances the study's depth and scale, ensuring a balanced perspective that minimises bias and maximises practical insights. As noted by S. Fischler, such an approach enriches the pragmatism from the perspectives of respondents, readers, and the researcher. (S.Fischler).

An analysis of students and market research will be conducted simultaneously, with no anticipated interference, as each question addresses distinct aspects of the study. See Fig 6 for the visual design of the research. Upon its empirical congregation, the writer will reach a proposition handed in as a discussion and recommendation chapter that will answer the central question of the research and, as seen in Fig.7, the proposed angles of approach, which are lauded by the commissionaire.

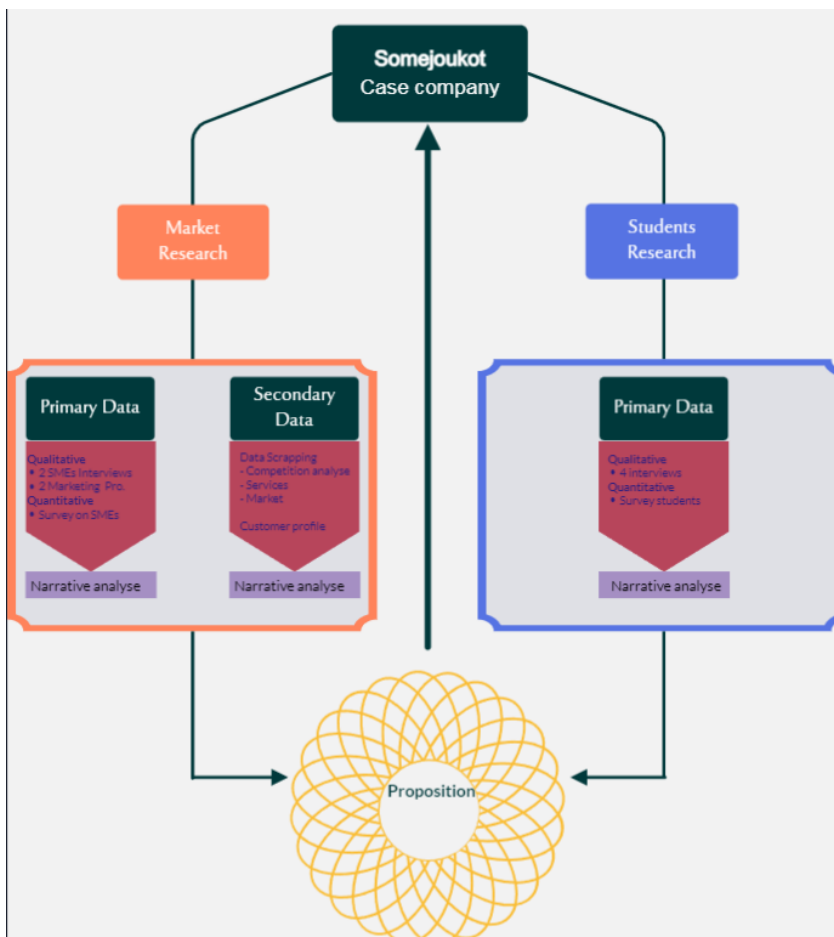


Figure 6. Research design

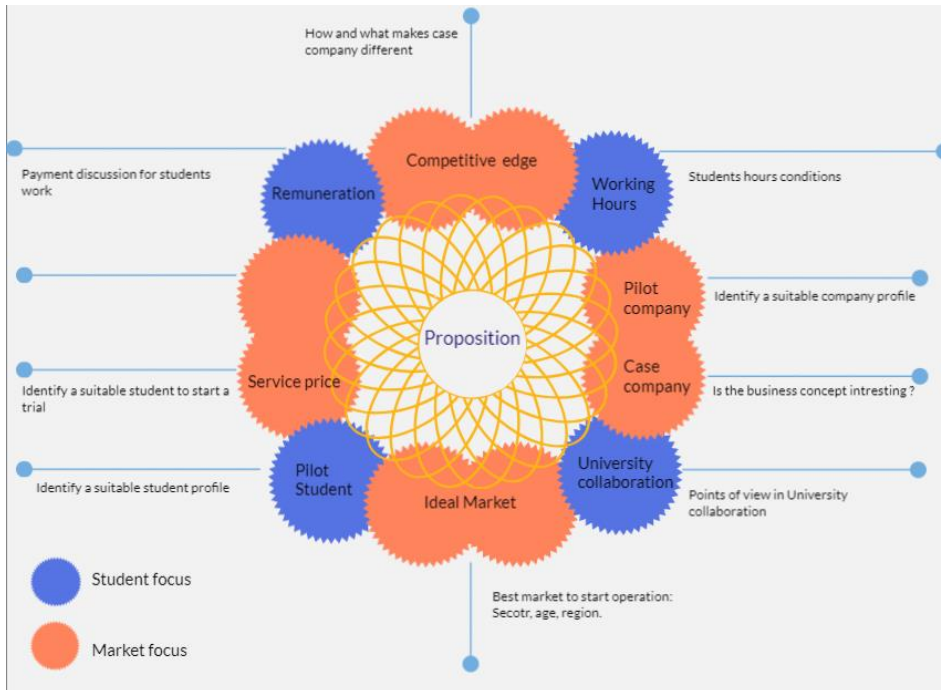


Figure 7. Addressing the commissioner questions.

3.2 Market Research

When handling Market research, a convergent parallel design between primary and secondary data will congregate for interpretation.

Within the primary data, the writer will refer to one quantitative survey focused on SMEs and four semi-structured interviews for qualitative data. The focus will be on key aspects that influence market viability and customer appeal in digital marketing for SMEs.

3.2.1 Primary Data Collection- Quantitative

The survey, built with the Webropol tool, will be circulated primarily on LinkedIn social channels for three weeks. The rationale of such doing is to convey as many responses from diversified market sectors and professional employees to C-suit executives within SMEs as possible. Most of the writer's and commissionaires' networks are of Finnish reach, which is vital to grasping domestic data for the study. The more answers, the better. Nevertheless, 30 responses would be a reasonable count for the study.

3.2.2 Primary Data Collection- Qualitative

Two of the four planned interviews will be directed to SME professionals who can be categorised as “potential customers” regarding outsourcing digital marketing services, and two will interview marketing professionals categorised as “ offering outsourcing service” in digital marketing. From

analysing these two perspectives, the writers will see how both sides see matters running. The loosely structured interviews will prompt more open and insightful discussion.

3.2.3 Secondary Data Collection- Market Analysis

The study will employ data scraping techniques to import large data information from a website into a spreadsheet. The researcher can gather and analyse comprehensive information on the competition in different components such as market pricing, services offered and other details. This information gathering and analysis will primarily focus on the Finnish market, ensuring the data is relevant and specific to the region under study. The data will be scraped from the Clutch.com website, which specialises in connecting marketing services for buyers and providers. The company is very credible, having won over ten awards, operational in 154 countries, and has over 280 thousand service providers across the globe. Within the server, the browsing was done in the niche of [top digital marketing companies in Finland](#). As noted on the page, the information is updated daily, making it credible; in addition, when crosschecked with other websites that offer similar browsing systems, TheManifest.com, results are equal but with fewer companies.

In addition, the research will create a suitable customer profile in the form of an organisation that is perfectly aligned to buy the service from the case company under study. The idea is to understand better the consumer target.

3.3 Student research

For students, its convergent parallel design focuses on primary data, in its case, merely between qualitative and quantitative congregation for interpretation. The writers combined quantitative and qualitative research in consecutive order, a survey and two semi-structured interviews, targeting students' opinions on collaboration for working.

3.3.1 Primary Data Collection-Quantitative

The primary data collection method will be via a three-week Webropol survey, predominantly circulated between known personnel for the researcher. Additionally, to reach a broader audience, a post will be shared on social media platforms if allowed by the Haaga Helia. Given the significant presence of students on LinkedIn actively building their professional careers, a post on this platform will be particularly effective in gathering diverse opinions from students at other institutions. A target of 30 responses is deemed suitable for this study.

3.3.2 Primary Data Collection- Qualitative

Semi-structured and structured interviews will be conducted with marketing-specialised students from Haaga Helia to gain in-depth insights into their capabilities and preferred terms for working and studying. To solidify condition results, the candidates with experience in working while studying and those in marketing will be of value and thereby chosen for the interview.

3.4 Narrative analyze

After collecting the information from each part of the study, a convergent empirical reflection will be targeted towards the literature reviewed and other towards the operational concept of the case company.

3.5 Ethical Considerations over data collection, storage and processing

Both qualitative and quantitative data will be held ethically valid with consent of data usage and confidentiality of anonymity upon request. Data storage and processing are solely conveyed in the writer's laptop for two weeks. All data will be stored securely and conditioned to regulatory adherence, including ensuring participant confidentiality on request, obtaining informed consent and adhering to one data usage user, writers.

The writer's chosen interviewees cannot be randomised due to the lack of network in the study area. Data manipulation is considered a high infraction and is not moralised at all.

3.6 Limitations

Upon the design of the congregation of Market Research for interpretation, the writer will limit detailed reasoning on all collected data but focus on the main key aspects from own viewpoint. Nevertheless, processed data graphics will be stored in the appendixes chapter for a closer look at one's wishes and interviews upon request.

While the ideal scenario would involve receiving responses from students across multiple institutions, the limitations of writers' networks will likely result in most responses from Haaga-Helia students. Considering the general proportion of students to professionals in Finland SMEs, a lower response rate from students is anticipated.

The time constraint of three weeks for data collection might not be sufficient to capture a comprehensive range of responses, especially considering winter festivities at the door and the end of the semester for students. Therefore, data responses might not be sufficient, and their insights might quickly become outdated, limiting the long-term applicability of the findings. In the same view, the

study relies on a possible technological gap, which might exclude potential respondents who are less active or familiar with the LinkedIn platform. Haaga Helia, a research university, might be unable to assist with the research reach due to the semester break.

All interviews are limited in number, and their analysis can be subjective to personal insights or willingness to share, which might result in poor and limited conclusions.

The study is based on a concrete cultural, regional and case company service, thus limiting the study's applicability to other regions or market sectors.

Although there is a chapter outlining the ethical considerations of data handling, is considered a risk of a data breach as a limitation.

4 Research

4.1 Market Research

4.1.1 Primary Data

Interviews

To gather comprehensive information into the marketing dynamics within companies, a series of 30-minute interviews were conducted. These interviews provided a clearer understanding of the current landscape. The interviewees were divided into two primary groups: Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) needing marketing services, often lacking experience in outbound digital marketing, and marketing specialists who provide outbound digital marketing services.

For SMEs, the primary aim was to understand their perspective on outsourcing digital marketing services. The initial question posed was, "Has your company ever outsourced digital marketing services?". A tailored set of follow-up questions was presented based on their affirmative or negative response. The intention was to delve into their motivations for outsourcing (or not), perceived barriers, willingness to purchase such services, industry-specific dynamics, and interest in the offerings of the case company.

Conversely, a distinct set of questions was crafted for marketing specialists. The focus here was to comprehend the marketing dynamics from the viewpoint of those offering outsourcing services. The primary goal was to gain insights into the operational aspects of digital marketing companies. This included understanding the range of services they offer, pricing strategies, prevailing marketing trends, and other relevant details.

The semi-structured interview questions can be found in appendixes 6 and 7.

Table 6. Main figure results from SME interviews.

	Outsourced vs Inhouse	Industry	Marketing goals	Barriers	Marketing expertise	Willing to pay for case company services	Willingness to learn
Interview 1 Owner and employee	Non	Construction & Plumbing	Generate leads	Cost	Non	Yes	Yes
Interview 2 Owner	Both	Restaurant	Generate leads	Cost/effectiveness	Non to low	Yes	Yes

Interview reflection on literature review

In the context of the literature review, it becomes clear that a lack of expertise and lead generation are the main reasons for outsourcing services. The primary barriers are associated with costs and a limited understanding of the effectiveness of these services. Interestingly, the base location of the outsourcing company is not considered a significant obstacle. However, the responses, particularly from a small town in Finland named Forssa, suggest that word-of-mouth is a dominant marketing force in the region. This, along with a company's reputation, heavily influences hiring decisions. Both companies under study were small, with fewer than seven employees, and lacked a structured marketing strategy and experts, limiting their marketing outreach primarily to Facebook groups.

Reflecting on the case, company operations

It is apparent that both companies are keen to learn and are willing to invest in the case company's services. The responses regarding pricing indicate a challenge, as the formulated questions did not effectively highlight the specifics of the service. One company preferred a monthly payment plan, while the other favoured a project-based approach. Both expressed a willingness to learn but faced time constraints, limiting their availability to 4-8 hours per month. The predominant needs in the industry are website and SEO digital marketing services. The prospect of using students for marketing activities was not seen as a barrier; instead, it emphasized the appeal of a reduced price as a compelling condition. In the case of company service, the restaurant business is more solidly grounded. This is particularly evident from one of the interviews perspectives from the construction landscape, stating, its industry does not to rely primarily on marketing for lead generation. The

targeted approach in this sector appears more defined and potentially more receptive to “I know a guy”. Thus, reducing the marketing scope.

Semi-structured interview insights for marketing specialists.

Table 7 Main figure results from Marketing Specialists

	Market focus	Most demanded services	Pricing	Projects handle	In-house lecturing	Communication engages
Interview 1 Freelancer & Senior Marketing specialist at F company.	Mostly B2B, Finnish market	Content creation like copywriting	Hourly	6-8	Not a focus.	Once a month or biweekly
Interview 2 CEO of Aboad- Digital Marketing	B2B, International market	Mentoring and data analytics	Project	10-20	Yes	Weekly or biweekly

Undoubtedly, the interviews with marketing specialists were exceptionally insightful. Each interviewer brought a wealth of knowledge to the table, backed by many years of experience in the field. Intriguingly, their responses often reflected two distinct perspectives: an entrepreneurial viewpoint and that of an experienced worker in a digital marketing company. These insights were particularly valuable, predominantly in shaping strategies for the case company rather than in contributing to the literature review.

The second interview, particularly, stood out due to its high relevance. The individual represented a company, ABOAD, which is, among the few offering a marketing mentorship service. This aspect is paramount to understanding, given that such mentorship is a key component of the case company's business plan. The depth and latitude of the insights gained from this interview provide crucial guidance for the case company in navigating and structuring its own marketing mentorship offerings.

Interview reflection on literature review

The interviews underscored a common theme among SMEs: a notable lack of marketing achievements and a consequent need for external assistance. A key observation was their limited

awareness of the need for marketing and uncertainty about its effectiveness and strategy implementation. As one interviewee said, *“They don't know how to do it, but perhaps they don't even realize that they need marketing. They aren't sure if it will be effective enough.”*

The most popular outsourced services identified were content creation, including copywriting, performance marketing, and analytics. Regarding payment methods, it was noted that agencies commonly charge by the hour. Companies seeking these services often allocate between 1500 to 2000 euros per month for marketing expenses. In contrast, the project often charges freelancers, resulting in smaller, more affordable services.

A key insight came from Aboad, highlighting a shift towards value-based pricing, a relatively uncommon approach in the industry. This method aligns well with their extensive experience and efficiency, as exemplified by their ability to complete a 30-hour job in just 3 hours. Aboad also pointed out the challenge service providers face in quantifying their value, observing that *“it's easier for the client when we say like OK, this is the cost per hour, this is how much we anticipate it will cost.”* Overall, these interviews provided valuable support and real-world perspectives that align with the findings of the literature review.

Reflecting on the case, company operations

A key challenge is attempting to provide a comprehensive 360-degree service. This ambition faces several hurdles, including a lack of specialized expertise, time constraints, and the immense workload involved. *“Because if you do that, you're going to compete with everyone and also not only agency, but you're going to compete with cheap overseas labour,”* says Remy.

One major issue is identifying clear target industries, and it is difficult to pinpoint one particular industry. A more viable approach seems to incline towards mid-size-B2B services, *“Companies that are marketing to consumers, they usually have bigger teams, and they are fairly traditional”, “...they might be hesitant. They might think that they know already whom to visit, so they're not maybe willing to admit their need”* says Juha.

Specializing the team's skills towards specific services can be more effective than attempting to offer marketing outsourcing to a broad range of clients. As noted, a broad approach leads to competition with numerous agencies and cost-effective overseas labour. Establishing guidelines is crucial. The decision-making process should start with determining whether to focus on B2B or B2C markets, or both and then further refining the target demographic. Both advise preparing a studied pitch deck on the target company to pursuit business engage. In addition, often, a team manages

ten projects at a time, from which one specialises in one or two particular tasks from the project, never the whole 360 degrees.

In the Finnish market, consultancy is no longer a trending approach, although some, like Remy, continue to pursue it. Regarding meeting frequency, it's suggested to have monthly or bi-weekly meetings. This schedule allows for strategies or implemented actions to mature and yield results. Lecturing an executive of marketing is rare, says Juha. Generally, the meetings are 2 hours tops *“especially with executives, they are super concentrated”* and *“biggest constraint is time”*.

Remy notes that there's not significant emphasis on educating the company in need, although if it happens to some, they often do not implement the strategies themselves. *“With the very small one, there is a big part of educating them, yes, but they end up usually not doing it.”*, *“It's probably one of the most tricky and challenging parts”*. In the other interview, Aboad specialises in mentorship services, traditional as teaching and consultancy, but often, the focus is on *“companies who have the ability to do things themselves”*. The price dialogue remained confidential, but because, as often seen, services are tailored, it is negotiable, but never under the minimum price set for time input. Their mentorship services scale according to needs. If action input is needed by Aboad company, then the package selected is different, and so is the price.

SMEs Survey results

The survey's design, questions and channels can be found in appendix 9. Because there were only six responses, only two had experience with outsourcing digital marketing services, which was a meaningful target for information gathering. This collection of responses does not have high credibility. Nevertheless, the results analyse sets some valuable information. From all respondents, marketing is highly relevant for business growth. However, data on in-house marketing happiness fall short and shows room for improvement, more concretely on its search engine optimization capabilities, rated 2.3 from 5. Cost efficiency is the primary factor supporting the decision to outsource a digital marketing service, and project-based is the most desired service payment method. As well as in the literature review, strategy and reputation are the primary reasons for choosing the right company to collaborate. Results are positive on the scope of accepting students to take charge of their digital marketing if the costs are reduced, and all responses would consider enhancing their in-house marketing through the lecturing service of the case company, the follow-up on the time availability to learn and review analytics favours two hours per week. Analytic services are the only common service for companies with experience outsourcing. Results data can be found in appendix 8.

4.1.2 Secondary Data

Data Scrapping

The primary objective of the Data Scraping was to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the competitive landscape faced by the case company within their ecosystem, specifically focusing on the Finnish market and the outsourcing of digital marketing services. One hundred fourteen companies' data were meticulously compiled and analysed. [Linked](#) is the compilation of raw data and graphics used for interpretation. Accesses have to be requested. The data set was presented to both marketing experts who were interviewed, and both gave it 70% credibility.

Table 8. Key Insights from Data Scrapping

Assessment	Key insights	Notes
Geographical Distribution	The majority of the agencies are located in Helsinki (86).	Other cities like Turku and Espoo also have a presence but to a much lesser extent. Clarification on centralization of digital marketing services in the capital and potentially higher-end clients. Agencies in other cities might focus on regional markets or specialized services, but the conclusion needs more observation.
Count of Primary Services	Primary services are Advertising (23 agencies), Branding (13), Content Marketing (11) and SEO (10).	A wide range of primary services indicates a diverse and competitive market. Advertising and Branding are highly saturated, indicating stiff competition. Services like AI Development and SMS Marketing are less common, suggesting niche markets with potentially less competition.
The sum of services percentage	The most actionable services presented by the companies are SEO, SMM and video production, all with 65%.	The sum is, in reality, the services to which companies dedicate most of their inputs. The lower the sum of services, the less common they are under the marketing umbrella: translation, customer software development and AI. This means companies are expanding their services outside of digital marketing.
Minimum Project Costs	Most common minimum project cost is \$1,000+ (37 agencies), followed by \$5,000+ (33 agencies)	A significant number of agencies are accessible for smaller projects.
Hourly Payment Rates	The most common hourly rate is \$100 - \$149 / hr (58 agencies)	This information is dull because it is not clear what services tasks. Further analysis is required.
Number of Employees	2-9 (42 agencies)	Marketing agencies tend to be minor, and is assumed that one agent multitasks for different companies within multiple services.

Year founded	Only three companies were founded starting from 2022.	Similar to 2010 & and 2012 (post-recession), only three companies were created. Between these ten years, marketing companies' founding count average was 6 per year.
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YIPI, one of the most modern companies established in 2022, was more meticulously analyzed from all the available companies. Yipi is a digital marketing agency specializing in search engine marketing, but its services also include search engine optimization, content production, Google advertising, and marketing consulting. They emphasize a customer-centric, data-driven, and simplified approach to marketing. The team consists of five professionals in various roles. Yipi primarily offers its services remotely, catering to numerous Finnish companies, visible are fourteen. Their services are primarily monthly but also have few side services outside it. Their “Good Luck” monthly 675 euros service is the one that offers more value for SMEs, with a combination of different sets of goals.

In summary, agencies that provide widespread services are likely engaged in price competition or are concentrating on specialized niches within their respective service categories. Contrarywise, agencies offering unique services may position these as premium offerings, often associated with higher costs, to differentiate themselves in the market.

Very often, the service prices are ambiguous and serve as a base which extends room for negotiation when engaged in dialogue. This approach enables to tailor their services more effectively and capture unique market opportunities. Understanding clients' specific needs and identifying unmet demands in the market is essential for both new entrants and existing agencies considering a strategic repositioning.

Moreover, there appears to be a correlation between the services' complexity and pricing structures. High-end services, such as AI Development, tend to command higher hourly rates, reflecting their specialized nature and the value they add. In contrast, more commonly offered services, such as Advertising, are likely to have more competitive pricing, reflecting a denser market with more service providers.

Ideal company profile

The digital marketing landscape is more complex than pictured in the early stage. Through a blend of quantitative data and qualitative insights, a solid suggestion for niche services and target customers in the early stage of business development is extremely important. To follow the advice and

avoid the “one size fits all mistake”, the writer will pivot a company profile that conveniently characterises lead generation in this chapter. It is to acknowledge that the customer profile is not static and evolves as market dynamics shift and the business grows. However, the goal is to make it relevant and current. Therefore, a dive into the latest demographic, psychographic, behavioural, and goals with challenging attributes will paint a picture of the right customers and shed light on their values, interactions, services, and decision-making processes. Ultimately, the more knowledge about the customers, the better the chance to personalise their messages and convert them from leads to purchase buttons.

Table 9. Ideal company profile

Aspect	Details
Business Demographics	<p>Industry: No clear scope, strong indications to Retail, e-commerce, tech startups, local small services (hairdressers, photographers, automotive and plumbing services), hospitality, and restaurants.</p> <p>Size: Stage 4 form literature review, mid-sized, under ten employees, two years active.</p> <p>Revenue: Inconclusive, but in green light to spend a minimum of 2000 euros in monthly marketing.</p> <p>Location: Mainly in urban areas.</p>
Business Psychographics	<p>Growth Orientation: Seeking to expand market reach with digital assistance.</p> <p>Digital marketing sense: Aware but lacking in-house expertise.</p> <p>Innovation: Open to new business models and wishing for professional learning development. Often, owning a business would be innovative.</p> <p>Value Perception: Budget-conscious, seeks cost-effective solutions, focuses on long-term wins.</p>
Behavioural Attributes	<p>Marketing Needs: Full range of services in the scope of the students, potential for tailored service.</p> <p>Decision-making: By owner or small marketing department</p> <p>Challenges: Lead generation, online presence, customer engagement, website design and social media</p> <p>Engagement with Service: Midterm collaboration, 6-month ideal.</p>
Goals and Challenges	<p>Primary Goal: Not only seeking marketing services (reach and engage target audience, increase brand visibility, generate leads, etc) but also engagement with marketing professionals.</p> <p>Key Challenge: Limited budget, resources, and time available to learn. Willingness to trust a student on marketing expertise.</p> <p>Solution Required: Cost-effective outsourced service, tailored service for time and service.</p>

Table 10. ICP assessment example (Building An Ideal Client/Customer Profile (ICP), 2013)

After establishing a contextual foundation, the writer will pick one company that matches the characteristics of a suitable profile and apply the renowned Rick Wong framework for the ideal customer profile (ICP) as presented in his book, "Winning Lifelong Customers with The Five Abilities."

	No Fit 0 points	Workable fit 1 point	Complete fit 2 points	Score
Need	The customer doesn't acknowledge the problem the company solves.	Customers acknowledge the problem but don't consider a solution a priority.	The problem exists and the customer seeks a solution.	2
Time	The customer is not interested in participating in any activity that requires his time.	The customer has little time to engage in case company service and plays for a short time upscale.	The customer has enough time to engage in case company service and is willing to learn on a more full-time basis.	2
Success	The customer has no direct success in the marketing area and cannot understand success parameters.	The customer has small success and small success knowledge parameters.	Customers can identify success and take full advantage. Has success parameters.	1
Budget	The customer cannot afford the service.	The customer can afford the service but has no room for an upgrade.	The customer can afford the service and has enough room for an upgrade.	1
Winners	Cannot identify service wins and is not capable for good collaboration.	Acknowledge the quality of the service but wish to proceed alone in the near future.	Takes full advantage of the service and wishes for continued collaboration.	1
Total				7

This framework effectively reveals the customer profile and traits that make it an excellent match. This tool is handy for focusing on potential purchasers rather than expending efforts on unlikely conversions. Its characteristics were slightly changed to fit the case company service. (Building An Ideal Client/Customer Profile (ICP), 2013)

To put the example into practice, the writer assessed one of his interviews to evaluate its dynamics of conversion fit. Sonja, owner of Hevossilta Oy restaurant in Forssa, post-interview reflection marks a 7 out of 10 as a suitable candidate for engagement.

When taking a look at meaningful prospect companies for the case company. The writer reviewed [seedtable.com under 69 Finland startup companies to watch out in 2024](#), Startcart, Metroc, Bit-odd and eBrands are companies which have in common high revenue investment with mostly B2B segment target and a small team with no marketing professionals, positioning themselves as a great fit for case company.

5 Students research

5.1.1 Interviews

The interviews were conducted two ways, one through a 30-minute online meeting and three by answering a questionnaire, appendix 8. The online interview had numerous questions not presented on the list, deepening the insight and gaining more credibility and value. All students are from Haaga-Helia, specializing in marketing in their 3rd year of studies.

The literature review reflects that all three interviewees have gained practical experience while pursuing their degrees. Interestingly, they were all working in fields outside their area of study. Marketing students, in particular, engage in real-project experiences as part of their coursework. These projects, often spanning five months and involving multiple courses, require students to work in teams and search for collaborations with commissioners, like photographers and hairdressers.

One interviewee recalled a significant experience at the marketing agency Krea, emphasizing the value of such real-world projects in their education. A key factor driving student motivation in these projects and for professional interest in a company is the opportunity to feel valued, alongside the chance to grow and learn.

Throughout their coursework, students are exposed to a variety of marketing tools. These include social media platforms “*Adobe Suite, Episerver, Agorapulse, and Microsoft 365*”. Pinja’s statement, “*We learn a little bit of everything. I think we have a scratch about everything,*” underscores the broad scope of marketing services that students are exposed to. Digital marketing, in particular, has been a major focus in their final year, reflecting its popularity and relevance in the degree.

Reflecting on the operations of the case company, the prospect of a student managing comprehensive 360-degree marketing operations appears challenging. Although all interviewees acknowledged the possibility of undertaking such a role with appropriate guidance and support, Pinja’s online meeting highlighted the benefits of a more tailored approach, leveraging their specific expertise. This preference seems to stem from a lack of confidence, not necessarily due to the skills learned at school but more from a shortfall in practical experience.

The feasibility of working while studying varies among individuals’ lifestyles, credits taken and more. However, ‘*manageable*’ is a term frequently used to describe their capacity, with 16 hours per week being a suitable amount of time students feel comfortable committing to work. Those working on their theses expressed a particular interest in full-time engagement.

Students are aware of the pay differential compared to senior professionals and are generally willing to perform similar tasks for about 70% of the professional market rate, roughly equating to 2000 euros for a full-time role. Most showed a preference for monthly payment structures. Pinja commented, *“While a professional might take one hour for a task, as students still learning and striving for perfection, we might take 12 hours,”* indicating a preference for project-based payment due to the significant time investment required at the early stages of their careers.

Teaching marketing principles is considered feasible for near-graduating marketing students, especially with proper guidance. They feel particularly confident in leading tasks like paid advertising, marketing design, and creating marketing strategies.

5.1.2 Students survey results

Like the SMEs survey, the student questionnaire results fall short of the desired number of responses, with only 15 total responses, from which five are aspiring marketing employees. Nevertheless, the responses provide some extra insights for the study. Since the study's preferred target audience was the marketing-interested students, the review is based on filtered answers. Moreover, regarding the generic questions like time available to work, the majority of the responses are similar to the majority of the target audience responses. Complete responses from the survey can be requested; otherwise, the filtered one can be found in appendix 10.

The marketing target interest echoed proficiency in content development, social media services, and paid advertisement. Web design is primarily the least proficient, followed by search engine optimization services. Google provides the most claimed marketing tools. Learning development and industry passion are the primary reasons for working in a digital marketing company. Crucially, salary is found in the middle of the table. Most students prefer long time commitments and a monthly salary. Lecturing marketing to others is within students' capabilities and is marketed on average as 5.4 from 10.

6 Discussion & Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents targeted recommendations and conclusive insights for the Case Company, crafted on the foundation of the literature and empirical data interpreted. The recommendations are exceptionally sculpted to resonate with the dynamics between the Case Company's current digital marketing strategies, including student collaboration, and the digital marketing outsourcing realm targeted at SMEs.

Furthermore, the chapter dives into an analysis of the Case Company's internal and external digital marketing competencies. Such will be achieved through a meticulously adapted SWOT analysis, an analytical tool that displays the company's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats in relation to its early visioned business model. As articulated by Skye Schooley, a SWOT analysis is not just an inventory but a profound exploration of a company's internal capabilities and external market position, giving a view of what the company is doing well and where it could improve (Schooley, 2024). For this thesis, the SWOT framework has been specifically tailored to the case company. The examination shall flourish thoughtful recommendations for the commissioner and present key findings for further consideration.

The culmination of this analysis leads to the formulation of a strategic initial start. These recommendations are structured using the SMART framework, ensuring they are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (California, 2017). This approach aims to provide the Case Company with a path of actionable and pragmatic strategies that resonate with the company's unique business model towards the first market penetration.

Moreover, answering the commissioner's proposed questions, which can be found on the methodologic figure under the proposition, will be reflected.

To finalize, utilize a conferred visual presentation of the operations by the commissioner. A modified display will be assembled to present writers' views on improved business dynamics.

6.2 Assessment of the case company and recommendations

Table 11. Case company SWOT analyse

<p>Strengths</p> <p>Innovation- integrating students' talents showcases continuous development, eagerness, energy, and fresh ideas.</p> <p>Educational partnerships- continuous influx of talent, practical learning, and ease of commissioner reach.</p> <p>Unique business model- a full business model focused on student integration is unique in the market.</p> <p>Unique value proposition- enhancing in-house marketing while gaining value in practical marketing services is uncommon.</p> <p>Cost-favourable- student integration and its business model shall substantially reduce the price of the service; SMEs' economics indicate cost as of high importance to purchase the service.</p>	<p>Weaknesses</p> <p>Credibility and trustworthiness- Students are not yet fully capable of delivering professional results; a supervisor needs to be capable of making amends and guiding them.</p> <p>Niche students- Students' time is limited and has to be meticulously conditioned based on studies, time of the year, academic period, and interest in marketing.</p> <p>Services- Without a doubt, all marketing services require time, knowledge, and much more. Offering a 360 degree in marketing service seems to be a big stretch. Tailoring the service according to students' expertise and SMEs' needs is imperative.</p> <p>Niche market- SMEs are picky and lack resources. Not all companies have the time to dispose in the learning market; if they do, time is limited.</p>
<p>Opportunities</p> <p>Market penetration- Much more tailored possibilities will strongly benefit the company. Examples: Services SMEs need, price negotiations, students' expertise, and time. This will ease the market penetration in terms of targeted industries within SMEs and facilitate the finding of the niche customers target.</p> <p>Full-time employment is a crucial incentive for attracting students' interest and commitment.</p> <p>More academic collaborations- having access to multiple talents will open the possibility for more intake projects, hence more stream revenue.</p> <p>Extension of the service- the service as of now is great, but it would be convenient to find an upgrade to hook the customer after they are preceptive on marketing solutions. It will create a more long-term need.</p> <p>In addition, the company currently has a</p>	<p>Threats</p> <p>Reputation damaged- noted that reputation upon choosing the right marketing agency is crucial. A small breakdown can influence the loss of market share.</p> <p>Extensive competition- not only in terms of players but in offered services. Standing out and maintaining a unique value proposition is hard.</p> <p>International freelancers- there is a big ecosystem of cheap labour out there.</p>

<p>plus service that mainly focuses on longer time and a few more services. One could upscale with more add-on chances.</p>	
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6.3 Starting plan

Table 12. SMART framework for plan initiation

Specific	Launch an initial market penetration campaign to establish the case company as a go-to provider of digital marketing services for SMEs. This campaign shall highlight the unique selling proposition of leveraging student talent as innovative, cost-effective, in-house marketing enhancement, and short-term bounded service from which the hiring company can step up in its marketing activities.
Measurable	Track progress with the amount of acquisition rate in schools as partners, students involved, and amount of SMEs adhering to service. Measure success through client satisfaction scores from two angles: his own(hiring company) learning achievements—perhaps a test, and the marketing campaign KPIs, according to the agreement (reach, impressions, sales etc.) Track the revenue generated and student satisfaction in the company.
Achievable	Creating targeted marketing materials. Secure all needed tools for the operations. Ensure that student employees are adequately trained and supported to deliver high-quality services.
Relevant	Create targeted strategic marketing campaigns monitor and adjust according to the needs of SMEs. Initially specialized in 2 services and two industry tools and moved to the next ones when ready. Because the schools and students are a vital process of the case company business model, early commitment to ensure both collaborations are thriving is a must; SMEs are many, but teachers within

	this small ecosystem aren't. A mistake can hardly influence collaboration and affect future growth and assistance.
Time-bounded	Build a plan with one teacher to integrate students with the case company programme. Secure the first student and SMEs pilot within the following 3 months and be ready to start the programme in the upcoming summer. When students return to school, upscale the operations with 3 SMEs and ten students. Set monthly review meetings to assess progress against goals and make necessary adjustments.

Commissioner-focused questions and recommendations

The research could not pinpoint a more concrete industry looking for such services. Nevertheless, the ideal first segment for this service would be SMEs that recognize the importance of digital marketing but are constrained by budget and resources. These would typically be SMEs that are open to innovative approaches (often themselves have an innovative business) and require marketing support. Companies in industries that are more dynamic and open to change, perhaps younger demographic, would likely be the first adopters. Focus on industries that aren't yet ready to take on more complex digital service needs like SEO. B2B is highlighted as a better starting angle because B2C tend to be bigger companies with their own marketing team.

Key reasons for those not as interested include concerns about the credibility, professionalism and risk associated with entrusting their marketing to less experienced individuals. There is also a concern on reputation. It is hard to penetrate the market when there is no proof of achievements. The saying "time is of the essence" must be closely analysed. One reason to hire external companies for marketing is to be more resourceful, and having to input time into learning is not a great fit. Therefore, a wise, thoughtful timing for lecturing is essential. Considering reducing the plan time and making it an add-on service. However, certainly, individuals are looking for this service.

The most relevant buying criteria, outside of the already-mentioned costs, is strategy. As advice, is crucial to prepare ahead a marketing campaign to pitch for the concrete needs of the company. With time, after collecting feedback from prosperous customers, it improves its elaboration and standardizes unique views on different industry sectors. The needs dynamics are high, and personalization is of high value. Therefore, tailor-tailor-tailor services are a key strategy that will call attention to and facilitate integration on several industry targets.

The service should focus on digital marketing strategies that students can manage effectively and meet SMEs' core needs. It's not important to offer a full spectrum of marketing services, and students will not even be capable of doing it. Instead, tailor the service based on students' expertise

and SMEs' needs, one or two services at a time. The most relevant services are again conditioned. However, paid advertisement is where the best fit goes. One is because most companies offer such a service, echoing demand. Second, students are well-fitted to do it. These two points correlate with reducing the price of the service in the market and calling "Somejoukot" for a better market price-wise fit. Other services in reach for students are social media marketing and content development.

The ideal pricing model would attract SMEs and reflect the cost benefits of using student talent. Students have a stronger preference for monthly fees. While companies have experience with monthly fees, they tend to prefer project-based. The simple way would be to make it all monthly fee. However, when considering multiple students could be handling multiple projects same time, it conditions how to pay per itch project, leading to different salaries at the end of the month.

The most interested students are those studying marketing or related fields, possibly in the latter stages of their studies, looking for practical experience and flexible work hours.

Students prefer part-time work that accommodates their academic schedules, with the option for more hours during school breaks or if they are writing a thesis. Sixteen hours a week is a suitable choice. Students will enormously benefit from mentoring, but the company will need a marketing expert to overview the deliveries. It is not to underestimate their capabilities, but guidance and ownership of full responsibility are necessary.

With the many tools out there, is important to fit the ones students are most familiar with, which often are the ones used in school projects and most commons worldwide used.

It is relevant to point out that the student workforce will reduce the price, but on the other hand, the rare proposition of mentoring and enhancing in-house marketing shall raise it.

I would recommend ensuring that case company SEO is top-notch and quickly visible on online digital marketing services. I would suggest signing up for as many outsourced service providers as possible to follow the same point. Examples Clutch, Digital Agency Network, TheManifest and GoodFirms.

For the pilot purpose, the requested contact information by the case company will be shared confidentially to follow privacy rules. To note, there were three SME collected and two students. I would recommend focusing on the restaurant company. The restaurant is integrated into one other company that owns a museum/hotel establishment, opening doors for a fast service expansion. In addition, the owner has already taken matters of learning into her own hands, showcasing a genuine interest in learning. Its needs addressed paid ads, which are within the scope of students'

capabilities.

As for the students, both are marketing students with practical experience in the field.

As a final recommendation, the writer sketched an operations design presented in figure 8. Because the text is not very visible a more visible display can be found in the appendix 11. A four-plan design, with prices and characteristics that have value enhancement considerations. A concrete example of a customer needs and the process of choosing student/service needs. A small reflection on revenue attribution. The biggest challenge was to consider the needed funds for the paid ads to be included or not in the plan price. This also leads to a possibility to offer an extension of the service, when included in the plan. It is important to point out that, knowing the time to be a constrain, the plans are seen only with 1 hour per week learning enhancement.

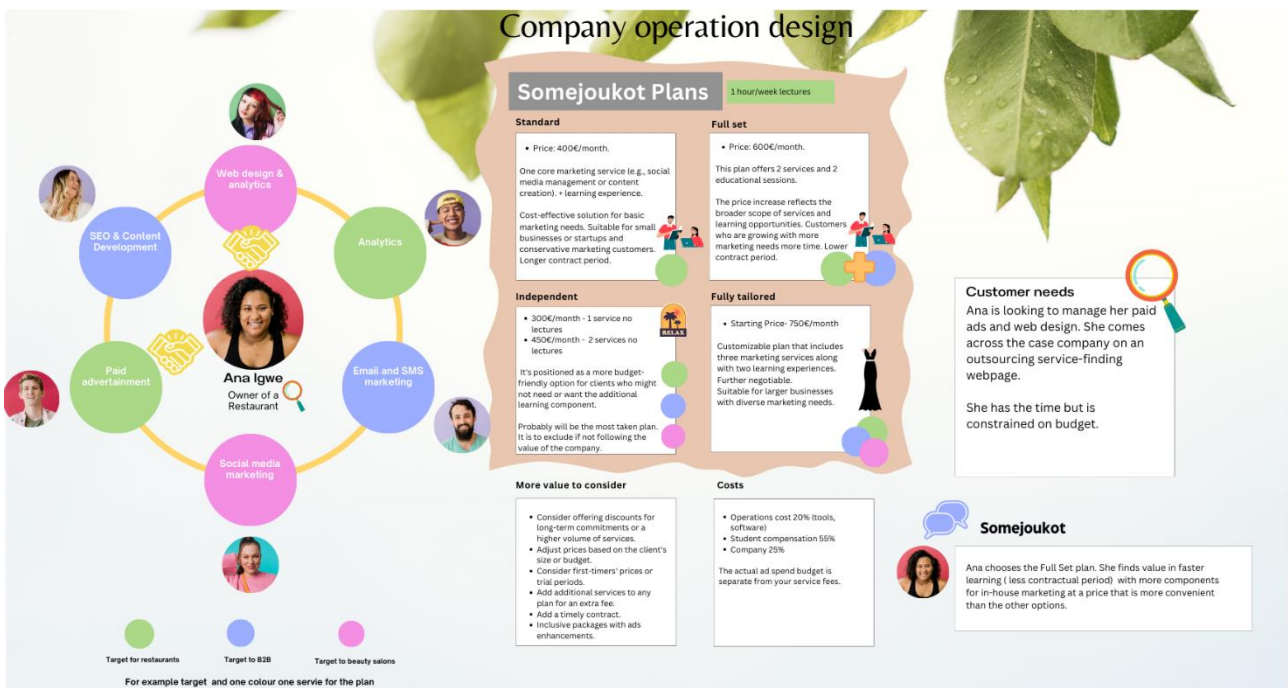


Figure 8. Writers own sketch of company's operations design

6.4 Thesis main question response

The thesis aimed to validate the case of company business towards SMEs' digital marketing needs. To do so, two angles had to be researched: student integrations in the case company and the market needs.

This business development strategy is highly pertinent to the agency's overarching aim to establish itself as new model of digital marketing partner for SMEs. The strategy directly addresses the pain points of SMEs – the need for cost-effective yet practical digital marketing solutions to stay competitive in the digital era. Another value lies in enhancing digital marketing skills in-house, on a

limited committed time. This approach differentiates the agency in a crowded market and aligns with broader services the industry needs.

Furthermore, this model promotes a symbiotic relationship between academia and industry, nurturing future marketing professionals and ensuring a continuous influx of eager working culture.

To answer the central question of the study:

Do SMEs perceive a service like 'Somejoukot', which involves students managing digital marketing initiatives while improving in-house marketing skills, as a fitting solution for their digital marketing needs?

-The answer is that the initial idea is appealing, and SMEs would be interested in such a service. So yes, there is a fit.

There is a slight need to improve the current business model, addressing the earlier recommendations or others.

6.5 Theoretical concepts under the study

The theoretical concepts reviewed under digital marketing didn't prove to be of vast importance for the study but, most notably, for understanding digital marketing influences. Nevertheless, some of the contribution to the study is viewed under the marketing theory, which outlooked the need for tailored programmes to validate personalized and emotional connections with consumers. This relationship shall galvanize more users, and under the network of externalities theory, more users equal to more value for the company.

The theoretical concepts reviewed in the student's literature positively join the case company practices with the student's apprenticeship under the WIL theory (work integrating learning). As vouched by the students, it will transmit future work readiness and career path clarification.

From the KBV (knowledge-based theory), the plan was to determine to what extent the students' knowledge is seen as a meaningful resource for the company. As analysed, students have some knowledge to offer but not to the same extent as professionals, not fully synthesizing as a company's primary resource. In addition, innovation capabilities remained an assumption.

Under the association of the book "The dance of change" with the students' research findings, it is safe to say students showed eagerness and motivation to enhance their learning, conveyed towards a more continuous learning workplace culture at the case company. The collective intelligence theory supported this study by having diverse students submit responses. After all, the best

outcomes come when knowledge is shared. From that perspective, a recommendation to have a professional outlook on the student's deliveries will produce more qualitative results.

6.6 Commissioner and case company

To start, I would like to comment on the commissioner, Noora. It was a great pleasure to work with her. In the early stages, we prepared weekly meetings and discussed the material she gave me. She was always available, very understanding, and supportive. In addition, she was very flexible and open to my forward-thinking direction for the thesis and planning, which made me feel more in control. She made sure to always answer on time and displayed interest. She assisted me with some inputs and offered to help me reach some of her contacts for interviews. Unfortunately, they did not pay off. Although there wasn't a total commitment to reviewing every document I posted on Monday.com for rating and comments, I know she was aware of my work from the Teams group.

Next, I wish to comment on some of my thoughts on the case company. This thesis was important for me from when Noora displayed interest in supporting students' integration in the practical workforce. I also must say, from my interviews, that the excitement of having commissioned real projects, getting credits, and possibly being paid was superbly thrilling for the students.

I think the case company have a good thing going. The way I see it, the case company does not need to hire students as employees fully but serves as a commissioner for their projects and connects to the needed companies. Positioning itself as an in-between, the primary task is to correspond SMEs to students. In addition to corresponding the communication with the institution, its key responsibility is to make sure the practice and results are reviewed by one professional and, if needed, step in and take responsibility on improving the student's work, making sure the SME's end needs are met.

6.7 Future research

This thesis is far from complete due to the lack of data to support its content; certainly, there is a need for more investigation to solidify its findings. Future research should focus on collecting a larger set of data, which could include broader surveys and more in-depth interviews, particularly with SMEs as potential customers.

Because the study was broad, it lacked specificity. Therefore, I suggest a targeted focus on investigating a particular industry to understand its needs and how the case company could enhance their marketing through its digital services.

It is strongly advised that collaboration methods and outcomes between educational institutions and private companies be further investigated. This research should focus on the benefits and challenges from both perspectives, understanding the various types of collaborations and how to enhance them. By doing so, the case company would obtain a robust set of information on how to integrate students into the business model and gain key insights into commission-based projects for educational institutes, credit systems, and remuneration. A prime example is the long-standing partnership between the Nordic Business Forum and Haaga-Helia, where students gain credits and, nowadays, remuneration and, most importantly, experience. The point is how to make such collaborations more regular every month.

Another suggestion is to identify the tools used for students' marketing education and leverage them within the case company. Moreover, because technology continuously evolves, it is crucial to investigate which new tools and services of marketing SMEs could utilize to maintain a competitive edge.

Currently, everything seems to be moving in the right direction. However, I would recommend comparing student and professional outcomes to see how they differ and what improvements could be made to overcome those gaps.

This study aimed to be as representative of the national level as possible. Regrettably, there was a noticeable lack of research and input when studying SMEs and digital marketing associations in Finland. I suggest investigating in different geographical locations similar to Finland to make more precise assumptions.

Lastly, but not least importantly, further in the future, it would be pertinent to examine the scalability of the business. Consider expanding the business model from students to a larger pool of individuals, such as freelancers.

6.8 Thesis journey and limitations

The thesis was a rollercoaster of emotions, with some positive experiences and some less fortunate. Because there was a great deal of interesting information (sometimes not entirely necessary for the thesis or not even on the same topic), one of the biggest challenges was to narrow down my research and stay focused on the direction I was heading. As a result, I ended up writing far too many pages off the course, discussing theories that weren't as relevant and didn't add significant value to the concrete aspects of the study. To mitigate this and make some use of the time I had invested, I followed my teacher's advice and compiled more visually accessible and constrained tables with information found in two sections of the literature review: the market and the students.

Furthermore, the scope of the thesis was broad and had two perspectives to validate: one from the standpoint of the students in the case company and one from the market. It was challenging to contextualize both simultaneously. For example, when I mentioned a “niche segment,” I had to reference it from both perspectives, which sometimes made it difficult to balance the importance of both topics, often leaving little to add to one of them.

The surveys were a huge disappointment. After reviewing the number of impressions my two posts had on LinkedIn, which amounted to over 3,223 combined, the number of times my posts appeared in someone's feed. Additionally, the student survey was confirmed by email from the communications department at Haaga-Helia to have been sent to over 680 students from the target marketing specialization audience. I received private messages from individuals admitting they had difficulty answering my survey. This occurred because respondents did not adhere to the survey's required constraints, such as in the hierarchical rating, often repeating the same number without understanding that they could not use it twice, even though it was mentioned at the top. I heard good feedback on both the survey design and the questionnaire. However, the lack of responses was heart-hurting.

Happily, I conducted more interviews than I initially thought I would, and the compiled data I scraped was a significant perspective boost regarding the competition. Interestingly, they wanted to access that document after the interviews with marketing professionals. This scraping was new to me, and I had to learn it from scratch, not an easy task.

As a business student in aviation, I had some ideas about marketing, but not to a far great extent. This thesis certainly gave me more knowledge not only from a marketing perspective but also from a business development perspective. When it comes to digital marketing, some of the most interesting things I came across were its vast umbrella of services and the complexity in the ecosystem business. From the business view, I very much enjoyed the management factors and stages figure, I found it to be very well visually presented, giving a good perspective on how different relevance's shift along the company grow. In addition, I got very engaged in the game theory concept, although it wasn't so crucial for this thesis.

I am glad I learned how to scrap data. It is an interesting tool and can often facilitate lead generation, graphics development, and information-related components.

Overall, I gathered a wealth of information and am satisfied with what I put together. But for me, what is most important is that it brings value to my commissionaire and the business.

6.9 Conclusion

The journey of this thesis has been a complex mission of analysis, strategic insight, and innovative propositions, all aimed at enhancing the digital marketing efforts of SMEs through the novel integration of student talent. The thesis has carved out a set of targeted recommendations through meticulous research and empirical data interpretation, resonating profoundly with the case company's ambitions and operational dynamics. To appeal towards my initial statement, if the case company is a startup or not, I would categorize it as a start-up. It is innovative, and the business idea has legs not to walk but to run.

To conclude, this thesis does not mark an end but a beginning. It invites the case company to embark on a journey and explore its opportunities and adaptations. The insights gained here are a flare for the company's future actions, ensuring that it penetrates not only the market but also pioneers new horizons in the digital marketing domain for SMEs.

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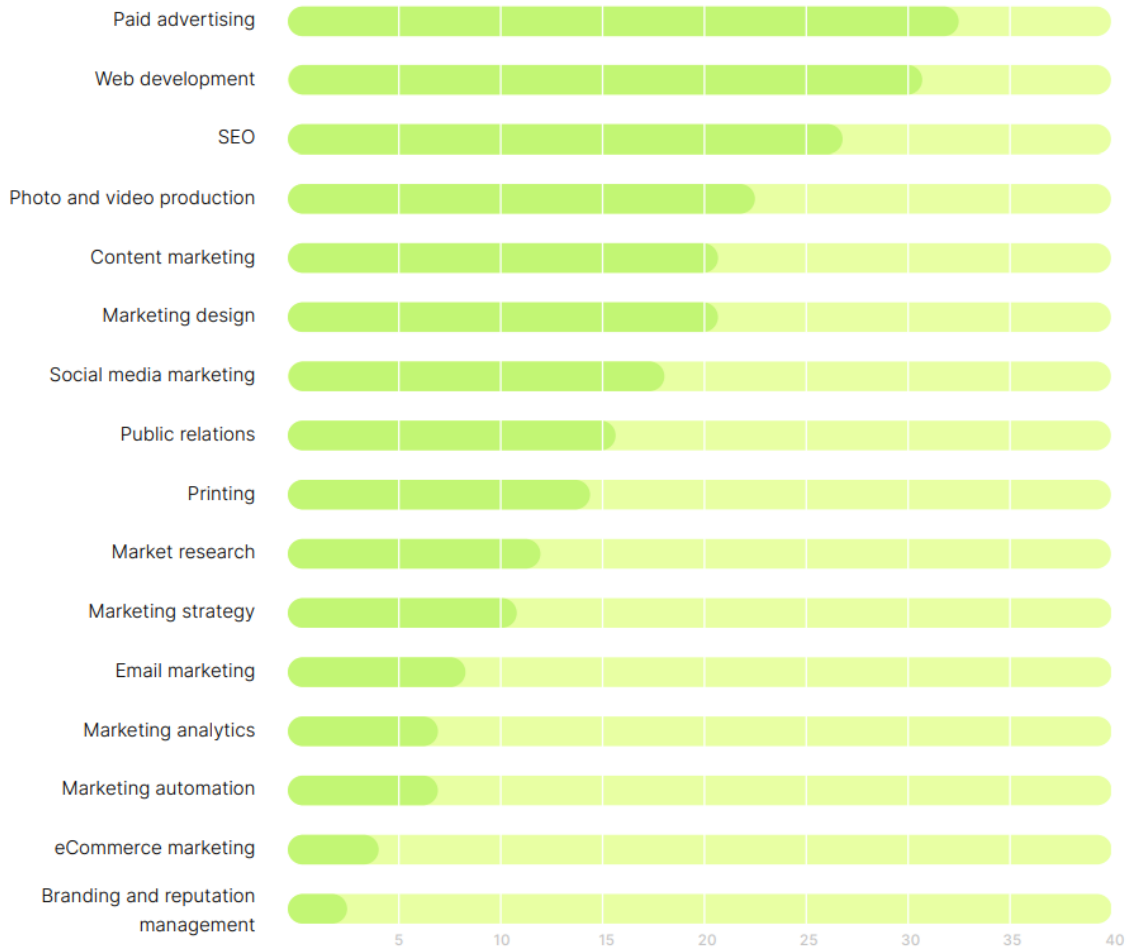
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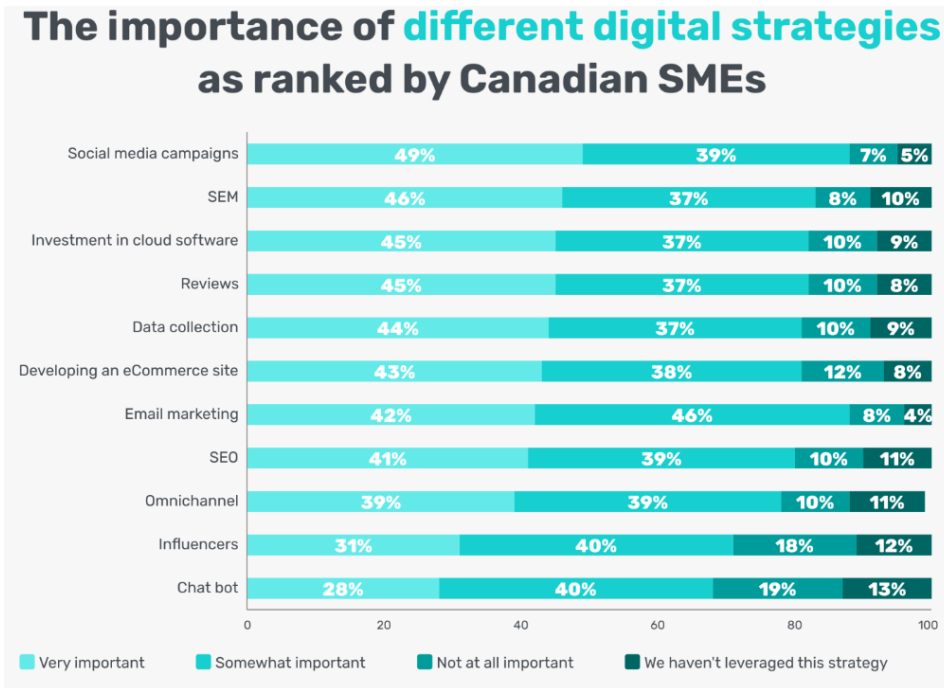
Appendixes

Appendix 1. Which marketing services do you outsource ? (Team D. , 2021)

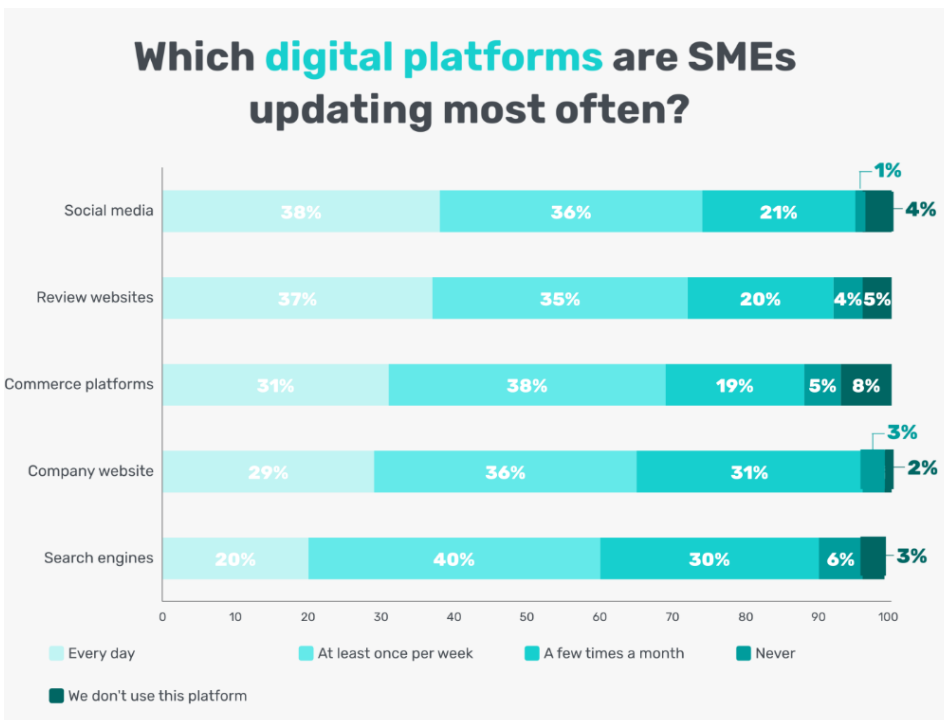
Which marketing services do you outsource?



Appendix 2. The importance of different digital strategies as ranked by Canadian SMEs (Anaya, 2022)



Appendix 3. Which digital Platforms are SMEs updating most often ? (Anaya, 2022)



Appendix 4. Students Survey

Survey: <https://link.webpolsurveys.com/S/073657D7810E0A62>

Track of reach

Reach	Note	Action
Study in Finland	Facebook Group	
International students in Finland	Facebook Group	
Let's Study in Finland!	Facebook Group	
Student Jobs in Finland FI	Facebook Group	
Startup community Haaga Helia	startupschool@haaga-helia.fi	Forwarded
3AMK-	iida.koivusaari@laurea.fi	No help
Marketing Major Senior Responsible HH	Kevin.Gore@haaga-helia.fi	Forwarded
Asiantuntija, tutkimuspalvelut	pekka.lahti@haaga-helia.fi	On the 16th January, survey was sent to 688 Haaga-Helia students in marketing target
LinkedIn		3 reminders
Own contacts	WhatsApp	

Cover Letter for Survey:

Dear student,

You are invited to participate in a pioneering survey that aims to bridge the gap between academic learning and real-world working digital marketing practices.

Whether you're already diving into marketing dynamics or just starting, this survey is designed to understand your motivations, skills, and the potential for integrating your academic journey with practical and paid experience. One student will be selected for a paid pilot program integrated into a digital marketing company to confine mutual benefit towards small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Rest assured, this 5-minute survey will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Thank you so much for your attention and participation.

Questioner

1. What is your major area of study?
2. What year are you in your academic program?

3. Are you professionally interested in progressing your career path in digital marketing?
4. Have you ever managed or contributed to a social media account for a business or organisation? (If Yes, follow question: Describe your experience: What did you do, what tools did you use, and other relevant details?)
5. Rate your proficiency in the following digital marketing services: Content creation, SEO, SMM, email marketing, marketing data analytics, and Web design.
6. What digital marketing tools are you familiar with?
7. Please prioritise the attributes that most pique your interest in working for a digital marketing agency while you pursue your studies: Work Flexibility, Salary, Learning development, Practical experience, Industry passion, Incentive for a full-time job.
8. While studying, how many weekly hours are you willing to work professionally?
Multiple: Less than 7; 8-12; 13-17; Over 18 hours.
9. While studying, for how long can you commit to work professionally?
10. Please rate the importance of the following factors in enhancing your work experience.
11. Select one remuneration model that would be most appealing to you.
12. Can you provide an example of effective digital marketing targeted to SMEs (small and medium enterprises)?
13. How well can you tutor someone lacking digital marketing experience?
14. Are you willing to participate in a paid pilot programme in digital marketing? If yes, follow-up question: Write your details for follow-up.
15. Do you wish to share any additional thoughts to highlight working students in digital marketing?

Appendix 5. SMEs Survey

Survey: <https://link.webropolsurveys.com/S/EFBE9FA41D11EE0F>

Track of reach

Reached	Note	Action
Startup Jobs Finland	Facebook Group	
Startup Helsinki	Facebook Group	
Startup community	startupschool@haaga-helia.fi	Forwarded
Maria01 Community	annica@maria.io < annica@maria.io >	No replay
XES community	Tamara on LinkedIn	Forwarded
LinkedIn	Noora Lainio, comissionair forwarded	3 reminders
Own contacts	WhatsApp	

Cover Letter for Survey:

Greetings,

I invite you to participate in a brief survey to understand the landscape of outsourced digital marketing among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). One company will be selected for a free pilot initiative. 📄

Whether you own the business or are an employee, your insights are invaluable in shedding light on the motivations, preferences, and operations of digital marketing strategies in the SME sector. Your responses will remain confidential and directly contribute to a broader understanding of how companies leverage external marketing strategies to achieve business goals.

Thank you for taking the time to share your experience and knowledge.

Questionair

1. In which industry does your company operate?
2. What is the size of your company in terms of employee count? *
3. How long has your company been in operation?
4. In which region is your company primarily active?
5. On a scale, rank how important digital marketing performance is for your company's business growth
6. Does the company outsource any digital marketing services? * (If yes: Are you capable to share from whom ? ; How often do you review analytics and strategy each month?
7. Which digital marketing services does your SME currently outsource?
8. Regardless of whether the company's marketing activities are in-house or outsourced. How happy do you feel with your company's current marketing activities? Rate on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is least important, and 5 is most important
9. Regardless of whether the company outsources or not. How crucial are the following factors, in your opinion, in deciding to outsource digital marketing services? Rate on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is least important, and 5 is most important. *
10. Which pricing model do you prefer when paying for outsourced digital services?
11. What barriers, if any, might prevent your company from outsourcing digital marketing services?
12. Please prioritize the following factors in order of importance when choosing a digital marketing agency: Cost; Reputation, Experience; Range of services; Company location; Strategy offered.
13. If the cost of outsourcing could be reduced by having a near-graduating marketing student employed by a professional digital marketing company to manage your digital marketing services, would this interest your company? * If yes, would you like to share any thoughts or insights on this matter?
14. Would you consider hiring a service that provides both digital marketing and training on enhancing your in-house capabilities? * If yes, What is your availability and willingness to commit time for learning and reviewing strategy?
15. Would your company be willing to participate in a free pilot project for outsourcing digital marketing? If yes, please provide the best contact information for follow-up.
16. Do you have any additional comments or feedback regarding digital marketing outsourcing for your company? For example, what key learnings or insights have you gained from outsourcing your digital marketing?

Appendix 6. Semi Structured Interview questions for SMEs potentials

Note: These were a few selected questions.

Introduction and Background:

Can you briefly describe your role in the company?

How long has your company been active?

What is the industry where your company operate?

If any, how many people in the digital marketing team?

Dive in marketing activities:

How important is digital marketing for your success?

Do you conduct digital marketing activities ? What specifically?

Is your inhouse marketing successful?

Division question:

Have your company ever outsourced digital marketing?

Outsourced	Not outsourced
What prompted your decision to outsource digital marketing activities?	What are the reasons to not outsource ?
What were your concerns prior to outsourcing ?	Do you have enough expertise in marketing in your company ?
How you searched and assessed a potential digital marketing agencies?	What would be the key factors to help you decide to outsource ?
How do you communicate and how many times you meet with the outsourced team?	Would you pay a end-degree student in Marketing to do your digital marketing while also lecturing your in-house capabilities?
Have there been any significant challenges or setbacks in this collaboration?	Would you be willing to learn digital marketing ? How many hours a month ?
Have your initial objectives been met, exceeded, or fallen short?	What marketing services your companies needs for success ?
What digital marketing services you outsourced ?	How much you willing to pay for marketing services?
How was the payment for the service ?	What would be the marketing services in your industry that require most attention ?
Would you be willing to learn digital marketing ? How many hours a month ?	If you were to outsource a company, what would be the key determining factors on selecting company A or company B ?

Would you pay a end-degree student in Marketing to do your digital marketing and teach you how to do it Aswell?	What type of payment you prefer to pay for marketing services ? (per hour, per month, per click, per project, other)
Based on your experience, what are the key lessons learned in managing out-sourced digital marketing services?	What are the biggest challenges you have faced with in-house digital marketing?

Appendix 7. Semi-structured interviews questionnaire for marketing specialists

Note: This are some of the selected questions

- Can you share your professional background and experience in digital marketing for SMEs?
- Do you have any tailored program services ?
- What are the industry sectors that have the biggest need of outsourcing digital marketing services and why ?
- What are the most common challenges SMEs face in digital marketing?
- What services are most in-demand ?
- How many services and clients can one man handle?
- How many times a month do you engage in analytical communication ?
- How is your pricing structured for SMEs?
- What kind of budget should an SME allocate for effective digital marketing?
- Do you provide any help for this SMEs to enhance their in-house marketing capabilities and how ?
- What advices would you give for a company starting in the digital marketing outsourcing ecosystem ?

In addition, review of data set and questions.

Appendix 8. Semi structured interviews for marketing students

1. What motivated you to pursue a career in digital marketing?
2. What digital marketing skills and tools are you proficient in? (related to services, SEO, SMM etc)
3. Do you think a near-graduating student in marketing is capable of producing a 360-degree marketing work?
4. Can you describe a scenario where you felt fully engaged and motivated in a learning or work environment?
5. What do you look for in a company's value proposition that would encourage you to engage and learn more?
6. How difficult is it to combine work with studies?
7. How many hours a week could you work in a marketing company?
8. What sort of payment do you expect? Per month, per project and how much?
9. Do you believe that working in a marketing company while studying could be integrated in some school projects? If so how?

- 10. What do you expect from a company specializing in outsourced digital marketing services regarding career growth and opportunities?
- 11. As a near graduating student how confident are you in your skill of marketing based on schools studies ?

Appendix 9. SMEs Survey results

Basic report

Outsourcing Digital Marketing for SMEs

Total number of respondents: 6

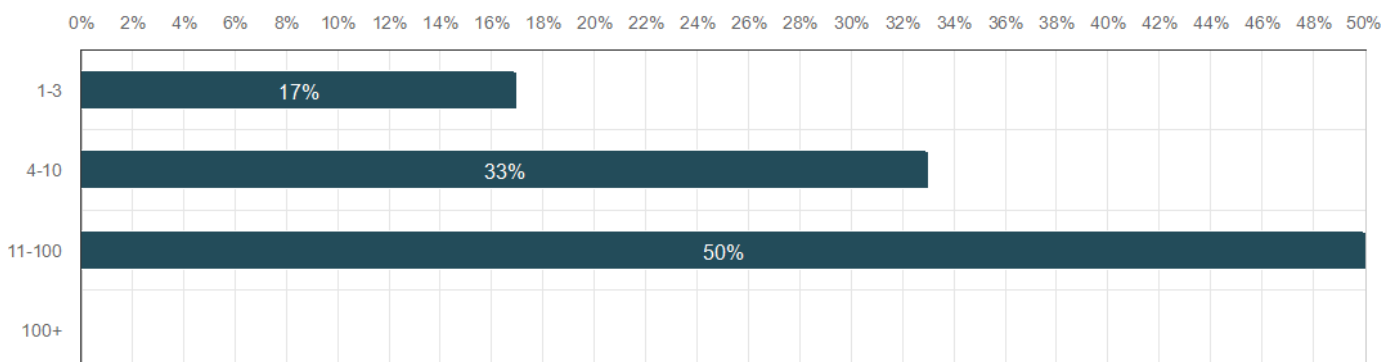
In which industry does your company operate?

Number of respondents: 6

Responses
Event
Construction
Education Technology
Health
Real Estate
Sales

What is the size of your company in terms of employee count?

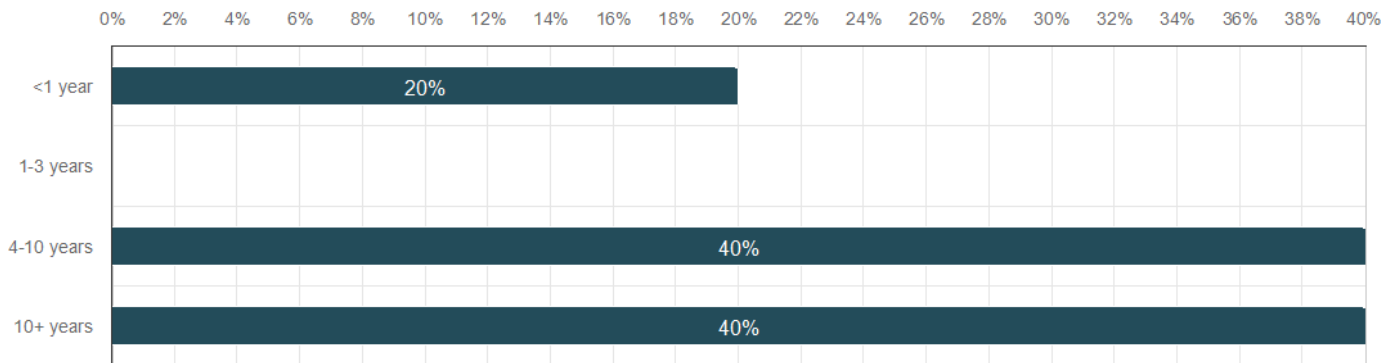
Number of respondents: 6



	n	Percent
1-3	1	16.7%
4-10	2	33.3%
11-100	3	50.0%
100+	0	0.0%

How long has your company been in operation?

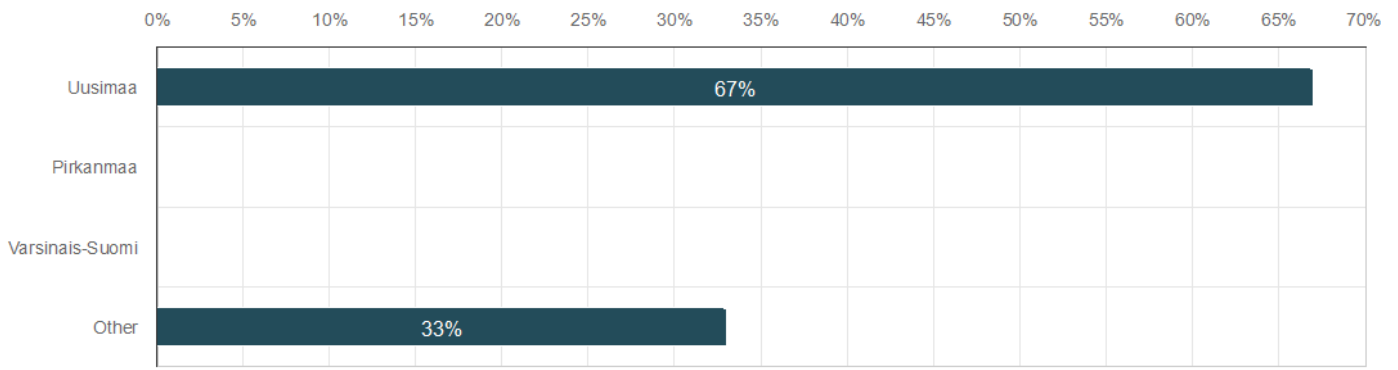
Number of respondents: 5



	n	Percent
<1 year	1	20.0%
1-3 years	0	0.0%
4-10 years	2	40.0%
10+ years	2	40.0%

In which region is your company primarily active?

Number of respondents: 6



	n	Percent
Uusimaa	4	66.7%
Pirkanmaa	0	0.0%
Varsinais-Suomi	0	0.0%
Other	2	33.3%

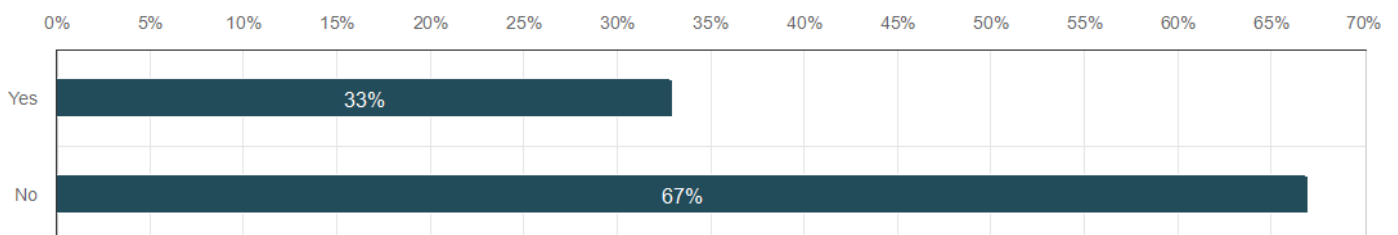
On a scale, rank how important digital marketing performance is for your company's business growth.

Number of respondents: 6

Min value	Max value	Average	Median	Sum	Standard Deviation
4.0	8.0	6.8	7.5	41.0	1.6

Does the company outsource any digital marketing services?

Number of respondents: 6



	n	Percent
Yes	2	33.3%
No	4	66.7%

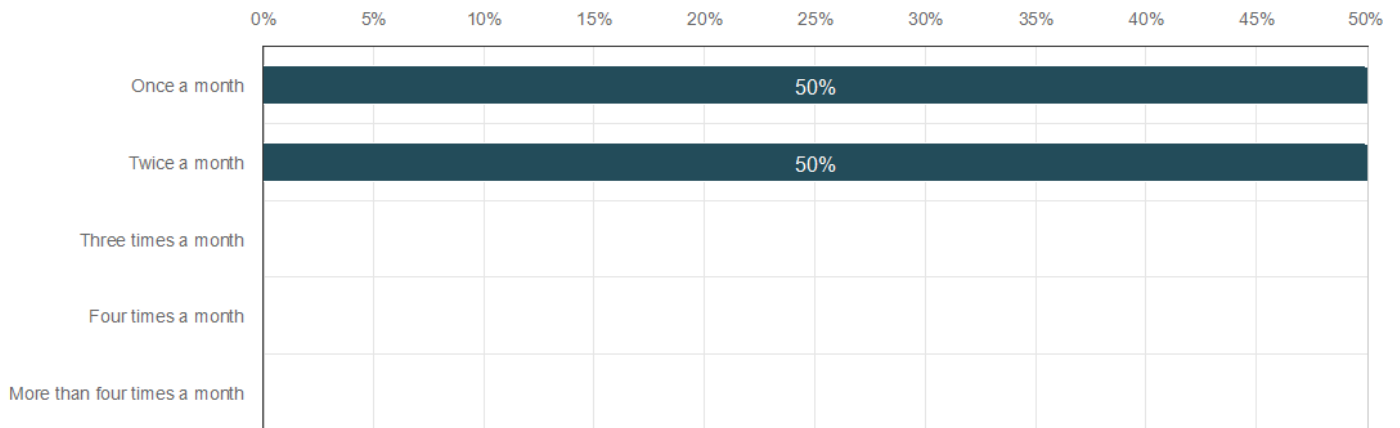
Are you capable to share from whom ?

Number of respondents: 1

Responses
Swiss agencies and international freelancers

How often do you review analytics and strategy each month?

Number of respondents: 2

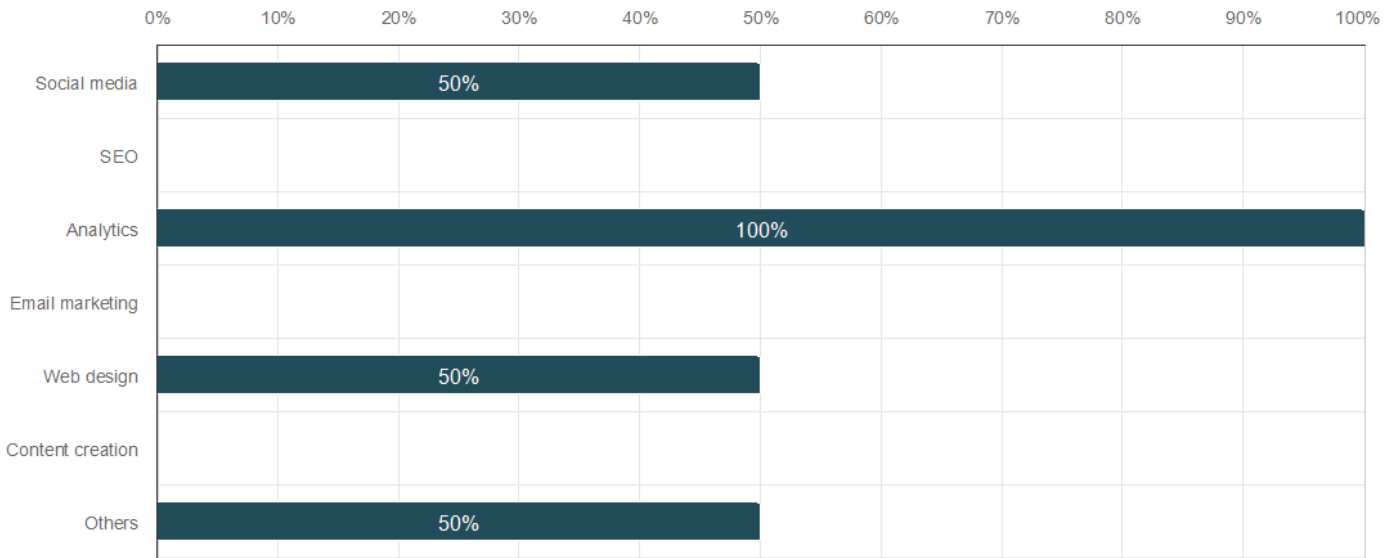


	n	Percent
Once a month	1	50.0%
Twice a month	1	50.0%
Three times a month	0	0.0%
Four times a month	0	0.0%

More than four times a month	0	0.0%
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Which digital marketing services does your SME currently outsource?

Number of respondents: 2, selected answers: 5

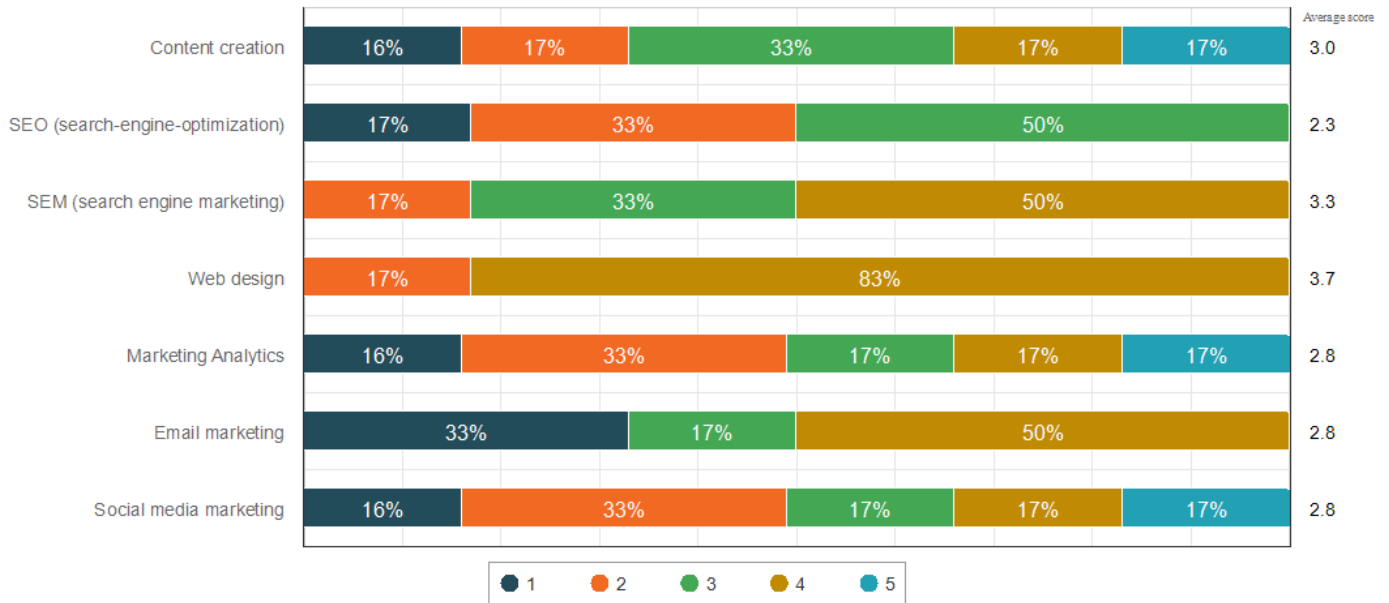


	n	Percent
Social media	1	50.0%
SEO	0	0.0%
Analytics	2	100.0%
Email marketing	0	0.0%
Web design	1	50.0%
Content creation	0	0.0%
Others	1	50.0%

Regardless of whether the company's marketing activities are in-house or outsourced. How happy do you feel with your company's current marketing activities?

Rate on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is least important, and 5 is most important.

Number of respondents: 6

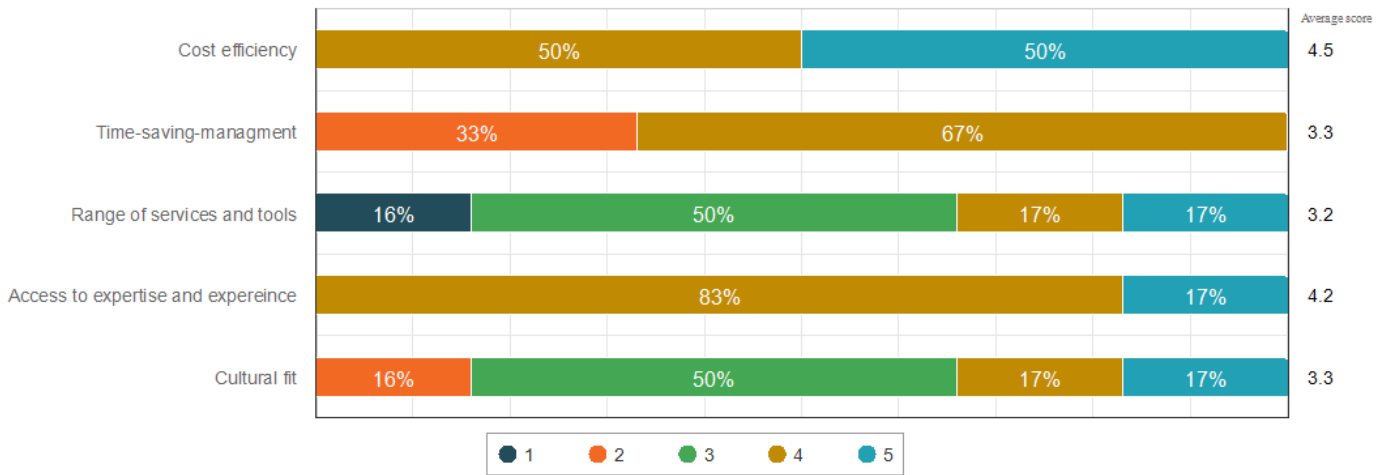


	1	2	3	4	5	Average	Median
Content creation	16.6%	16.7%	33.3%	16.7%	16.7%	3.0	3.0
SEO (search-engine-optimization)	16.7%	33.3%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.3	2.5
SEM (search engine marketing)	0.0%	16.7%	33.3%	50.0%	0.0%	3.3	3.5
Web design	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	83.3%	0.0%	3.7	4.0
Marketing Analytics	16.6%	33.3%	16.7%	16.7%	16.7%	2.8	2.5
Email marketing	33.3%	0.0%	16.7%	50.0%	0.0%	2.8	3.5
Social media marketing	16.6%	33.3%	16.7%	16.7%	16.7%	2.8	2.5
Total	14.3%	21.4%	23.8%	33.3%	7.2%	3.0	3.0

Regardless of whether the company outsources or not. How crucial are the following factors, in your opinion, in deciding to outsource digital marketing services?

Rate on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is least important, and 5 is most important.

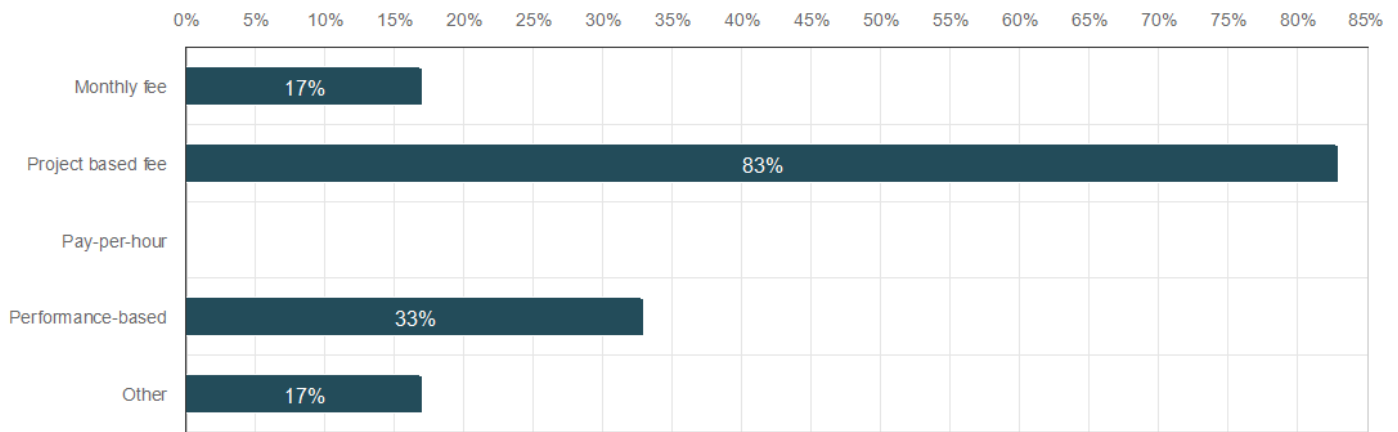
Number of respondents: 6



	1	2	3	4	5	Average	Median
Cost efficiency	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	4.5	4.5
Time-saving-management	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	66.7%	0.0%	3.3	4.0
Range of services and tools	16.6%	0.0%	50.0%	16.7%	16.7%	3.2	3.0
Access to expertise and experience	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	83.3%	16.7%	4.2	4.0
Cultural fit	0.0%	16.6%	50.0%	16.7%	16.7%	3.3	3.0
Total	3.3%	10.0%	20.0%	46.7%	20.0%	3.7	4.0

Which pricing model do you prefer when paying for outsourced digital services?

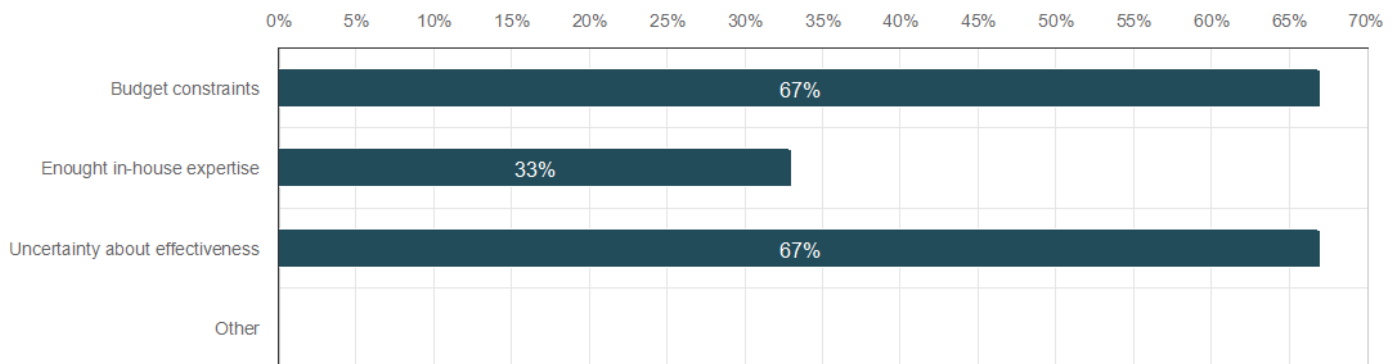
Number of respondents: 6, selected answers: 9



	n	Percent
Monthly fee	1	16.7%
Project based fee	5	83.3%
Pay-per-hour	0	0.0%
Performance-based	2	33.3%
Other	1	16.7%

What barriers, if any, might prevent your company from outsourcing digital marketing services?

Number of respondents: 6, selected answers: 10



	n	Percent
Budget constraints	4	66.7%

Enough in-house expertise	2	33.3%
Uncertainty about effectiveness	4	66.7%
Other	0	0.0%

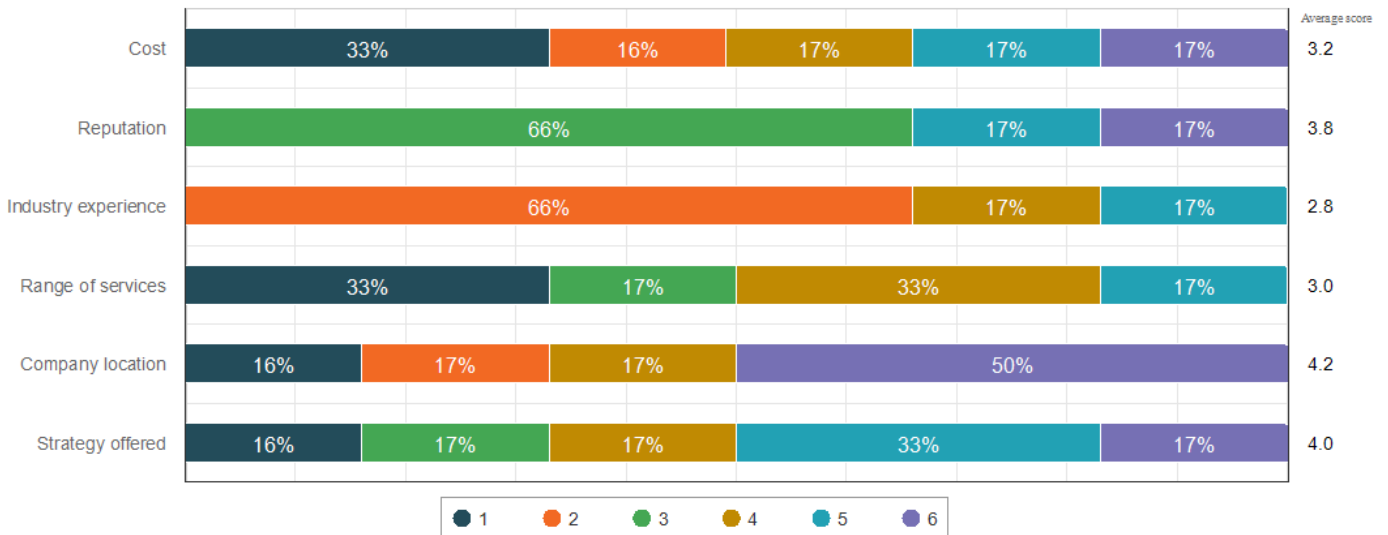
Wish to elaborate?

Number of respondents: 0

Responses

Please prioritize the following factors in order of importance when choosing a digital marketing agency:

Number of respondents: 6

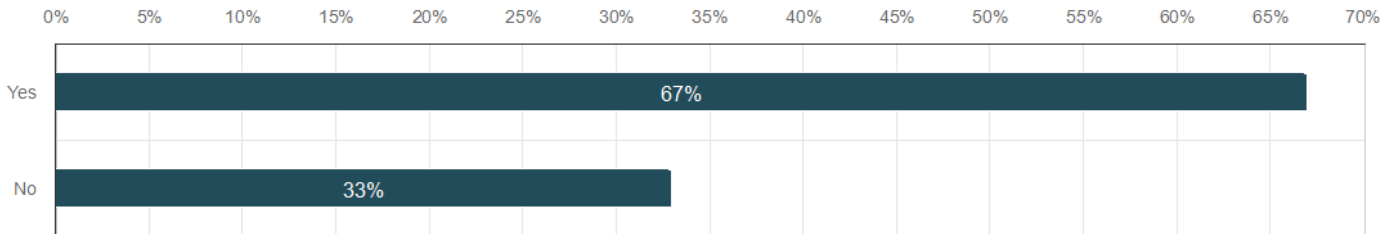


	1	2	3	4	5	6
Cost	33.3%	16.6%	0.0%	16.7%	16.7%	16.7%
Reputation	0.0%	0.0%	66.6%	0.0%	16.7%	16.7%
Industry experience	0.0%	66.6%	0.0%	16.7%	16.7%	0.0%
Range of services	33.3%	0.0%	16.7%	33.3%	16.7%	0.0%
Company location	16.6%	16.7%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	50.0%

Strategy offered	16.6%	0.0%	16.7%	16.7%	33.3%	16.7%
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If the cost of outsourcing could be reduced by having a near-graduating marketing student employed by a professional digital marketing company to manage your digital marketing services, would this interest your company?

Number of respondents: 6



	n	Percent
Yes	4	66.7%
No	2	33.3%

Would you like to share any thoughts or insights on this matter?

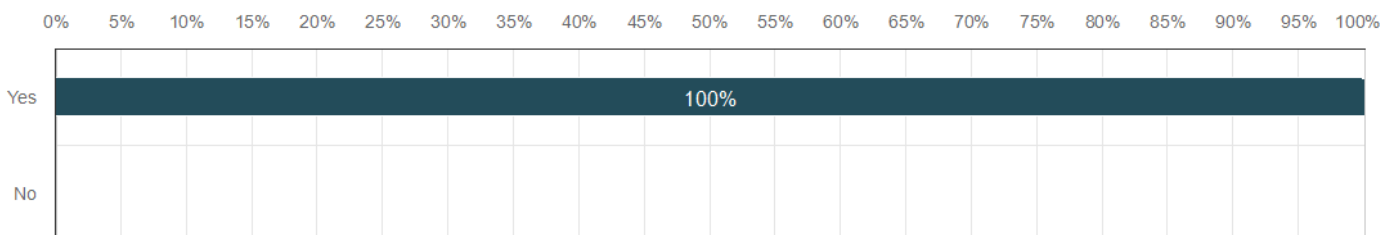
Number of respondents: 1

Responses

I see that especially near-graduating students could have certain insights that some of the professionals who have been working already longer. I think that new and experimental methods could have opportunities to stand out from the mass.

Would you consider hiring a service that provides both digital marketing and training on enhancing your in-house capabilities?

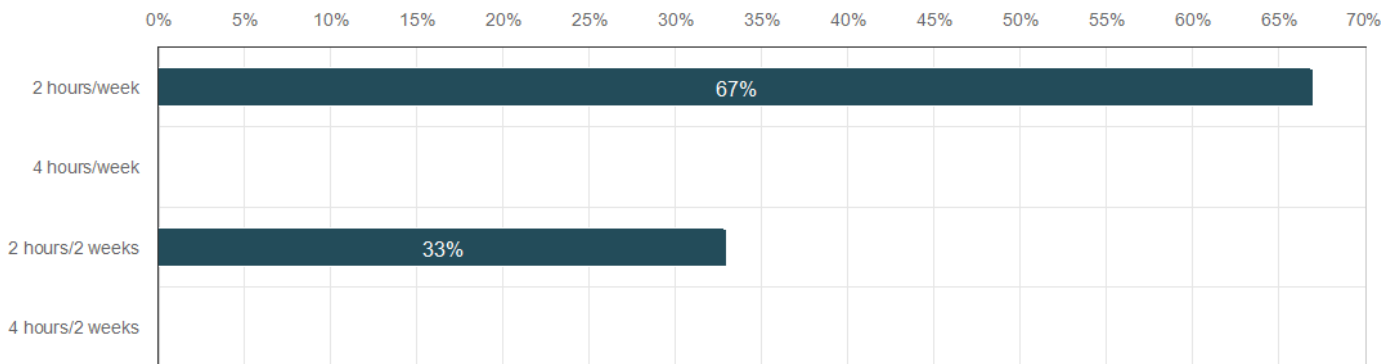
Number of respondents: 6



	n	Percent
Yes	6	100.0%
No	0	0.0%

What is your availability and willingness to commit time for learning and reviewing strategy ?

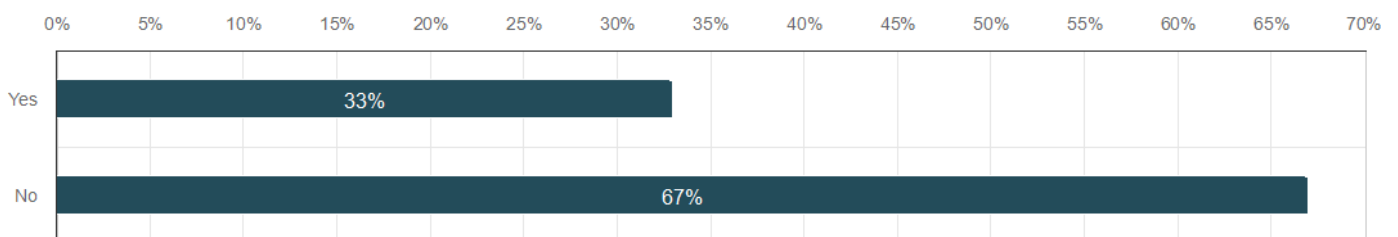
Number of respondents: 6



	n	Percent
2 hours/week	4	66.7%
4 hours/week	0	0.0%
2 hours/2 weeks	2	33.3%
4 hours/2 weeks	0	0.0%

Would your company be willing to participate in a free pilot project for outsourcing digital marketing?

Number of respondents: 6



	n	Percent
Yes	2	33.3%
No	4	66.7%

If yes, please provide the best contact information for follow-up.

Number of respondents: 2 – **Confidential data**

Do you have any additional comments or feedback regarding digital marketing outsourcing for your company? For example, what key learnings or insights have you gained from outsourcing your digital marketing?

Number of respondents: 1

Responses
Outsourcing can be great if there is not a huge learning curve to be anticipated and if its high quality.

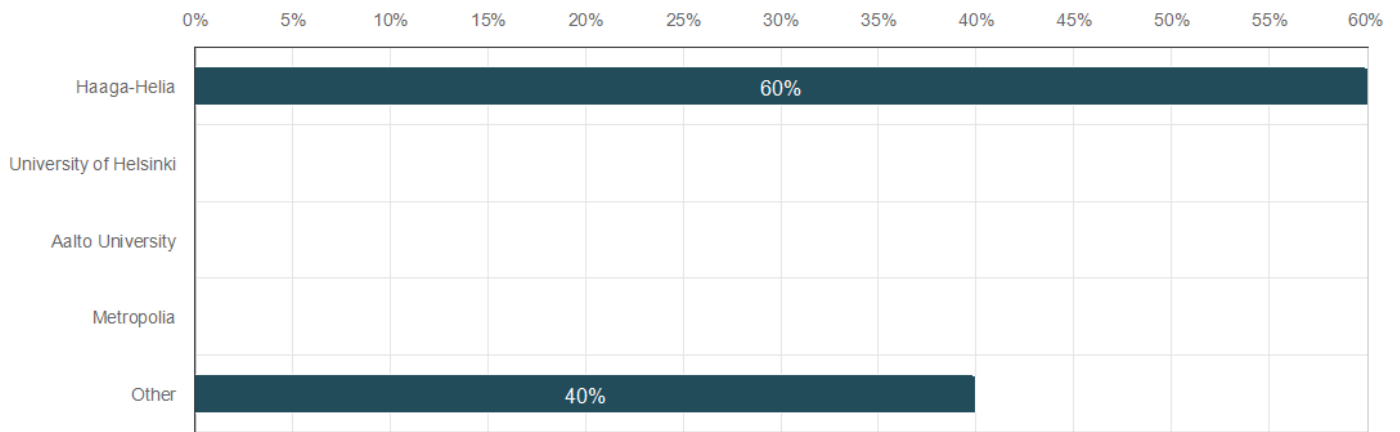
Appendix 10. Students Survey Results

Basic report-Students Survey

Showing 5 respondents of survey's total 15 respondents

What is your educational institution?

Number of respondents: 5



	n	Percent
Haaga-Helia	3	60.0%
University of Helsinki	0	0.0%
Aalto University	0	0.0%
Metropolia	0	0.0%
Other	2	40.0%

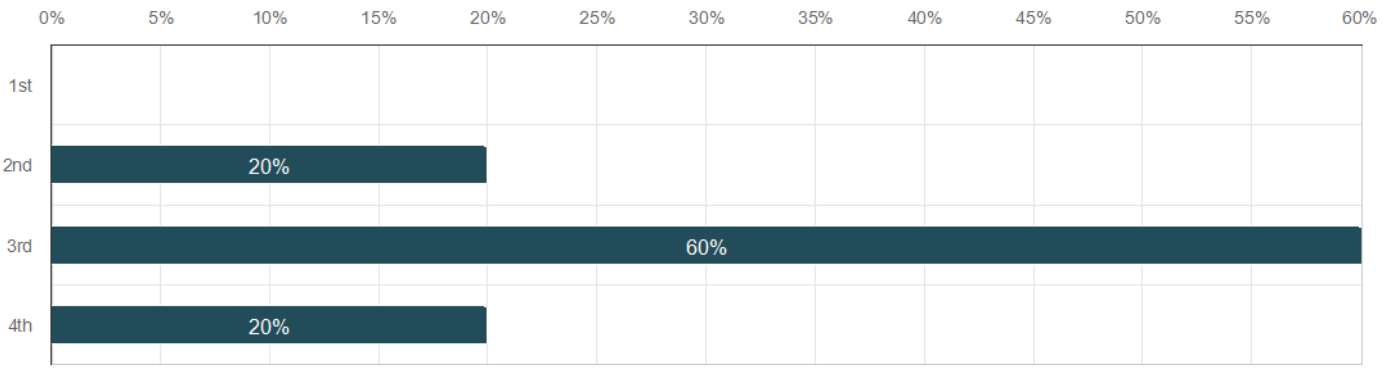
What is your major area of study?

Number of respondents: 5

Responses
Business economics
Aviation business
BIT, Cybersecurity
International Marketing
Aviation business

What year are you in your academic program?

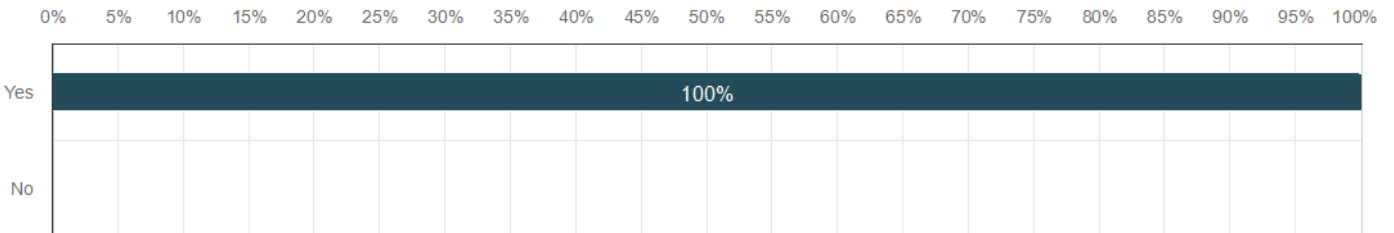
Number of respondents: 5



	n	Percent
1st	0	0.0%
2nd	1	20.0%
3rd	3	60.0%
4th	1	20.0%

Are you professionally interested in progressing your career path in digital marketing?

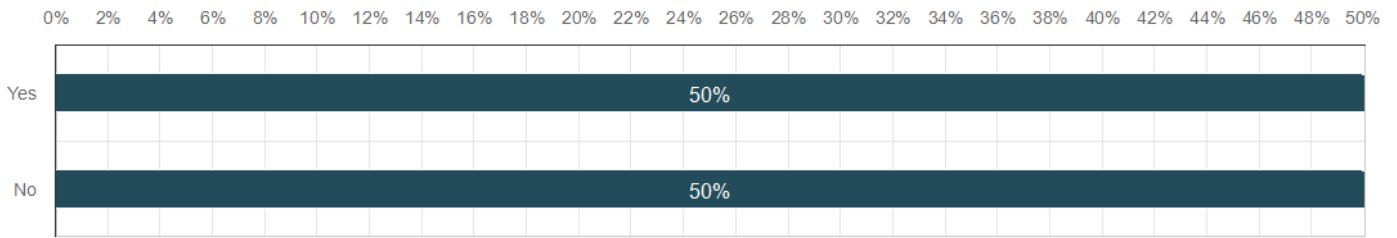
Number of respondents: 5



	n	Percent
Yes	5	100.0%
No	0	0.0%

Have you ever managed or contributed to a social media account for a business or organisation?

Number of respondents: 4



	n	Percent
Yes	2	50.0%
No	2	50.0%

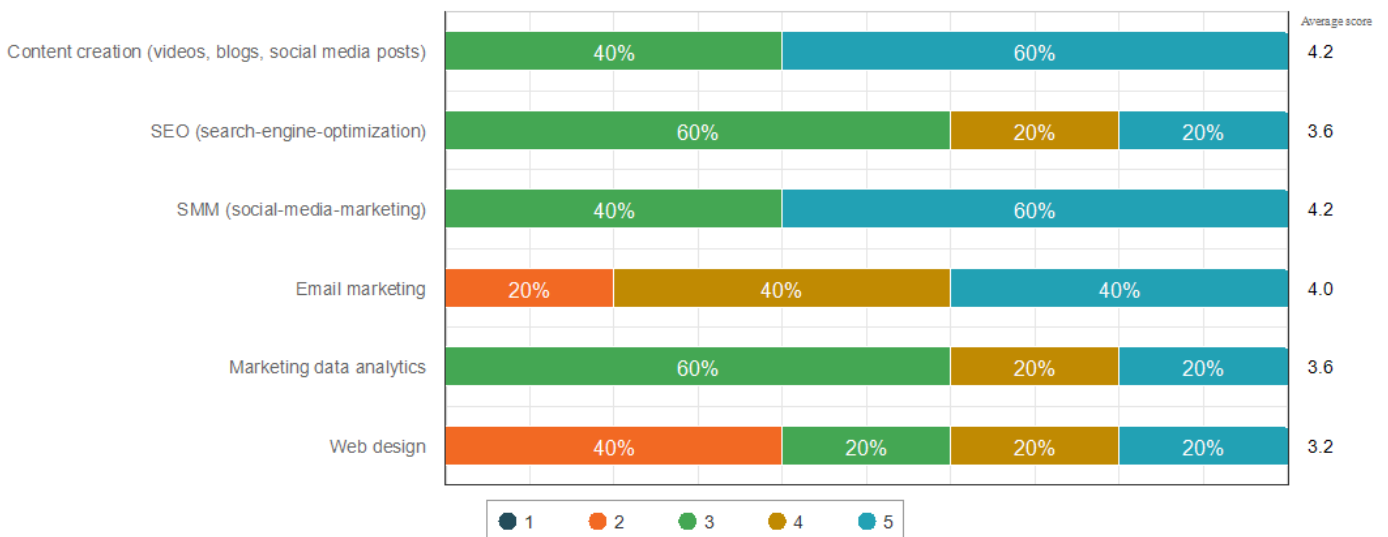
Describe your experience: What did you do, what tools did you use, and other relevant details?

Number of respondents: 2

Responses
Created marketing plan through instagram for töölö gym. We designed ig posts and the theme of the marketing campaign.
I did a lot of SEO. Optimizing the companies and content creation.

Rate your proficiency in the following digital marketing services:

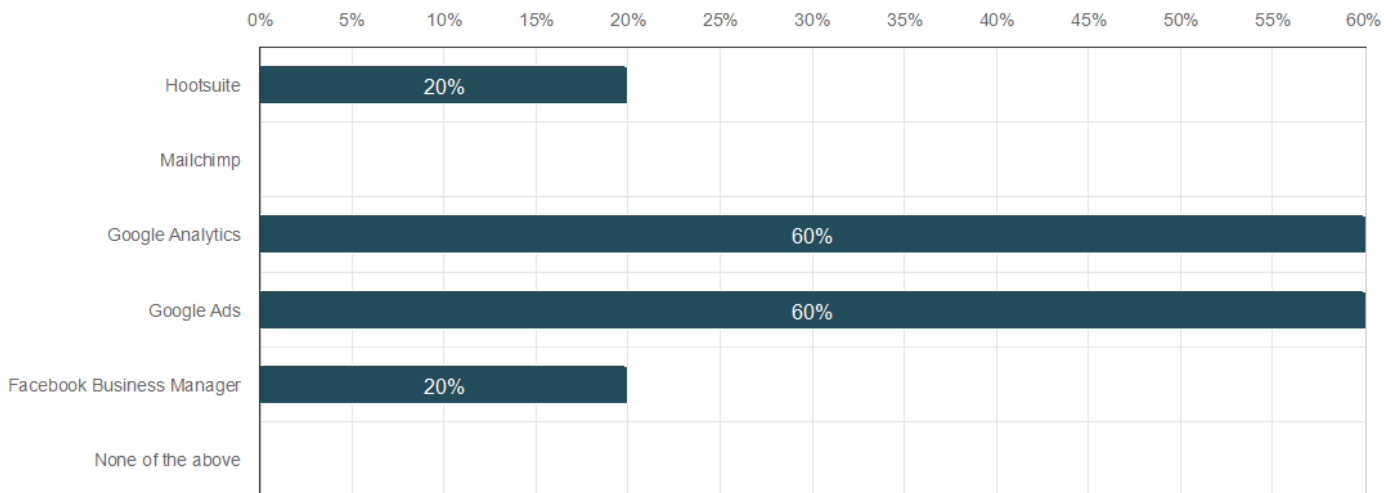
Number of respondents: 5



	1	2	3	4	5	Average	Median
Content creation (videos, blogs, social media posts)	0.0%	0.0%	40.0%	0.0%	60.0%	4.2	5.0
SEO (search-engine-optimization)	0.0%	0.0%	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%	3.6	3.0
SMM (social-media-marketing)	0.0%	0.0%	40.0%	0.0%	60.0%	4.2	5.0
Email marketing	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	40.0%	40.0%	4.0	4.0
Marketing data analytics	0.0%	0.0%	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%	3.6	3.0
Web design	0.0%	40.0%	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	3.2	3.0
Total	0.0%	10.0%	36.7%	16.7%	36.7%	3.8	4.0

What digital marketing tools are you familiar with?

Number of respondents: 5, selected answers: 8

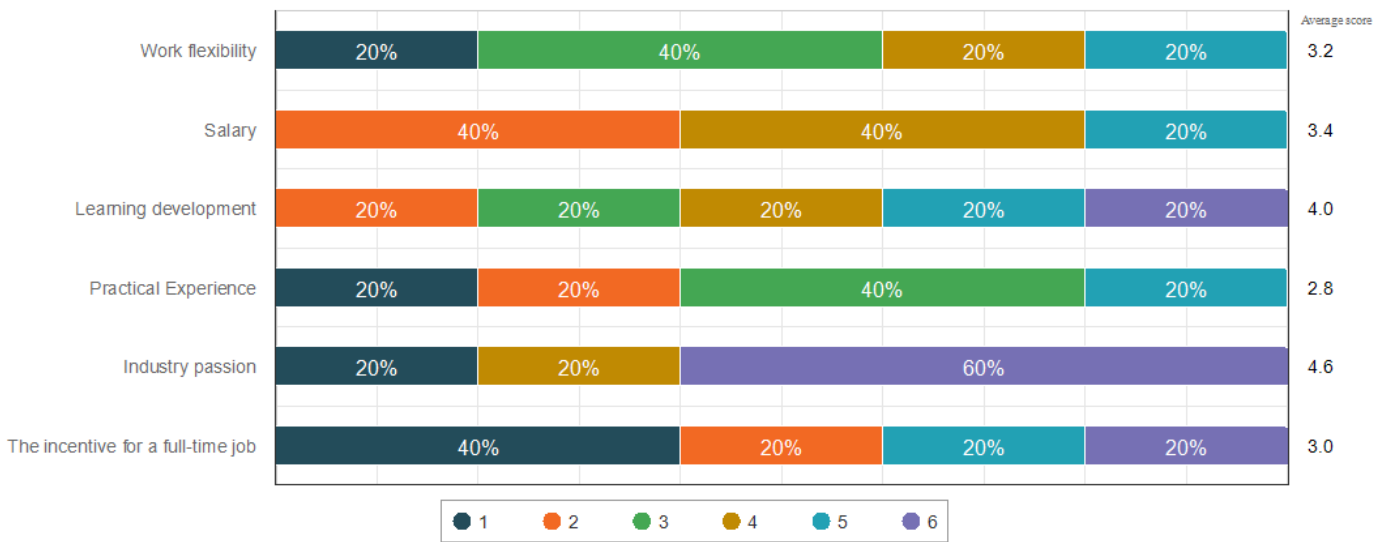


	n	Percent
Hootsuite	1	20.0%
Mailchimp	0	0.0%
Google Analytics	3	60.0%

Google Ads	3	60.0%
Facebook Business Manager	1	20.0%
None of the above	0	0.0%

Please prioritize the attributes that most pique your interest in working for a digital marketing agency while you pursue your studies.

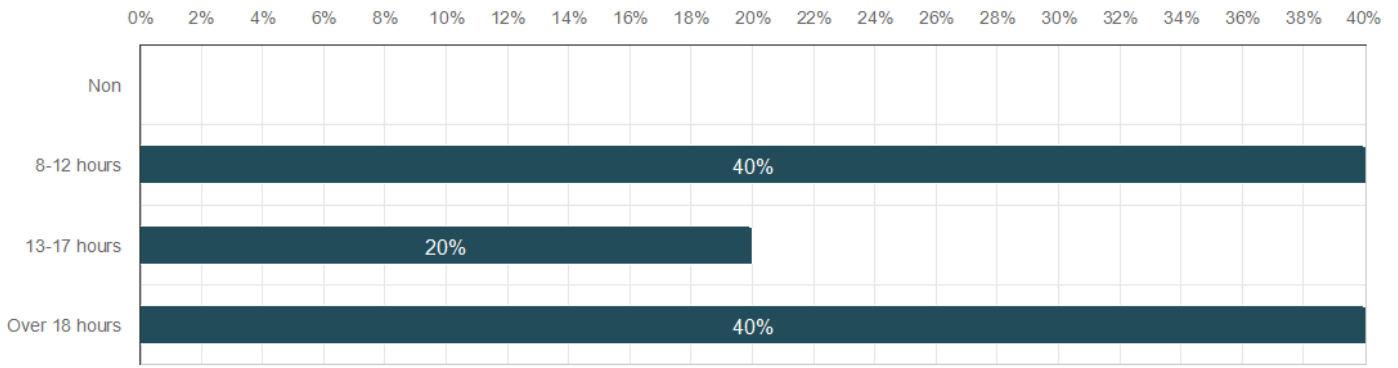
Number of respondents: 5



	1	2	3	4	5	6
Work flexibility	20.0%	0.0%	40.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%
Salary	0.0%	40.0%	0.0%	40.0%	20.0%	0.0%
Learning development	0.0%	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%
Practical Experience	20.0%	20.0%	40.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%
Industry passion	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	60.0%
The incentive for a full-time job	40.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	20.0%

While studying, how many weekly hours are you willing to work professionally?

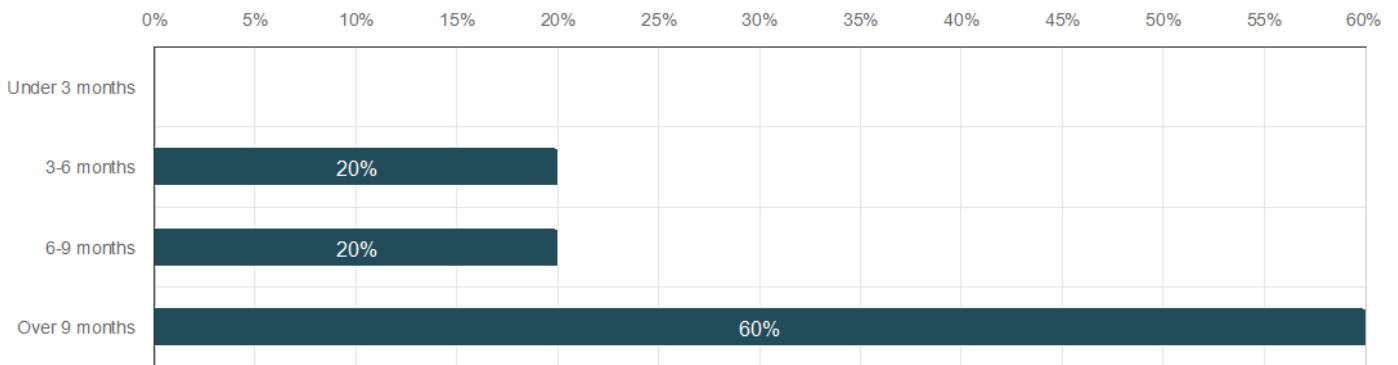
Number of respondents: 5



	n	Percent
Non	0	0.0%
8-12 hours	2	40.0%
13-17 hours	1	20.0%
Over 18 hours	2	40.0%

While studying, for how long can you commite to work professionally?

Number of respondents: 5

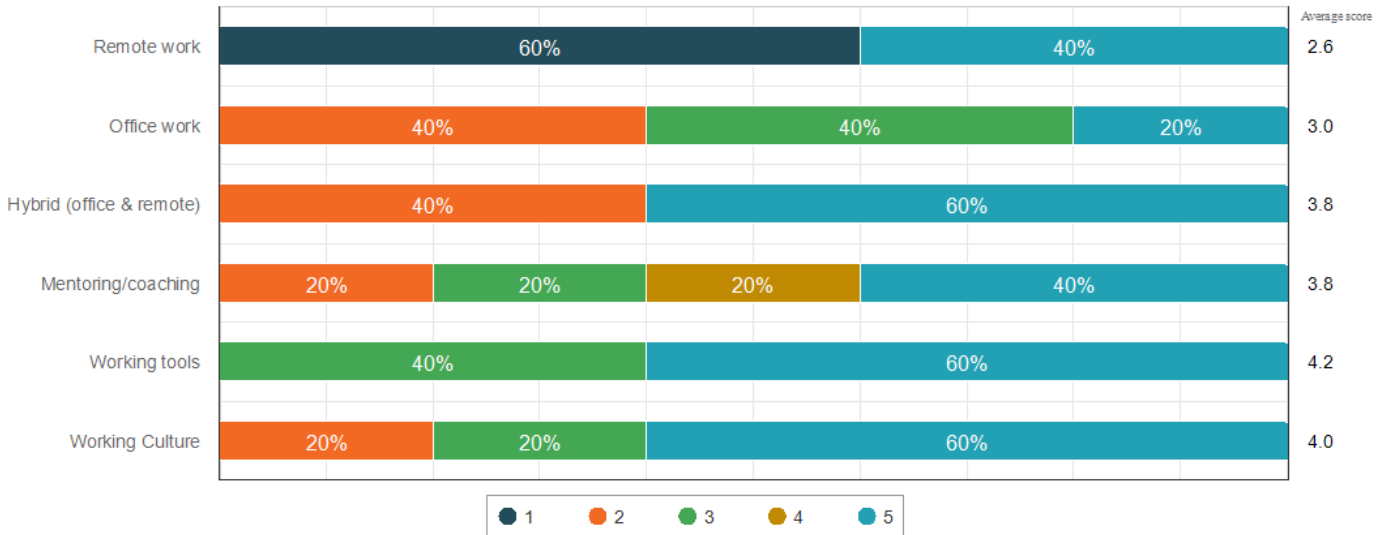


	n	Percent
Under 3 months	0	0.0%
3-6 months	1	20.0%

6-9 months	1	20.0%
Over 9 months	3	60.0%

Please rate the importance of the following factors in enhancing your work experience.

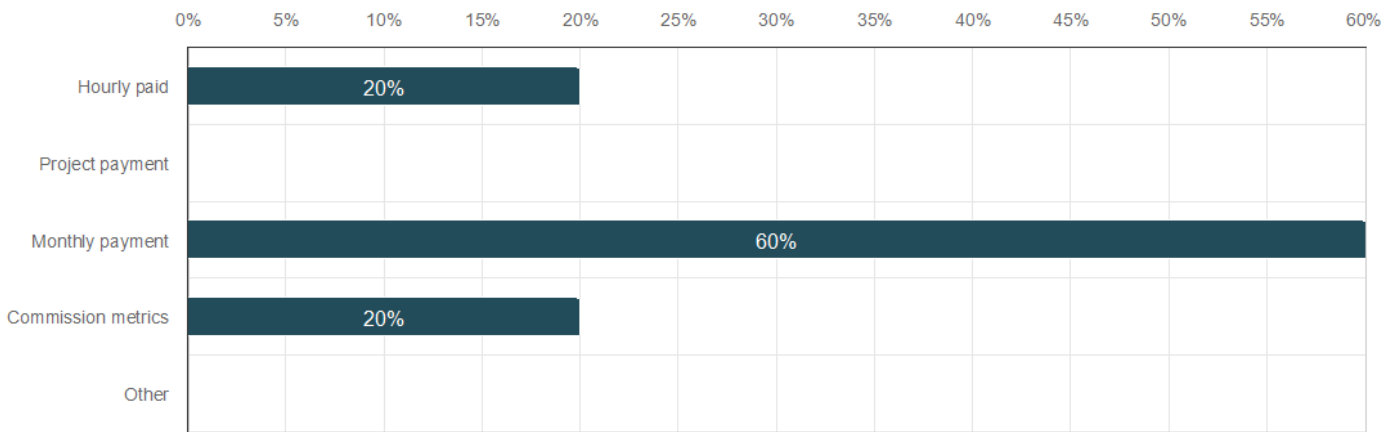
Number of respondents: 5



	1	2	3	4	5	Average	Median
Remote work	60.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	40.0%	2.6	1.0
Office work	0.0%	40.0%	40.0%	0.0%	20.0%	3.0	3.0
Hybrid (office & remote)	0.0%	40.0%	0.0%	0.0%	60.0%	3.8	5.0
Mentoring/coaching	0.0%	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	40.0%	3.8	4.0
Working tools	0.0%	0.0%	40.0%	0.0%	60.0%	4.2	5.0
Working Culture	0.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%	60.0%	4.0	5.0
Total	10.0%	20.0%	20.0%	3.3%	46.7%	3.6	3.5

Select one remuneration model would be most appealing to you?

Number of respondents: 5



	n	Percent
Hourly paid	1	20.0%
Project payment	0	0.0%
Monthly payment	3	60.0%
Commission metrics	1	20.0%
Other	0	0.0%

Can you provide an example of effective digital marketing targeted to SME (small and medium enterprises)?

Number of respondents: 2

Responses
One example is creating engaging social media content that showcases the unique offerings of the SME. This can include behind-the-scenes footage, customer testimonials, and interactive posts that encourage audience participation. By using platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn, SMEs can reach a wider audience and build brand awareness.
I would say emailmarketing for reaching them. Because of the fact that these companies are smaller, they are most likely to see all the incoming emails rather than a big enterprise.

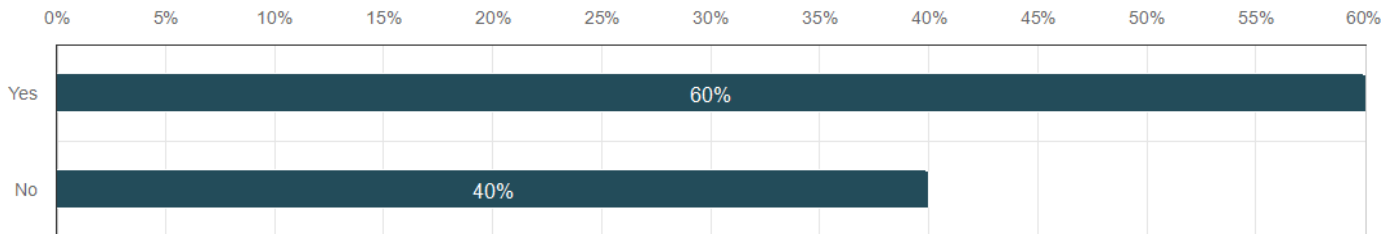
How well can you tutor someone lacking digital marketing experience?

Number of respondents: 5

Min value	Max value	Average	Median	Sum	Standard Deviation
2.0	9.0	5.4	5.0	27.0	2.7

Are you willing to participate in a paid pilot programme in digital marketing?

Number of respondents: 5



	n	Percent
Yes	3	60.0%
No	2	40.0%

Write your details for follow-up

Number of respondents: 2 – **Confidential**

Do you wish to share any additional thoughts to highlight working students in digital marketing?

Number of respondents: 1

Responses
<p>I think digital marketing is the future and sometimes my home university let us do projects with stuff where i think: it's nice to learn about topics, but i would like to go more into depth. This is then not possible, because the course is planned for only 7 weeks, so there is no possibility to go into depth. I hope that this research helps to improve digital marketing somehow 😊</p>

Appendix 11 – Operations design sketch

