

Building a strategy for Hospitality Management student association, LaGeR ry

Abstract

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Abstract

This thesis provides a thorough understanding of the strategic plan for LaGeR ry, Lappeenranta Generalistiset Restonomiopiskelijat. The thesis focuses on developing a three-year strategy to guide LaGeR ry's future activities and strengthen its position as a Hospitality Management student association.

The goal of this thesis is to develop a clear and feasible strategic plan for LaGeR ry. The plan focuses on three key areas which are internationality, advocacy, and event enhancement.

The research seeks to determine how internationality can be integrated into the operations of LaGeR ry. The goal is to provide members with international learning opportunities and to connect them to the operations of LaGeR ry.

The thesis examines current advocacy practices and suggests improvements to their effectiveness. One of the goals of the thesis is to ensure that LaGeR ry is an active advocate for Hospitality Management students' rights and interests.

The research focuses on the role of events in LaGeR ry. The goal is to improve the quality of the events so that they can better support the strategy's other goals and provide members with diverse and memorable experiences.

To develop a strategic plan, the thesis primarily employs the action research working method. Action research allows for a more participatory approach, involving LaGeR ry board members in the process and ensuring that the strategy truly meets their needs.

The thesis findings should provide a clear plan for LaGeR ry's future three-year operation. The findings should also provide practical guidelines and recommendations for successful implementation of internationality, advocacy, and events.

The conclusion examines the findings in relation to the current state of LaGeR ry and propose additional measures. The thesis' goal is to be practical and to provide LaGeR ry with concrete tools to successfully implement its strategy.

Keywords

Strategy, LaGeR ry, Hospitality Management, Internationality, Advocacy, Events, Action research

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1 Introduction

The Finnish higher education system is well-known for its high quality and accessibility, and one of its distinguishing features is the wide range of student associations. These associations have become an important part of university students' daily lives, with tasks ranging from recreational activities to advocacy.

One of the primary reasons for the existence of student associations is to promote the well-being of students. Associations provide an important place for students to find peer support, participate in activities, and form social relationships. This improves student's psychological and physical well-being, which is reflected in their academic success and overall quality of life.

Student associations also serve as important guardians of advocacy and a voice for university students. Considering students' interests, they can influence educational institutions' decision-making, educational policy, and resource allocation. In this way, they ensure students' needs and concerns are addressed both within educational institutions and in society at large.

Students' associations play an important role in the Finnish higher education system in a variety of ways. They promote student well-being, supplement education, serve as sounding boards and advocates, aid in networking, and provide a variety of recreational opportunities. One of these significant players is a Hospitality Management student association in Lappeenranta called Lappeenrannan Generalistiset Restonomiopiskelijät – LaGeR Ry (hereafter “LaGeR ry”).

The purpose of this thesis is to present the future three-year strategy of the Hospitality Management student association LaGeR ry, which primarily focuses on three main areas of focus which are internationality, advocacy, and improvement the quality of events.

The three main areas of focus are key elements in the strategy. Internationality brings the international students closer to the activities of LaGeR ry. Advocacy on the other hand, ensures that the association promotes the interests and well-being of its members. Improving event quality ensures that the association provides its students with appealing and memorable experiences and has a chance to network with future colleagues.

This thesis goes into greater detail about LaGeR ry's strategy and key areas. Furthermore, it provides concrete recommendations and action recommendations to assist LaGeR ry in achieving its strategic goals. The next three years provide an opportunity to renew and

grow, and this strategy is intended to help LaGeR ry succeed and serve its members even better.

This thesis is intended to serve as a foundation for LaGeR ry's future activities and development. It aims to highlight the significance and role of associations in the Finnish education system while presenting the most important aspects of the future strategy. The chapters that follow go into greater detail about LaGeR ry's strategic direction, as well its key goals and measures in terms of internationality, advocacy, and event quality. This thesis provides practical instructions and recommendations to help LaGeR ry succeed in the coming years and serve its members better. Student associations in Finland are an important part of students' lives, with the mission of providing high-quality activities and support students' well-being. LaGeR ry is one of these important actors, and its future strategy is key to growth and success.

Lappeenrannan Generalistiset Restonomiopiskelijät – LaGeR ry is a Hospitality Management student association at LAB University of Applied Sciences, Lappeenranta branch. We take care of the interests of Hotel and Restaurant Business Management students and produce activities that support studies for our members. We want to give our members the best possible conditions for studying and the future, and to ensure that the study time is enjoyable. (LaGeR ry, 2023)

The purpose of the association is to supervise the common social, spiritual, study-related, and professional interests of its members and strengthen their social status – act as a connecting link for its members. (LaGeR ry, 2023)

The board of the association consists of the chairman, vice-chairman, treasurer, and a maximum of four (0-4) other board members and, by decision of the association's meeting, a maximum of three (0-3) alternate members. The board's term is one calendar year. (LaGeR ry rules)

2 Objective and limitations

The goal of this thesis is to develop a three-year strategy for LaGeR ry that focuses on three primary areas which are internationalisation, advocacy, and event quality. The goal of the strategy is to provide LaGeR ry with a clear direction and action plan for strengthening these priority areas. Over the next three years, the goal is to define how LaGeR ry can promote internationalisation, increase advocacy, and improve event quality.

Some limitations apply to this thesis. The thesis is focused on developing a three-year strategy for the next three operational years. It does not address either short- or long-term objectives. The thesis is solely concerned with the advancement of LaGeR ry's internationalisation, advocacy, and event quality. Unless they have a direct impact on LaGeR ry's focus areas, the thesis does not address the working environment of Hospitality Management students or broader trends in the field.

The thesis heavily relies on qualitative techniques like interviews, surveys, and SWOT analysis. These methods are used to collect information that serves as the strategy's foundation and aids in understanding the needs of LaGeR ry and the members' expectations in these areas of the strategy. Although the strategy defines goals and guidelines; the thesis does not go into detail about the strategy's feasibility, or the resources needed to implement it. These are management decisions that may necessitate a separate feasibility study.

Practical plans, such as the specifics of internationalisation projects, advocacy control measures, and event planning, are still in the strategy implementation phase and are not covered by this thesis.

These objectives and constraints help to ensure that the thesis focuses on the important aspects and develops a practical and functional three-year strategy for LaGeR ry, with an emphasis on internationalisation, advocacy, and event quality.

3 What is strategy

Even after the early stages of humanity, strategy has first been firmly connected to warfare. The word strategy is derived from the ancient Greek word strategos. The strategos was the leader of the army and agreed together with his colleagues before the battles on how to act in battle. Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* (around 500 BCE) is considered to be the earliest book on strategy. The act is still applied today, in addition to warfare, but also in social affairs, business life and, for example, sports. (Vuorinen, 2013)

Numerous attempts have been made at providing a simple, descriptive definition of strategy but its inherent complexity and subtlety preclude a one-sentence description. There is a substantial agreement about its principal dimensions, however. Strategy is about positioning an organisation for competitive advantage. It involves making choices about which markets to participate in, what products and services to offer, and how to allocate corporate resources. Strategy therefore is different from vision, mission, goals, priorities, and plans. It is the result of choices executives make, about what to offer, where to play and how to win, to maximise long-term value. (Cornelis & Pearce, 2015)

3.1 Why is strategy needed

Strategic planning is the ongoing organisational process of using available knowledge to document a business's intended direction. This process is used to prioritise efforts, effectively allocate resources, align shareholders and employees on the organisation's goals, and ensure those goals are backed by data and sound reasoning. (Cote, 2020)

There are literally hundreds of definitions of strategy. And among these definitions, there are ones that seem clearly more relevant today. Examples are "a pattern in a stream of decisions." (Mintzberg, 1978), "a deliberate search for a plan of action that will develop a business's competitive advantage and compound it." (Henderson, 1989) and "deliberately choosing a different set of activities to deliver a unique mix of value." (Porter, 1996)

The concept of strategy's multifurcated and dimension is both a strength and a weakness. Above all, the concept of strategy transforms into versatile and deep thinking about managing and developing the organisation and its personnel. The difficulty and demanding nature of the strategy concept is its weakness. People who lack sufficient theory and experience in strategic management and thinking perceive strategy as theoretical, hazy, and difficult. (Kamesky, 2023)

Strategic planning combines systematic retrieval and use of data to determine the direction for the long-term timeline. It is a mixture of cogitating the future, analysing the goals and evaluating the priorities. It is about ensuring the viability and effectiveness of the organisation with the means of mapping the direction for future action. (Poister & Streib 2005)

3.2 Values

Values are basic and fundamental beliefs that guide or motivate attitudes or actions. They help us to determine what is important to us. Values describe the personal qualities we choose to embody to guide our actions; the sort of person we want to be; the manner in which we treat ourselves and others, and our interaction with the world around us. They provide the general guidelines for conduct. (Mintz, 2018)

When we say “values”, we are not talking about economic worth, monetary return to shareholders, or investment bankers’ smiling faces. Instead, think in terms of corporate values, shared values, core values, traditional values, and family values. We are talking about the soft side – a people factor, not a financial consideration. (Cowan & Todorovic, 2000)

According to (Nyyti ry, 2023), values can be:

Valuable human experiences, for example music, nature, friendship, love

Valuations, for example valuation of goods, skills, status

Ideals, for example: honesty, equality, respect for life

Classic values, for example truth, goodness, justice

Values are important for strategic planning because if everyone demonstrates the same values, passion, and purpose when they come to work, then they are going to be working toward the same goal, regardless of what the strategic plan is. (Taylor, 2016)

Your values and mission are what ultimately drive your team’s performance. When your core values are truly ingrained in your way of doing business, every decision will be made with those values in mind. This helps align every decision with your brand and what it hopes to accomplish. It creates accountability to yourself and others – and customers will see that in every interaction you have with them. (Gleeson, 2021)

Values are fundamental convictions and beliefs that guide an individual’s or community’s decision-making and behaviour. They serve as the foundation for what is important, right, and good in life. Values can be personal or communal, and they influence many aspects of life, including morality, culture, decision-making, and interpersonal relationships.

3.3 Vision

A vision statement is a business document that states the current and future objectives of an organisation. A company's vision must align with its mission, business plan, strategic plan, and organisational culture. A vision statement is not only used in business; nonprofits and government offices also use them to set strategic goals. (Schwartz, 2023)

In order for the strategy to be successful, the company must define its mission statement, vision, values, goals, business areas and form an understanding of the company's current and future position. In addition, the definition of how the company is run and how the organisation works must be clear to everyone. At its best, a successful strategy enhances the company's operations and tells which customer segment to focus on and in what way. In this case, the company's resources are not wasted. (Kamensky 2014)

Establishing a vision and mission statement is crucial to defining your organisation's strategy. Mission statements describe your purpose and reason for being, while vision statements describe your ultimate goal. In combination, they guide decision-making and goal setting for your organisation. To build a thriving organisation, it's imperative to have a vision and mission statement, which should be reviewed and updated regularly. (Three6, 2023)

3.4 Mission

Mission and vision both relate to an organisation's purpose and are typically communicated in some written form. Mission and vision are statements from the organisation that answer questions about who we are, what we value, and where we are going. A study by the consulting firm Bain and Company reports that 90% of the 500 firms surveyed issue some form of mission and vision statements. (Bart & Baetz (1998)

A mission statement outlines a company's underlying motivation for being in business. It spells out the contribution to society that the organisation aspires to make. The mission statement is not a strategic objective, but rather the basis on which the strategic objectives and strategic plan are developed. (Nielsen, 2017)

Strategic architecture starts from the company's mission life, i.e., the mission, which in turn consists of vision, values, and operational concept. The focus is also on strategic business areas, as well as identifying and understanding the industry and its environment. In addition, various analyses, goals, choices, and measures, as well as plans are included in the strategic architecture. (Kamensky, 2014)

Sometimes values can affect the direction when choosing a mission statement, and that could be valuable human experiences, such as nature. Finnair's mission is to inspire passengers to effortlessly connect and experience the world in a more sustainable way. (Finnair, 2023) The definition of mission is varied: it defines the purpose of the organisation, guides decision-making, and fosters member unity. A mission is more than just a statement; it is a dynamic force that gives meaning to direction and action. The mission is not a fixed element; it evolves and changes as the organisation grows. Understanding the central role of a mission allows us to ensure that strategic decisions and actions reflect the organisation's core purpose, laying the groundwork for long-term success.

3.5 Mission statement

A mission statement is used by a company to explain, in simple and concise terms, its purpose for being. The statement is generally short, either a single sentence or a short paragraph. (Gorton, 2023)

The mission statement explains why your organisation exists. It tells you what an organisation does, whom it serves, and how it does it. Make your mission statement actionable, specific, and focused. It should explain your organisation's values and principles. (Three6, 2023)

Mission statements serve a dual purpose by helping employees remain focused on the tasks at hand and encouraging them to find innovative ways of moving toward increasing their productivity with the eye to achieving company goals. (Gorton, 2023) A mission statement clarifies what the company wants to achieve, who they want to support, and why they want to support them. A mission statement is a literal quote stating what a brand or company is setting out to do. This lets the public know the product and service it offers, who it makes it for, and why it's doing it. (Cox, 2023) A mission statement should serve as the foundation of your company's strategic goals. It details the fundamental purpose of your business and what you want to intend to stand for to your customers. (Berman, 2020)

4 Building a strategy

A strategy is a long-term plan that you create for your company to reach the desired, future state you envision. A strategy includes your company's goals and objectives, the type of products or services that you plan to build, the customers you want to sell to and the markets that you serve to make profits. (Reddy, 2018)

A successful business strategy begins with formalising a plan around three core elements: business objectives, target audience and strategic management. (Emmer, 2023)

1. Consider your organisation's mission and vision statements
2. Identify your company's core values
3. Conduct a SWOT analysis
4. Outline tactics to achieve goals
5. Create a plan for allocating resources to achieve the desired outcome
6. Evaluate results for effectiveness

The efforts related to the strategy's goals can be roughly divided into two categories. The most important strategic goal is to do something more efficiently or better. In this case, the company tries to meet the needs of its customers either through existing business areas or by identifying new profitable and feasible business areas for the organisation. (Vuorinen, 2013)

SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis is a framework used to evaluate a company's competitive position and to develop strategic planning. SWOT analysis assesses internal and external factors, as well as current and future potential. (Klenton, 2023)

SWOT is summarising, synthesis-oriented analysis. The purpose of the tool is to produce a clear overall picture of the company's situation to support the strategic choices. A good SWOT analysis requires numerous sub-analyses related to the company's resources and operating environment. If the organisation and its operating environment are not known in depth, the analysis cannot be done correctly. With the SWOT, a couple of key themes should emerge, which the company management should focus on. If one ends up listing too many things or omits company-specific and thorough groundwork, only platitudes and self-evident are collected in the SWOT analysis. (Vuorinen, 2013)

Strategic planning, and even visioning, cannot be casually ideated in a few hours. Often, strategic planning is associated with completing a SWOT analysis. (Emmer, 2023)

Although the SWOT analysis has been used in almost every company worldwide for decades, errors can still creep in today. At first glance, this is often not even recognizable, because the SWOT analysis usually brings up a large number of points. In terms of quantity, the management and the participants can usually be very satisfied. Mistakes in the application of methods are noticeable: when it comes to the qualitative implementation of the findings. The results fall short of expectations. This becomes particularly clear when the results are re-evaluated after some time has passed. (Arentzen, 2021)

5 Methods

In this section, I present my thesis' methodological approach, justify it, and describe how it was implemented. As a research method for my thesis, I use qualitative research, which allows me to gain a thorough understanding of my research object and the participants' perspectives.

Qualitative research investigates and provides deeper insights into real-world problems. Instead of collecting numerical data points, intervening, or introducing treatments as in quantitative research, qualitative research aids in the generation of hypotheses as well as further investigation and understanding of quantitative data. Qualitative research collects data on participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviours. It addresses the how's and whys rather than how many or how much. It could be designed as a stand-alone study that only uses qualitative data, or it could be part of mixed methods research that includes both qualitative and quantitative data. This review introduces readers to the fundamental concepts, definitions, terminology, and applications of qualitative research. (Tenny & Brannan, 2022)

Qualitative research was chosen as an approach because it allows for a more versatile and in-depth examination of the phenomenon. This approach allows for an understanding of the complexity of the research object as well as the participant's experiences and perspectives. Furthermore, qualitative research is an appropriate choice for my research topic because it allows for conceptual flexibility and in-depth analysis.

Planning and implementing the survey method as part of LaGeR ry's strategic planning was a critical step towards achieving the goal of creating a clear and comprehensive plan for the next three years. The survey was sent online via the Slack communication platform, with the goal of gathering board members' perspectives on the future and their involvement in the strategy development process. This data collection was critical to ensuring that the plan is based on consensus and commitment.

The questions were designed to address the primary focuses of the strategy. Internationality, evaluation of the quality of events, members' needs and expectations, opportunities for stakeholder cooperation, and board members' expectations for the next three years. The survey was anonymous, board members were encouraged to provide honest feedback and open responses. To guarantee their involvement and dedication, the board members were briefed beforehand about the background, goals, and importance of the survey.

The survey was distributed on Slack in accordance with the agreed schedule, and participants were given enough time to respond to the questions. To guarantee the greatest possible response rate, if needed, reminders were sent out regarding answering the survey. To pinpoint important themes and insights, all the submitted responses were gathered and thoroughly examined.

The survey's design and execution were influenced by SWOT analysis, which assisted in identifying the survey's opportunities, threats, weaknesses, and strengths. It was also feasible to assess the influence of the survey on the actual creation and advancement of the plan with the aid of the analysis.

5.1 Action research

The action research methods are central to this thesis. Action research was chosen for its ability to bring together scientific research and practical applications, allowing strategy development and implementation to occur concurrently. This thesis is well suited to operation research because it allows for continuous interaction and reflection to improve the operations of LaGeR ry.

Action research is usually carried out in discrete cycles, where later cycles are used to challenge, support, and refine insights and results from previous cycles. When the approach is used appropriately, this cyclic feature of action research can be used not only to propose theory, but also to test theory. However, like case studies, action research is usually concerned with single situations, for example, a single group or company. (Oosthuizen, 2002)

Action research involves learning in and through action and reflection and is conducted in a variety of contexts. (McNiff, 2013)

My thesis process was carefully planned in collaboration with the LaGeR ry board. A total of ten people attended the meeting, representing various perspectives and experiences with my research object.

The data was collected during the meeting through open discussions and observation. Discussions were used to gain a thorough understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences, whereas observations were used to learn about their operational methods and decision-making processes.

The information gathered during the data collection phase was accurately documented using meeting notes. We worked hard to ensure that all key perspectives and decisions are accurately documented.

The collected material was analyzed using thematization, with the goal of identifying the meeting's central themes and findings. During the analysis phase, we attempted to identify connections and meanings amongst the various parts of the conversation.

A total of ten board members took part in the process, actively participating in discussions and making decisions. Their contributions were significant, and their perspectives guided the research's progress and interpretation of the findings.

The meeting provided an opportunity for learning and reflection, which were crucial to the process. Participants learned new things about their operating methods and decision-making processes, and they were encouraged to reflect on their experiences and lessons learned. This improved my understanding of the research object and its challenges.

5.2 Reasons for choosing the method

The active role of participants in the process is emphasised in action research. It encourages and facilitates community members' participation and consultation, which is an essential part of strategy development. This increases the members' dedication and commitment to the strategy. Action research allows you to start a cycle of continuous improvement. It enables the strategy's development, implementation, and evaluation of results, which can guide strategy adaptation to changing needs. Action research integrates theory and practice. It allows for a more in-depth understanding of how LaGeR ry's strategy affects practices and how practices can support the strategy's goals.

In this thesis, collected empirical data with participation workshops. Participatory workshops are organised so that the LaGeR ry's board members can engage in an open discussion about the strategy's needs and potential courses of action. Previous strategies, action plans, and reports of LaGeR ry are examined to comprehend previous operating models and their effects.

The action research method used allows for deep understanding, participatory strategy development, and continuous learning, all of which are important components of the thesis's goal. The method's thorough application aids in the successful development and implementation of the strategy.

6 Strategy process

LaGeR ry is an important player in promoting students' well-being, protecting their interests, and advancing their professional development. This thesis focuses on the organisations' future planning, developing a three-year strategy. The strategy's main objectives are to strengthen internationality, improve event quality and advocacy.

Understanding the current situation and operating environment is the starting point for strategy planning. A SWOT analysis was used to identify LaGeR ry's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, allowing the strategy to be built on realistic foundations and meet the needs of the association.

The board is evaluating their own values with the vision of what their actions could be in the future, and what is important for the members.

6.1 Survey for the board members

This section of the thesis discusses LaGeR ry's three-year strategic planning. The thesis's goal is to develop a clear and comprehensive plan that will guide LaGeR ry's activities over the next three years. The strategy's main areas are internationality, improving event quality and developing better advocacy.

A survey was conducted as part of this strategic planning and was sent to the board members of LaGeR ry. The survey was carried out online using the Slack communication platform. Slack was chosen as a communication channel because it allowed for flexible and real-time interaction with board members, which is especially important in a student association with members who may be geographically dispersed.

The goal of the survey was to gather the board members' perspectives on the future and their contribution to the strategy's development. This information is critical to the strategy's successful implementation because it ensures that the plan is to build on the consensus and commitment of the association's members.

This section discusses the survey's background, implementation method, and key research questions. Furthermore, we investigate the significance of the survey in the context of strategic planning and how the information gathered will influence the strategy's concrete formulation.

The survey was anonymous, and it included 5 questions:

In the next three years, how do you see LaGeR ry's role in internationalisation evolving?

How will you assess the success of your events and participant satisfaction?

What things do you think are important to the members?

What kind of stakeholder's cooperation opportunities do you see as important in the coming years?

What are the board members' expectations for LaGeR ry's next three years?

The first questions were chosen as central in terms of strategy planning because it focuses on LaGeR ry's future direction and allows for the strengthening of the international dimension. The purpose of the selection is to learn about the board members' perspectives on the role and meaning of internationality, so that the strategy can be tailored to meet these expectations and goals. The most common response to this question is to strengthen international networking and make more events for international students. This could include international parties, international theme days, or collaboration with other student organisations.

The second question was asked because it deals with concrete evaluation and feedback collection. The question was chosen as the centre of strategic planning. Event success and participant satisfaction are critical aspects of LaGeR ry's operations and measuring them allows strategic goals to be set and met. This question can be used to assess the efficacy of current methods of operation and to identify potential areas for improvement in future event planning. The most common answer to this question is that versatile and systematic evaluation methods are used. This could mean gathering feedback from a variety of sources, such as participant surveys, social media comments and likes, and direct feedback at events.

Third question was chosen as the foundation of strategic planning because it allows for an in-depth examination of the values and needs of LaGeR ry's members. Understanding what members value allows the strategy planner to design measures that not only meet concrete expectations, but also reflect LaGeR ry's values and commitment to the members' well-being. Members of the board emphasised values that are members consider important, such as communality, responsibility, and courage.

Fourth question was chosen to be taken care of in the strategy planning because it focuses on expanding the networking and cooperating with other stakeholders. Building strong relationships with other student associations is critical to the success of LaGeR ry. This question allows planning and identifying important opportunities that support the strategic goals of

LaGeR ry. The most common response to this question was Restoverkko, which means other Hospitality Management associations in Finland, local associations on the LUT and LAB campuses and Sureo – Hospitality Management Student Union. In general, board members' response could highlight a desire to strengthen the association's networks and form long-term partnerships with other associations, the student union, and local associations. Such collaboration could help LaGeR ry achieve its strategic goals and broaden the influence in the Hospitality Management community.

The fifth question was chosen because it allows understanding the board members' personal and collective visions. During the process of creating the strategy, we can learn important information about the board members' goals and expectations for the future of the association by asking this question. Identifying expectations assist in directing the strategy in such a way that it corresponds to the visions of the members and creates commitment of LaGeR ry's development. The most common answers were growth and membership expansions, diversification, and expansions of operations, strengthening the community spirit.

In general, the responses could emphasise the desire to grow the association to make it more versatile, appealing, and better serve the needs of its members. This information assists while planning the strategy in defining concrete goals and measures that meet members' expectations and lay a solid foundation for the associations' future success.

6.2 Strategy meeting

When LaGeR ry's strategy plan was being developed, it was decided to hold a comprehensive strategy meeting with LaGeR ry's board members. The goal was to develop a three-year plan that would guide the association's activities and strengthen its position in the Hospitality Management student community. The strategy meeting was conducted in an open and inclusive manner, allowing all members to express their opinions and participate in shaping the strategy.

The meeting began with a joint opening in which the day's objectives were reviewed. The goal was to define strategic goals for the next three years by identifying LaGeR ry's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis). In Figure 1 you can see the results of the SWOT analysis.

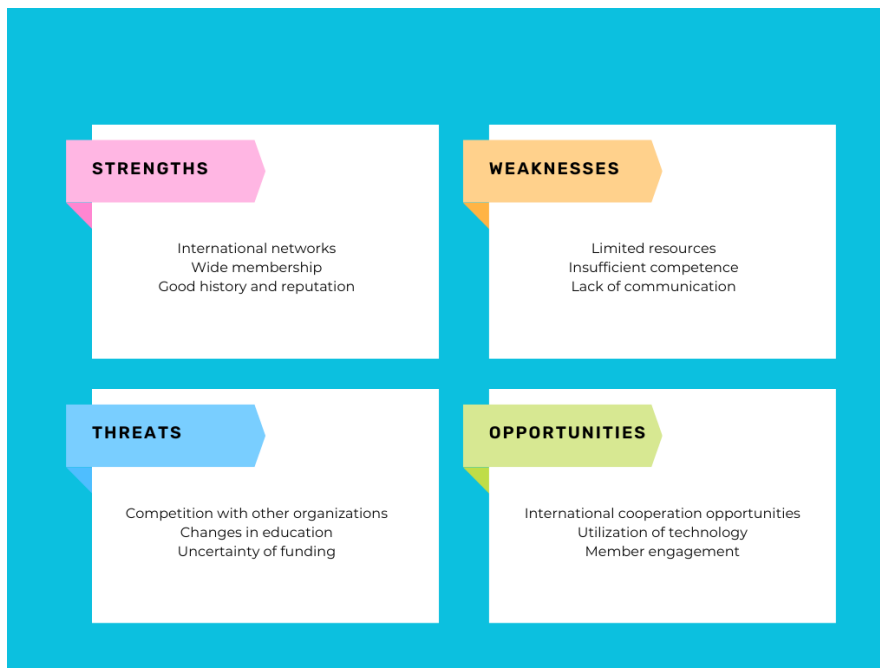


Figure 1. LaGeR ry's SWOT analysis

When the board members reflected on LaGeR ry's long-term goals, the discussion shifted to the vision and mission. We discussed what the association would like to be like in the future when defining the vision. The mission, on the other hand, encapsulated LaGeR ry's purpose and goals. The strategy was built on the vision and mission, which guided decision-making and measures.

At the strategy meeting, it was decided to increase internationality. Members' opinion we heard, and it was decided to invest in social events, international communications, and possible partners. This decision was made with the belief that international students enrich the association and provide members with new opportunities.

Board members expressed concern about the current state of interest monitoring for students. It was decided that the strategy meeting to develop more active advocacy that addresses issues related to studies, well-being, and other aspects of student life.

The strategy meeting discussed LaGeR ry's previous event's successes and challenges. It was decided to improve event quality by improving content, marketing, and participating experience. The goal was to make events more appealing and engaging for members.

Concrete measures, responsibilities, and timetables for implementing the strategy were defined at the end of the strategy meeting. It was also decided to hold regular follow-up meetings to evaluate the strategy's implementation and make changes as needed. In conclusion, the strategy meeting was critical in planning LaGeR ry's future direction and strengthening its position as an active and innovative Hospitality Management student association. The

vision and mission clarified LaGeR ry's long-term goals, while the values served as the foundation for the members' shared values. Such a comprehensive approach ensures that the strategy is consistent with LaGer ry's values and the members' visions.

7 Conclusion

This thesis provided an in-depth look at LaGeR ry's future three-year strategy. LaGeR ry's effort to develop the experience and position of its members at the LAB University of Applied Sciences in Lappeenranta is reflected in the strategy, which is aligned with internationality, advocacy, and improving events.

One of the key outcomes of this strategy development process is a strong emphasis on the internationality. Future success requires LaGeR ry to operate in more international way, and this strategy outlines how LaGeR ry can provide more for international students and promote multicultural interaction.

Advocacy emerges as a cornerstone of the strategy, with a focus on its role in LaGeR ry operations. The strategy provides a clear direction for LaGeR ry's influencing activities, which ensure that Hospitality Management students' voices are heard clearly. To respond to the changing challenges of studying, this area necessitates constant monitoring and active participation.

Improving events in strategy is more than just filling the calendar, it is an effort to provide members with diverse and high-quality experiences. It must be considered how these events can effectively support other areas of the strategy and strengthen LaGeR ry's sense of community. The goal is to organise events that are both entertaining and educational for members.

The challenges that the strategy's implementation may face include resource management, communication, and maintaining member activity. It is critical to maintain the strategy as a living document that guides LaGeR ry's decision-making and operations even as circumstances change.

This reflection provides the keys to the strategy's ongoing development and monitoring. LaGeR ry can strengthen its position as a respected and influential Hospitality Management student association, but doing so will require consistent commitment, open dialogue, and a willingness to learn as the strategy is implemented.

Although the database provides excellent starting points and keys, utilizing it in the work itself turned out to be somewhat of a challenge. A big part of the strategy of the related material deals with business activities, which are somewhat narrow.

In conclusion, reflection allows for critical examination, which is required for the strategy's successful implementation. It also outlines future research and development activities to ensure LaGeR ry's continued growth and influence.

The strategy will be presented at the autumn meeting of LaGeR ry on December 7th 2023, and the members will approve the strategy.

8 Final results: Strategy

The strategy of LaGeR ry for the years of 2024-2026 is not a separate document, but instead it builds on the work of its predecessors by considering the current situation as well as future possibilities.

Before we get into the strategy's specifics, I would like to emphasise the importance of LaGeR ry's mission and values. LaGeR ry's mission defines why they exist, while LaGeR ry's values guide decision-making and operations. These principles form the foundation for the strategy.

The strategy is built on three pillars: internationality, advocacy, and events. These are not separate components but work together to support LaGeR ry's vision. Internationality opens doors to new opportunities, advocacy ensures that members' voices are heard, and events improve the community spirit. The strategy is based on the need to adapt to a changing environment and meet members' increasing expectations.

The strategy will be presented at the statutory autumn meeting of LaGeR ry. The strategy is approved by the members of LaGeR ry.

8.1 LaGeR ry's vision

Lappeenrannan Generalistiset Restonomiopiskelijät - LaGeR ry aims to be the regions and Finland's most prestigious and influential Hospitality Management student association by 2026. LaGeR ry's vision reflects strong commitment to providing meaningful added value to LaGeR ry's members and ensuring that every member gets the most out of their stay at LAB University of Applied Sciences, Lappeenranta branch.

Main principles of LaGeR ry's vision are student-centeredness, pride and partnership, pioneering and influencing, appreciation and promoting the international environment.

LaGeR ry strives to be a dependable source of support and information for all the members during their studies. According to LaGeR ry's new vision, every member makes the most of their time at the LAB University of Applied Sciences in Lappeenranta.

LaGeR ry wants to be more than a subject organisation. LaGeR ry is a source of pride for Hospitality Management students in Lappeenranta, as well as a partner in Hospitality Management and Lappeenranta community. LaGeR ry aims to be a valuable partner with a visible and widely recognized impact.

The goal of LaGeR ry is to be a pioneer in following student's interests, organising events that promote studies, and promoting the international environment. As a result, LaGeR ry's vision directs in enriching student's lives and leading the field's development.

The vision states that LaGeR ry wants to be the most prestigious and influential Hospitality Management student organisation in the region and in Finland. This means that LaGeR ry's values and activities are widely acknowledged, and LaGeR ry is a source of pride for its members as well as a powerful influence in the student community. Vision works hard to provide LaGeR ry's members with an international environment. This goal reflects LaGeR ry's commitment to facilitating international learning and networking. Vision helps LaGeR ry's decision-making, operations and development towards a common goal which is to provide the members with a meaningful and influential student experience.

8.2 LaGeR ry's mission

The mission of LaGeR ry's strategy work is to fulfil its mission and to strengthen its principles. The first strategic priority is to support students' wellbeing. This is accomplished by providing high-quality services that support Hospitality Management students' daily lives and promote their overall well-being.

Another strategic focus is on members' professional development and internationalisation. LaGeR ry strives to provide opportunities for its members to broaden their professional knowledge and cultural perspective. This is accomplished through a variety of events, trainings, and networking opportunities that promote professional development and prepare members for future challenges.

Building a strong and united community is the third strategic pillar. LaGeR ry strives to build a community that values diversity and is environmentally and socially responsible. This goal focuses on community and responsible activities among members, which reflects the organisation's values and strengthens its position as a resource for Hospitality Management students in LAB University of Applied Sciences, Lappeenranta branch.

The emphasis in strategy is on concrete measures such as planning events, membership benefits development and their involvement. In this way, LaGeR ry ensures that its strategy is vibrant and meets changing needs, while also encouraging their achievement of mission-aligned goals.

8.3 LaGeR ry's mission statement

The mission statement of LaGeR ry is to inspire and support Hospitality Management students as they strive for a successful and accomplishing course of study and a bright future. LaGeR ry's goal is to build a strong community that encourages personal development, promotes professional growth, and promotes internationality.

The mission statement concept emphasizes responsibility, and the goal is to raise environmental awareness within its framework. LaGeR ry plans to be an active actor who represents the voice of Hotel Management students. At the same time, opportunities for networking and professional development are provided. LaGeR ry's goal is to motivate future Hospitality Management professionals to take on the challenges and opportunities that come with their profession.

LaGeR ry, guided by the mission statement, focuses all its activities on creating positive and supportive environment that encourages members to achieve their personal goals while also enjoying their student life. At the same time, members' active participation in community building is emphasized. LaGeR ry will be a place where every Hotel Management student can thrive and build a solid groundwork for a successful working life.

8.4 LaGeR ry's values

The founding values of LaGeR ry are an important part of the organisation's identity and guide its operations and decision-making. These values reflect the members' shared commitment to LaGeR ry's goals.

One of the most important values is community spirit, which serves as the foundation for building a strong and encouraging community. The goal is for each member to feel like they are part of respected community, which promotes students' well-being and learning.

Another important value at LaGeR ry is internationality and diversity. The organisation values diverse backgrounds and perspectives and actively promotes intercultural understanding by providing opportunities for international experiences and interaction to its members.

Responsibility can be seen in LaGeR ry's efforts to be a responsible actor at both the environment and societal levels. LaGeR ry wishes to set an example of environmentally friendly practices and accept responsibility for its overall impact.

The fourth key value encourages LaGeR ry to be creative and take innovative approaches to advocacy and events. The goal is to bring new perspectives and ideas that will enrich the

organisation's operations and help members grow. Innovation is regarded as an essential component of LaGeR ry's ongoing development.

8.5 Advocacy and member participation

The operations of LaGeR ry emphasize open and active member participation as well as effective student representation.

Regularly scheduled member meetings or events serve as a forum for current study issues to be discussed and member's opinions to be gathered. Meetings are an important channel for information exchange and decision-making, allowing the membership's voice to be heard in LaGeR ry's activities.

LaGeR ry is trying to affect that their discussion will reach the LAB University of Applied Science's decision-makers and teachers. The goal is to establish a trusting relationship and an active dialogue so that they can represent the student's interests. In this way, LaGeR ry ensures that student's voices are heard in decision-making and teaching development.

LaGeR ry also encourage strong relationship with stakeholders on both sides, in Lappeenranta and nationwide. This allows LaGeR ry to strengthen its position in a broader study environment and brings additional resources to LaGeR ry's support.

LaGeR ry will work on a web-based proposal system, which can be on social media that will allow members to contribute to the development of LaGeR ry's operations. The system allows members to contribute ideas and suggestions to improve operations, thereby increasing the effectiveness and democracy of member participation.

8.6 Promoting of internationalism

The international student community is given special attention at LaGeR ry. LaGeR ry is putting together a strategy to implement new international events. The goal is to organise diverse and targeted events that will attract international students and encourage their participation in LaGeR ry's activities.

LaGeR ry works closely with teachers to ensure that its role and activities are recognized among international students. LaGeR ry tries to organise meetings or lectures for international students to increase the visibility of our community and to showcase LaGeR ry's diverse services.

International theme week and events are actively planned with the goal of promoting multiculturalism and international understanding. These events highlight the diversity of different

cultures while also providing a forum for students to share their experiences and learn from one another.

Every social media post and story is published in both Finnish and English. This policy ensures that communication reaches a larger audience, particularly international students, and makes it easier for them to participate in LaGeR ry's activities.

With the help of these practices, LaGeR ry aims to strengthen its position in the international study community as well as to create a more open and comprehensive operating environment for all its members.

8.7 Improving the quality of events

LaGeR ry invests in versatile event activities that meet the needs of members of LaGeR ry. LaGeR ry creates an event calendar that is flexible and covers professional, cultural, and entertaining events. The goal is to provide members with a diverse range of events that enrich student life while also promoting professional development.

LaGeR ry will plan a training and support program for event organisers to help them plan high-quality events. The plan will provide the board with the tools and information they need to successfully implement the events. The support program ensures that events meet as many of the member's expectations and needs as possible.

LaGeR ry actively collect event feedback surveys from members and use the results to promote continuous improvement. This process allows for a quick response to members' needs and expectations, as well as the ongoing development and improvement of event operations.

With this comprehensive approach, LaGeR ry will ensure that the event activities are meaningful to the members, inclusive, and meet the diverse interests of the students.

8.8 Responsibility and sustainable operating methods

LaGeR ry aims to assess the environmental impacts of the organisation's activities and to promote the principles of sustainable development. An environmental impact survey is conducted, which covers all operational areas of LaGeR ry. Based on the findings, a strategy for implementing more environmentally friendly practices is developed.

Campaigns and events are planned with the goal of encouraging responsible consumption and long-term development. The goal of these campaigns is to raise member's awareness

of environmental impacts and provide concrete solutions for a more sustainable way of life, and actions in Hospitality environment.

LaGeR ry considers environmental factors in all event planning and execution. The goal is to reduce the events' carbon footprint, minimise waste, and favour environmentally friendly alternatives, such as material selection and catering.

LaGeR ry intends to be a pioneer in environmentally responsible activities in student communities by implementing these measures. The goal is to create a more sustainable and responsible operating environment that promotes LaGeR ry's long-term growth while minimizing its environmental impact.

8.9 Strategic choices

Enhancing internationalisation

The goal of increasing internationalisation is to strengthen LaGeR ry's position in a multicultural environment and to create a more appealing community for international students. Strategic measures include organising events for international students, implementing international theme week and improving advocacy among international students.

Improving advocacy

The goal of improving advocacy is to strengthen LaGeR ry's position in the student community and to improve the members' position in decision-making. Regular meetings with the LAB University of Applied Sciences administration, close collaboration with other student organisations, and member surveys on advocacy-related topics are among the measures.

Organising high-quality events

The goal of organising high-quality events is to improve member experience and participation by providing diverse and high-quality events. Diversification of events, strong marketing and communication, member surveys about event preferences, and collaboration with other student organisations and businesses are all strategic measures.

Increasing the value of membership

By increasing the membership value, the goal is to make LaGeR ry's membership more appealing by providing better benefits and services. Measures include creating a member benefit program, involving members in decision-making, personal communication with members, and offering discounts from local businesses.

Changing social media platforms to bilingual: Finnish and English

To meet the growing multilingual membership, it is critical to make social media platforms bilingual. This measure includes updating LaGeR ry's website and social media platforms, a bilingual presence on social media, the bilingual implementation of the member's feedback surveys. Bilingualism promotes the participation of all members and increases LaGeR ry's openness to international students.

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