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MARKETING PLAN AND MARKETING RESEARCH FOR KUAS GAME STUDIES

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Thesis

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This thesis was commissioned by Tieto^2 Project. The aim of the thesis was to study higher education marketing, including marketing planning and marketing research, from the point of view of marketing Kajaani University of Applied Sciences game study programmes. After the relevant theoretical literature was reviewed, a marketing research was conducted by interviewing current KUAS game students and new applicants who had applied for KUAS game studies in the spring of 2012. Based on the analysed results of the marketing research, a marketing plan was written for KUAS game studies.

Kajaani university of Applied Sciences (KUAS) offers the oldest, most all-encompassing game study programme in Finland. Because of increasing competition in the field of Finnish game education, marketing is a crucial function. Marketing planning is an important step in marketing efforts, because it makes sure that marketing is done as effectively as possible and resources are used correctly. Marketing research is often done to aid marketing planning, because successful marketing efforts are based on customer insights.

The theoretical framework for the thesis was built on business marketing strategies and concepts that were applied for higher education marketing. The research conducted was an exploratory, descriptive marketing research that aimed to uncover customer insights through a structured questionnaire with open-ended questions. 114 responses were received, 34 from students currently studying in KUAS game studies and 80 from new applicants. The research showed that KUAS game studies were considered the best game study programme by majority of respondents, and that KUAS game study marketing has been successfully improved over years.

For the future, it is recommended that marketing planning and marketing research to support it are made an on-going process and an integral part of KUAS game study marketing effort to make sure that KUAS game studies retain their position on the increasingly competitive market.

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

The game development industry is growing in popularity worldwide. With this growth and recognition, demand for a trained workforce is growing and universities around the world are responding to this by including game development studies on their curriculums. Finnish higher education institutions are responding to the challenge as well and a growing number of schools are incorporating game development into their curriculums in different forms, ranging from individual courses to full game study programmes.

As more schools adopt game study programmes into their curriculums, competition in the field grows. As the competition grows, so does the importance of marketing in order to attract the best prospective students. Marketing research and marketing planning are key factors in designing effective marketing actions.

Kajaani University of Applied Sciences (KUAS) game study programmes have been one of KUAS's most important study programmes for years. As one of KUAS' core competencies, its game study programmes attract students from all over the country to come study in KUAS.

KUAS is a small university and its marketing department consists of only three permanent employees. Because of these limited resources, the KUAS marketing department cannot focus on marketing individual study programmes. The marketing department has expressed wishes that the degree programmes themselves would take a more active role in marketing the studies. Game studies have been one of the most active study programmes in this regard, but until now no marketing plan has been made for the game studies and so the marketing actions have not been very organized.

In December 2011 Tieto^2-project – which existed to improve and promote technological studies in KUAS – hired a project worker to take care of KUAS game study marketing. The author of this thesis was this project worker and was handling KUAS game study marketing from December 2011 until July 2012. This thesis was commissioned as a continuation of this work, so a future project worker could easily continue the marketing efforts started by the author.

1.1 KUAS Game Studies

Kajaani University of Applied sciences has the longest history as a higher education level game educator in Finland. KUAS first started offering game studies in 2006. KUAS' game study programme has gone through various changes during its lifetime as the study programme has been improved. Since 2009 KUAS' game study programme, offered under business information technology studies, has offered its students an opportunity to specialize in game programming, game graphics or game design and production. In 2012 game sound specialization was added to the list, and game technology education was begun under information technology studies, among the first of its type in Finland.

There are 25 Universities of Applied Sciences in Finland (OPH). In 2012, five of these (including KUAS) offer game studies in one form or another. Two of these schools started offering game studies in 2012 and the growing trend is predicted to continue – more schools are likely to include game studies into their curriculums in the future. (Neogames)

1.2 Goals of the thesis

This thesis was written as a commission for Tieto^2 project. Project manager Tanja Korhonen desired a marketing plan that could be used to effectively guide any KUAS game study marketing in the future. The marketing plan should be such that a single fulltime employee who works 40 hours a week can follow it and put the proposed marketing actions into action.

Marketing planning is the key to effective marketing. Marketing research is often conducted before a marketing plan can be written, to aid with marketing planning. The purpose of marketing research is to discover customer insights, to learn about the target market's wants, needs, attitudes and behaviour so that marketing can be planned based on them.

The goal of this thesis was to study appropriate theory of marketing planning and marketing research in order to conduct marketing research by interviewing KUAS game students, and to use customer insights uncovered while analysing the research findings to write an effective marketing plan for KUAS game studies.

1.3 Research problems

The aim of the thesis was to research how KUAS game study marketing should be improved so that the studies can be marketed effectively, while keeping in mind that most of the marketing will be done by a single project worker.

The marketing research that was conducted to help choose the best marketing actions, and aid in writing the marketing plan, sought to find answers to the following questions:

- What information do potential students want about KUAS game studies?

- Through which channels does marketing reach potential applicants effectively?

- In what forms should KUAS deliver the marketing information?

Based on the theory studied and the research results, a marketing plan was written for KUAS game studies. This marketing plan covers a year in marketing actions and makes suggestions for future marketing planning.

1.4 Research

Research was conducted by interviewing current KUAS game study students and new applicants who had applied for KUAS game studies. Research was conducted using a structured questionnaire with open-ended questions. It was an exploratory, descriptive research that aimed to measure student insights and satisfaction, as well as to discover how KUAS game study marketing could be improved. 114 responses were received, 34 of which were from current students and 80 from new applicants.

1.5 Summary

The research showed that KUAS game studies has been successful in positioning the studies as the best game study programme in Finland. Customer satisfaction was high as a majority of the current students reported that the studies had met their expectations. The results also

showed that marketing efforts had been successfully improved over the years, as a majority of new applicants reported that all of the information they wanted to received prior to applying to KUAS game studies had been available to them.

The results show that KUAS game studies holds the position of a market leader in the field of Finnish game study education, at least in the minds of the students and applicants. Marketing actions have been successful. However, there is room for improvement. As the competition in the field increases, KUAS game studies must ensure the high quality of its educational services and make sure that marketing efforts are continued. The best way to ensure successful marketing is to make marketing planning and research an on-going part of the marketing effort.

2 HIGHER EDUCATION MARKETING

Higher education is becoming a business where competition in the marketplace is increasing. (Maringe & Gibbs 2009). The main reason higher education institutions have started paying attention to the importance of marketing is to increase student attendance. Competition in the higher education market has driven universities to market themselves more effectively, hoping to attract more students through their efforts. In addition to having enough students in order to survive, many universities would prefer to have so many applicants that they could then select those best suited for their university. (Mills, R. & Rudd, D., 2008) In higher education, the university is usually considered more prestigious the more applicants it recieves, and from the university's point of view it is important that the students who are accepted into the university are well suited for the study programmes they enter, and are thus likely to graduate.

Ghost, Javalgi and Whipple (2007) agree that declining enrolment and growing competition have been the main reasons for marketization of higher education. They also list increasing retention problems as another reason (Ghost, Javalgi&Whipple 2007). Nicolescu (2009) agrees that the higher education field has been going through some major environmental changes in most countries, leading them to turn to business marketing strategies in order to thrive in the changing environment (Nicolescu 2009). Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006) concluded that because business theories have been successfully applied to the business sector for years, they are beginning to gain popularity in the higher education sector as well, in the hopes that they would help higher education institutions gain a competitive edge over their rivals. As with Nicolescu, Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka pointed out that higher education institutions are responding to the changes in their environment by adopting business marketing concepts to their marketing efforts. (Hemsley-Brown&Oplatka 2006) The higher education marketing field is a still developing field, borrowing theories from the business sector and searching for the best ways to apply said theories to itself. (Nicolescu 2009)

Marketing higher education is a relatively new concept. It was started in the UK and US in the 1980s and most of the literature is based on theory that originates from the business sector. At first, higher education marketing's focus was on information dissemination, but lately there has been a shift towards strategic marketing by using business sector concepts and

theories. (Hemsley-Brown&Oplatka 2006) Nicolescu (2009) who wrote about higher education marketing, concluded that business marketing concepts are practically applicable to the higher education sector. However, the way they can be applied to the higher education sector is often a little different from their application in the business sector. But within certain limitations and changes, business sector marketing theories and concepts work equally well for the higher education field. (Nicolescu 2009)

According to Kotler and Keller (2009) marketing is about identifying and meeting human and social needs. They also state that "success often depends on marketing ability." In recent years higher education institutions have started to recognize the need for marketing efforts. Without successful marketing efforts, the products or services a company offers, no matter how great, are nearly irrelevant, because if the customers do not know about the company and the services it provides they will not know to come to it. (Kotler and Keller 2009 44) For KUAS game studies this means that no matter how great the program, the teachers and the facilities, if marketing efforts are not successful in informing potential students of these, the potential students will not know to apply for the university. That is why marketing efforts are not only important, they are crucial – and become more and more crucial as competition in the field of game studies increases.

Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006) wrote that service marketing should be applied to higher education marketing. However, they note that there are some differences between higher education institutions and general services organisations, and so not all of services marketing theories are directly applicable to higher education. Still, it is agreed that higher education is not a product but a service (Hemsley-Brown&Oplatka, 2006). A degree programme that a university offers is not a manufactured and packaged good. What universities provide are not goods but services, specifically information as a service, which is one of the ten types of entities marketers market, according to Kotler and Keller (Kotler&Keller 2009). Nicolescu (2009) noted that because higher education is a service, marketing theories and practises applicable to services marketing should be used in higher education marketing (Nicolescu 2009).

Services marketing is a specialized field of marketing, because services have characteristics that make them different from manufactured goods and other physical products. Services

tend to be more abstract and intangible, more varied in their attributes than goods and products generally are, and inseparable from the production process, as they are usually produced and consumed simultaneously. On top of this, it is usually not possible to store services the way one could store products. (Marketing Planning for Services 2011 23)

Nicolescu (2009) points out that education is a non-profit industry in most countries. Because of this, the business sector's primary goal of making profit does not transfer to higher education sector as such (Nicolescu 2009). This is true for the Finnish higher education field. The Finnish Constitution promises equal education opportunities to all residents, regardless of their finances. The laws dictate that basic education must be free to everyone and in Finland most other education is free of charge as well, including higher education studies. (OPH) Because of this, KUAS can be considered a non-profit organisation when it comes to marketing. No tuition fees mean that schools are operating on a limited budget, which results in a restricted marketing budget. In this thesis, the focus is thus on free or cheap marketing means.

Some of the critics of higher education marketization argue that the business values are not morally correct for the higher education sector. However, it would benefit higher education institutions to take a look at marketing theory and strategies developed in the business sector and put to use the parts of these concepts that make sense in the higher education field. Marketing as a philosophy and strategy could benefit the higher education sector and help them better meet and fulfil the needs of students. (Hemsley-Brown&Oplatka, 2006)

Many higher education marketing texts are written from the point of view of marketing the whole university, or to aid in improving the study programmes to better meet the demand in the market. These points of view are important, but not directly relevant to this thesis. In this thesis, marking planning is approached from the point of view of a study programme that needs to be promoted as is. The marketing theories and methods introduced in this thesis are universal to all education marketing. What ties these theories to game study marketing specifically is the research that was conducted by interviewing KUAS game students. Game students' responses give the general theory the relevant framework that ties these concepts to game studies specifically.

2.1 Student as a customer approach

Marketing still has a reputation from its earlier days when it was mainly about promotion and advertising. This reputation is not always viewed favourably by higher education field. Nowadays, though promotion and advertising are seen as a part of the marketing effort, according to Maringe and Gibbs (2009) organisations have embraced a more holistic view of marketing, making it a part of everything the organisation does, and more about delivering value to those who have a relationship with the organisation. (Maringe&Gibbs 2009 13)

As tuition fees have been adopted into higher education in various countries, the student-as-customer approach has become widely adapted into higher education marketing. With this, student expectations, and managing and considering them, has become much more central to higher education and higher education marketing. (Nicolescu 2009) The term 'customer' originates in the commercial sector and means someone who purchases goods or services from a provider (Maringe&Gibbs 2009 33).

There are those that argue that instead of customers of higher education, students are the product of higher education. According to this view, employers would be the customers of higher education as they are the ones that use the products that higher education produces (Hemsley-Brown&Oplatka 2006). However, adopting such a view would fundamentally change the way marketing is done and shift the focus away from student recruitment. However, it is true that considering the nature of higher education, students are not the only customers that a higher education institution serves. Other groups that can be seen as the customers of higher education are the employers, as mentioned above, as well as the society. (Maringe 2006; Nicolescu 2009) Still, students are the direct customers, and so the primary marketing effort should focus on the students. Attracting students to the higher education institution is a requirement before the other customers, the employers and the society, can benefit from the product higher education offers. The purpose of this thesis is to create a marketing plan to attract students – so with student recruitment as the purpose of this marketing plan, and the student as the main customers of higher education, is the point of view that is the most useful for this thesis.

Like the term marketing itself, the use of business world terms such as 'customer' has attracted criticism. The critics of the approach argue that higher education is fundamentally so

different from the commercial purchase process that the two cannot be compared and so the same terms cannot be used. Maringe and Gibbs (2009) argue that higher education students are not customers in the traditional sense, because even though in some countries students pay money to receive higher education at universities, a student does not have the rights and privileges that the customer in a regular commercial transaction has. Unlike a traditional customer, a student can fail the course they paid for without compensation; they also cannot return the purchased 'product' even if they decide they are not satisfied with it. Although the student receives a diploma at the end of the course, the actual 'product' that they receive is intangible – the skills, competencies and attitudes they learned as they interacted with the university. It is also true that the corporate customer service is based on the idea that the customer is always right. This principle does not transfer into higher education as is, and some critics of the student-as-customer approach cite this as their reason to oppose the approach. Critics also argue that students are more than passive consumers of a product or service. They take active part in the process of learning. There are also requirements that the students need to fulfill in order to study at universities and to be awarded a degree. Unlike a regular customer, who can buy whatever as long as they have the means, a student needs more than money to partake in the process that is learning in a higher education institute. (Maringe&Gibbs 2009 33)

In their book Marketing Higher Education (2009) Marigne and Gibbs conclude that while they believe students are more than simply customers in the commercial sense of the word, and universities more than simple service providers, the labels of 'customer' and 'service provider' should not be completely disregarded. They argue that higher education marketing can benefit from commercial marketing practice and learn important lessons from it, because the commercial sector has been doing active marketing for much longer than the educational sector, and it is obvious that the methods used there have been effective. (Maringe&Gibbs 2009 35)

Students are considered informed consumers who make rational choices when choosing which higher education institutions to apply for and which courses to pick (Hemsley-Brown&Oplatka 2006). This point of view affects marketing and marketing planning because it puts the students' needs, and satisfying them, at the core of marketing. (Nicolescu, 2009) In the Finnish higher education market, students don't pay tuition fees. But students still make informed decisions about which higher education institution to apply to, just

based on criteria other than the cost of tuition, it is equally important to remember that putting students' needs in the core of marketing and the whole education experience is the starting point of effective marketing.

The purpose of this thesis is to write a marketing plan for KUAS game study programmes. For the purpose of this thesis, the student-as-customer approach is a relevant approach because the marketing plan is going to be student oriented, aiming to take the wants and needs of prospective students into account when deciding what information should be communicated, through which channels and in which form. In this thesis, the university is regarded as a service provider that offers a product (information), and students are customers interested in this service product.

2.2 Importance of higher education marketing

The importance of marketing higher education has been noted in previous studies. Hemsley-Brown (1999) concluded that though many students base their choice of a university first on intuition, they also use the marketing information that the schools provide to support their choices and explain them to others (Maringe&Gibbs 2009). In addition, Maringe and Gibbs also state that "Good institutional reputation is one of the major reasons students elect to study in specific universities." It will be shown below that these statements are supported by the primary research conducted for this thesis, making them as true for the Finnish game development education market as they are for the studied foreign markets.

The benefits of marketing planning and research in higher education marketing are many. Marketing and marketing research can help higher education organisations better understand their students and the environment that the university operates in, including their competitors. Marketing and marketing planning can also help direct resources in the right direction when it comes to targeting the right target market, following marketing trends, and employing human resources. (Mills&Rudd 2008)

2.3 Considerations

Higher education marketing should be based on facts, not artificially created images. SAMOK, the union of students in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences, has expressed worry that too many schools spend more effort on marketing than improving the quality of their education. According to them, marketing higher education should be based on facts. Facts that should be used in marketing a university include: Curriculums, applicant data (number of applicants the previous years), graduate statistics and employment statistics relating to those graduates. (Sjöholm 2011)

Already Moisan (1987) expressed similar worries when he wrote about higher education marketing. He wrote that the way promotions portray education should be truthful, because nothing is more damaging to the reputation of a higher education institution than students who feel like they were misled or even cheated by the advertisement. He noted that false advertisement will always be disastrous in the long-run and lead to decreased retention and bad reputation. (Moisan 1987)

Mills and Rudd (2008) noted that it should also be kept in mind that marketing is not magic; it cannot sell what is not there. Marketing can only help attract students to the university if the university offers courses that are interesting to the students. (Mills&Rudd 2008) Similarly, Nicoulescu wrote that the quality of the educational services offered hold a key position when it comes to ensuring student satisfaction. Universities should aim for providing good quality educational services, as this is the key to forming a favorable institutional image and reputation (Nicouslescu 2009). Higher education institutions should build their brand and their marketing, based on the quality services that they offer and claims about the services that are based on facts.

In conclusion, it is important that the quality of the education offered is as high as it is claimed to be. If there is a problem with the quality of education, it cannot be fixed by putting more resources into marketing, it needs to be fixed by improving the quality of the teaching. Marketing efforts then should only use marketing messages that are based in actual facts about the school and the quality of its education to attract students to the school.

3 MARKETING PLANNING

Marketing planning is a structured process that studies and analyses marketing situations. During the process, objectives are defined, and strategies to reach these objectives are developed and decided on. Threats and opportunities facing the organisation are studied and analyzed, and strategies to deal with them are formulated. The purpose of marketing planning is to prepare the organisation for the future so that they can focus their resources correctly. Implementation, evaluation of and controlling the marketing efforts and their effectiveness are also a part of the process. (Blythe&Megicks 2010)

Marketing planning is vital for any organisation that provides products or services to customers as their business and wants to retain a competitive edge among competition. The importance of marketing planning only grows as the competition increases. (Blythe&Megicks 2010)

A marketing plan is the document that is the written outcome of the planning process and a tool that can help the organisation move forward. Marketing planning is commonly criticized by saying that by the time the plan is written, it is already starting to be outdated. It should be remembered that the real value of marketing is not necessarily the final result, but is in the process itself. The process of marketing planning reveals important things about the organisation's strengths and weaknesses and the environment around it that it has to operate in. (Blythe&Megicks 2010 14)

It is especially important to remember in today's fast-paced, competitive marketing environment that marketing planning is an ongoing process, not something that should be done once and forgotten about. Marketing plans need to be assessed and modified based on experience. (Blythe&Megicks 2010)

According to Marigne and Gibbs (2009) the central parts of the strategic marketing planning process for higher education organisations are the following:

- Situation Analysis

- Market segmentation

- Product positioning

- The marketing mix

In addition to this process, the process of strategic marketing includes implementation and control phases where the plan it put into action, and the effectiveness of the actions is evaluated and a new plan formulated. This chapter describes the central phases of marketing planning process in detail. The theory covered in this chapter was put into use when writing the marketing plan for KUAS game studies.

3.1 Situation Analysis

Already Moisan (1987) talked about the importance of situation analysis in marketing planning for higher education when he wrote about the topic. He stated that a higher education institution requires constant feedback from its environments, both its internal and external environments. He went as far as to claim that not looking at this feedback or ignoring it could be fatal to the institution. (Moisan 1987)

It is generally agreed that situation analysis is an important part and the crucial starting point of the strategic marketing planning process. The marketing planning process is started by analysing the university's current position in the market (Maringe&Gibbs 2009 62). In order to move forward, it is necessary to first find out where the organisation is at. In addition to the organisation's current standing, the situation analysis will also address the future and how well the organisation is prepared to face it. (McDonald, Payne&Frow 2011) Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006) wrote that the situation analysis is an important tool for higher education institutions that will help them position themselves, choose effective strategies to use, and communicate their institutional image, or brand, properly. (Hemsley-Brown&Oplatka, 2006)

Situation analysis studies the organisation's internal and external environments. The internal environment consists of the organisation and the products and services it provides. The external environment consists of markets and customers, competition and the business environment. (McDonald et al. 2011 110) Already Moilan noted that higher education institu-

tions rely on the external environment heavily; they receive their financial support and their customers, the students, from their external environment. (Moisan, 1987)

Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006) listed the environmental factors affecting a higher education institution in more detail. They pointed out that the factors can be divided into the learning environment, reputation, graduate career prospects, and – especially in the case of foreign students – national image and cultural integration. (Hemsley-Brown&Oplatka, 2006) They write from the perspective of attracting international students, but it is obvious that even when looking at the institution's strengths and weaknesses in the home market, these are factors that need to be carefully considered.

It must be noted that it is important that the information provided by situation analysis is factual and accurate. When the organisation understands what is really happening with its customers and markets, it will be easier for it to decide which opportunities to seize in order to attain long-term success. (McDonald et al. 2011 110) Moisan points out that the purpose of the situation analysis is to give the institution a good idea of what its strengths and weaknesses are perceived to be so that the information can be used for strategic planning and decision making (Moisan 1987). Obviously, in order for the planning and decision making to be effective, the facts that it is based on need to be valid and truthful.

It would be important to perform situation analysis at least once a year, before anything has time to go wrong, because this would help the marketing management to recognize trends and threats in advance. In the constantly changing marketing environment of today's business world, doing a thorough situation analysis at the beginning of each planning cycle is important. (McDonald et al. 2011 109)

Situation analysis should be reported in a document that is separate from the marketing plan which is the ultimate result of marketing planning process, as situation analysis is just one part of the process. (McDonald et al. 2011 108) Situation analysis is the basis on which the rest of the strategic marketing process is built.

External analysis

The situation analysis should be started by doing an external analysis of the circumstances surrounding the organisation. External analysis will reveal the issues that should be considered when starting to develop a successful strategy. The purpose of external analysis is to find out which opportunities or threats are developing that the organisation should be aware of. (Drummond, Ensor&Ashford 2008 21)

External analysis should be done in a practical way, focusing on only the most important environmental factors (McDonald et al. 2011 144). External analysis can include different factors depending on the situation that is the reason for the review. The factors that are usually analyzed are: market size, trends, customers, customers segments and distribution channels. (Drummond et al 2008 34)

The purpose of the external analysis is to help the organisation understand its place in the environment that surrounds it. Understanding the external opportunities and threats will be helpful when looking for the organisation's own strengths and weaknesses and understanding how these can be used to the organisation's benefit or prepared for. (McDonald et al. 2011 108)

Different tools can be used to undertake the external analysis. In addition to PESTEL analysis, which will be used for the purposes of this thesis and explained later in this chapter, more thorough industry analysis, competitor analysis and market analysis are tools that are commonly used. (Drummond et al. 2008 21)

Internal analysis

The aim of the internal analysis is to discover the organisation's capabilities. To accomplish this, the organisation's resources, assets and competencies should be analyzed (Drummond et al. 2008 107). The analysis should study the organisation's strengths and weaknesses and the effect these may have on current operations and potential future growth. Factors that have an effect on the organisational performance are at the core of this analysis. These factors are: skills, resources, systems and procedures, and internal roles and relationships. (McDonald et al. 2011)

It is important that the organisation also analyses its products. It is possible to be too close to the products and services the organisation offers and so become blind to their strengths and weaknesses. It is important to take a critical look at the products and services offered, just as with all the other parts of the organisation's functions during the situation analysis. The reason for product analysis is taking a look at the strengths and weaknesses of the product and services in comparison to those provided by competitor organisations. The analysis should bring to light qualities of the products or services that can be used as 'differential advantage'. (McDonald et al. 2011)

The outcome of internal analysis is the knowledge of the organisation's competencies and assets, important information that can help with strategic positioning. The target of analysis should be the organisation's abilities and potential to satisfy customer needs and compete against competition. (Drummond et al. 2008 89)

Different analysis tools can be used to study the organisation's external and internal capabilities, aims, opportunities and constraints realistically (Maringe&Gibbs 2009 62). The following subchapters of this thesis introduce two most commonly used analysis tools, PESTEL SWOT. Competitor analysis is also looked at in more detail because it is especially relevant to the commissioner due to the fast growing competition in the Finnish game education field.

3.1.1   PESTEL

PESTEL (also known as PESTLE, or PEST) is an analysis tool used to analyze the environment surrounding the organisation and various environmental factors affecting the organisation from outside. The factors included in PESTEL analysis are Political, Economic, Social, Technological and Environmental and Legal factors. (Gillespie 2007)

Political factors include different governmental policies that have an effect on the organisation. Such policies have to do with governmental support, education, infrastructure and all the political decisions that affect these. (Gillespie 2007)

Economical factors include factors such as the interest rates, taxation, inflation, economic growth and exchange rates. Economic factors can have a huge impact on an organisation's functions as unfavourable economic conditions can raise the price of certain functions. (Gillespie 2007)

Social factors include the changing social trends, such as the aging of the population, that have an effect on the organisation's functions, demand of the products, and availability of workforce, among other things. (Gillespie 2007)

Technological factors include emerging new technologies that require changes to products and processes. Advancing technologies create new markets, and make improvements to business functions possible and sometimes necessary. Both the organisation and the customers can benefit from the changes and improvements in technological environment. (Gillespie 2007)

Environmental factors include weather and climate changes. Certain organisations are affected by the changes in temperature or the change of seasons. Global warming has made environmental factors important for organisations to think about and the growing efforts to protect the environment have an impact of certain types of organisation, in the form of added taxes and a shift in customer needs and wants towards eco-friendlier products and processes. (Gillespie 2007)

Legal factors include all factors related to the legal environment surrounding the organisation. New laws might force the organisation to change their processes. Changes in the legal environment can affect the organisation financially or cause changes in demand for its products or services. The legal factors include all different legislation: consumer, competition, employment and health and safety laws and legislation. (Gillespie 2007)

When conducting PESTLE analysis, it is possible to come to a situation where a certain factor fits into more than one of the categories. In such cases, it should be considered which category is the most relevant for that factor. (Gillespie 2007)

It is important to do more than simply list the PESTEL factors. In addition to listing the factors, the factors and the extent of their potential impact should be considered carefully. For different companies, different factors play a different role. Organisations should focus on the factors that are the most relevant to their business. (Gillespie 2007)

PESTEL analysis does not need to take into account the whole of the organisation; it is possible to use PESTEL to evaluate a particular part of the organisation or its business. PESTEL analysis can also be conducted of either the local environment, national environment or the global environment in which the organisation operates, depending on the organisation's business and needs. (Gillespie 2007)

3.1.2 SWOT

SWOT analysis is an analysis tool for studying the internal strengths and weaknesses of the organisation and comparing them with the external opportunities and threats in the market. The abbreviation SWOT comes from words Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. (Gillespie 2007)

Strengths and weaknesses are internal factors that the organisation needs to be aware of. Strengths can be used as a basis for strategy development. Weaknesses are factors that could cause problems for the organisation and need to be known so that preparation can be made to deal with possible problems. For the purpose of situation analysis, all aspects of an organisation's operations should be evaluated. Strengths and weaknesses of marketing, finance, operations and human resources need to be studied. (Gillespie 2007)

Strengths consist of factors such as internal capabilities and resources as well as any factors that can help the organisation better serve its customers or reach its objectives. Weaknesses are internal factors that limit the organisation or have a negative effect on its performance. Opportunities are external factors or trends that have a positive effect on the organisation's performance or could be used in the organisation's advantage. Threats are external factors that affect the organisation negatively or challenge its performance. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012 53)

SWOT analysis can be used to put together the factors that affect the organisation that came out during the rest of the situation analysis and assess how critical each of them is (Drummond et al. 2008 107). The organisation's unique strengths and weaknesses need to be specified and their significance should be assessed. After this is done, they should be compared with external opportunities and threats. Strengths and weaknesses reflect the current situation; opportunities and threats have to do with the future. Effective SWOT analysis requires honest, unbiased and correct information about the organisation and the environment. (Gillespie 2007)

3.1.3 Competitor Analysis

Marketing is a way to survive and thrive above competitor institutions in a constantly competitive environment (Maringe&Gibbs 2009 52). For it to be effective, the competitor organisations should be examined and analysed as carefully as the organisation's own services, strategies and capabilities. The purpose of competitor analysis is to be prepared for the changes in the market that they (the competitor) might cause. When the organisation knows its competition, it can take an active role in shaping the future instead of waiting and merely reacting to changes wrought by the competition. (McDonald et al. 2011 144)

It is not necessary or advisable to waste resources finding out everything about everyone in the same market as the organisation (McDonald et al. 2011 144). It is important to determine which competitors are the organisation's direct competitors in terms of offering the same products or services to the same customers. These competitors are in the same strategic group as the organisation and the competitor analysis should be focused on these competitors because they pose the greatest threat. (Drummond et al. 2008 29)

The key questions that should guide the competitor analysis process are the following:

- Who has done what the organisation intends to do?

- How successful have they been?

- How can the organisation differ from competition? (Maringe&Gibbs 2009 52)

The most interesting information about direct competitors are their objectives, strategies, capabilities and any predictions of their future strategies and reactions (Drummond et al. 2008 30). The information for competitor analysis can and should be collected from public-ly available sources, such as competitor's websites, marketing materials and organisational public reports and records. (McDonald et al. 2011 144)

Risks involved in the competitor analysis have to do with underestimating or overlooking potential competitors. Though resources should not be wasted on learning everything about everyone on the market, it is important to look at every potential competitor and assess the risk they pose. Sometimes smaller competitors might cause more trouble than the larger, more visible ones. Potential new entrants to the field may also pose unexpected threats, and it is possible for international competitors to enter the local market and change the dynamic. (Drummond et al. 2008 33) In the case of higher education, it is unlikely that a new universi-ty would appear suddenly. It is more likely that an existing university that didn't offer game studies before takes game education into their curriculum. International universities are un-likely to set up a campus in Finland either, but it is possible that a foreign university enters the market by offering Finnish students interested in game studies online based distance ed-ucation, for example.

3.2 Marketing Strategy

Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006) list four main marketing strategies that are employed by higher education institutions. These are public relations approach, sales approach, customer satisfaction approach and marketing as strategy approach. Strategic marketing means mar-keting planning and implementation that is tactical and driven by information about con-sumer needs and behaviour to gain a competitive edge in the market. It is not uncommon to apply strategic marketing tools and theories that have proven useful in the business world to higher education marketing. (Hemsley-Brown&Oplatka, 2006) However, it should be noted that there is one fundamental difference between higher education and typical products in regular business: higher education is a onetime purchase, as the same people will not return to buy the same service again. Because of this, marketing strategies that are taken from the

business setting might have to be altered when used in a higher education context. (Nicoles-cu 2009)

It seems that when it comes to higher education marketing, customer satisfaction approach is effective. Ghost et al. (2009) mentions that it has been shown that strategies which are based on satisfying the students' needs lead to more student satisfaction (Ghosh, Javalgi, Whipple, 2007). Marketing strategy that has customer satisfaction at its core is built on knowledge of consumer behaviour, market segmentation, positioning and the use of market-ing mix elements (Nicoulescu 2009). Marketing research can be used to study consumer be-haviour in the situation analysis phase. Marketing strategy formulation consists of the fol-lowing three phases: segmentation, targeting and positioning. Marketing strategy can be formed after situation analysis has been carried out thoroughly. Marketing strategy needs to be tied in with the organisation's overall goals and objectives, and is most successful when based on the organisation's core competencies. (Drummond et al. 2008)

3.2.1 Segmentation

Segmentation separates the market into groups, or segments, based on similar characteris-tics, behavior and attitudes. The aim of segmentation is to try to understand and predict needs and demand or customer reactions. (Drummond et al. 2008 13) Segmentation is nec-essary because the market is made up of customers who have different needs. (McDonald et al. 2011 125) Ghost et al suggest that services segmentation theory is directly applicable to the higher education field. (Ghosh et al. 2007)

A market segment is a group of customers within a market who have similar needs or de-sires which can be filled with the same or comparable goods or services. Specific segments can be targeted using specific services that meet their needs and different marketing mixes that interest them. (McDonald et al. 2011 111) The purpose of market segmentation is to make it possible to meet consumer needs more precisely, gain segment leadership, retain customers and develop focused marketing communications (Maringe&Gibbs 2009). The higher education sector needs to satisfy the needs of a very diverse group of prospective students that comes from different backgrounds and have different life situations and objec-

tives. Segmentation will help higher education organisations to meet the needs of these different groups. (Ghosh et al. 2007)

Segmentation is important because understanding the characteristics, thought processes, behaviour and general lifestyles and life cycles of the students a university hopes to attract is vital. Understanding these factors will help the university better understand what kind of services potential students are looking for and help a marketer to understand which qualities of the education should be advertised to the target market (Maringe&Gibbs 2009). Ghosh et al point out that once student markets have been segmented based on student needs, different service and marketing strategies can be used to satisfy the needs of these segments. (Ghosh et al 2007)

Geographic, demographic, behavioural and psychological factors are often quoted as the basis of segmentation in the business sector (Maringe&Gibbs 2009). According to Ghosh et al demographic, psychographic and behavioral information can be used to segment students. Demographic information in this case includes employment status, occupation, income, age and nationality, among others. Psychographic factors are factors such as lifestyle, motivation, family life cycle and attitudes. (Ghosh, Javalgi, Whipple, 2007) However, critics argue that segmentation should not be done based on these criteria, because people who are the same age or from the same area rarely act, think and feel the same way. In order to segment successfully, it is important to study and understand the market structure of the target market. Segments are not demographic or socio-economic groups because there are various possible purchase combinations and different buyer behaviour present in such a group. A segment is a group made up of similar purchase combinations and buyer behaviour. (McDonald et al. 2011 114) This critique is relevant to segmentation in the higher education sector as well, for the obvious reason that now all of the high university leavers have the same wants and needs. Psychographic and behavioral factors are most likely the most relevant bases for segmentation.

Generally, it is said that the market should be divided into segments according to the following criteria:
- Segments needs to be large enough to produce return of investment

- The members of a segment need to be similar to each other and distinctively different from the members of other segments
- Segments should be such that it is possible to communicate with them effectively (McDonald et al. 2011 121)

Generally in higher education marketing literature, higher education is seen has having three main student segments it needs to satisfy: high university leavers, international students and mature students (Hemsley-Brown&Oplatka 2006). Ghosh et al. Add to this transferees, students who transfer from another higher education institution to finish their studies elsewhere. (Ghosh et al 2007) However, segmentation and the need for it can go deeper than that. Students who apply for different programmes could be considered their own segments. After all, students who are interested in health related studies are bound to have different needs and wants than students who apply for business or technology studies. In this thesis, students interested in game studies are considered their own segment with their own needs and wants that are different from those of other students.

It has also been argued that higher education has more customers than simply prospective students. Students are the primary clients of higher education, but employers and stakeholders who finance higher education institutions can be considered clients. Segmentation is harder to preform when it comes to the other stakeholders. Segmentation and targeting, when it comes to higher education, work best with the primary clients, customers. (Nicolescu 2009) For the purpose of this thesis, students are the most important customers, because the purpose of this thesis is to market KUAS game studies from a student recruitment point of view. This is why this thesis does not look at segmentation when it comes to any stakeholders apart from students.

Whether or not segmentation and thus the rest of marketing strategy formulation is successful is dependent on thorough understanding of the market and the customers that make it up. Without thorough knowledge of consumer behaviour, it is impossible to carry out segmentation reliably. (Drummond et al. 2008 49)

3.2.2 Targeting

Targeting means analyzing and evaluating the market segments that were established during segmentation and choosing which ones to serve. The goal is to take advantage of opportunities that could provide long-term success and customer retention. (Drummond et al. 2008 13)

The organisation should choose just a few – the most important – segments to work with. Trying to work with too many might lead to problems, such as having segments that are too small to be profitable as well as wasting resources struggling to manage too many segments. It is not possible for one organisation to offer everything to everyone. It is necessary to evaluate the organisation's strengths and focus on targeting the markets where the possibility for success is the greatest. (McDonald et al. 2011 39)

3.2.3 Positioning

Positioning is important to help the organisation have a competitive edge over its competitors. The key to finding a competitive position is being aware of the needs of the customer and meeting them with products or services that fill those needs. (Drummond et al. 2008 13) The main reason positioning is done is to offer the target segments an incentive to buy the products or services the organisation offers. (McDonald et al. 2011 161) In higher education marketing, the purpose of positioning is to present and develop the university's institutional image in a way that makes it favorable in the minds of the general public, and especially prospective students (Nicolescu 2009).

Nicolescu (2009) concluded that the opportunities for using positioning in higher education sector are limited, because it is difficult to really differentiate from competition in higher education sector. Study programmes offered in different schools are generally fundamentally quite similar. She quotes a study by Kantanen (2007) saying that in the Finnish higher education field, differences between universities are not seen as being decisive factors. However, difficult does not mean it is impossible to differentiate. Nicolescu also lists qualities that higher education institutions often use to try to differentiate themselves from their competi-

tion. These are teaching focused vs. research focused education; science focused vs. arts focused education; and the quality of teaching, whether is basic or higher level. (Nicolescu 2009)

Maringe and Gibbs (2009) point out that in the higher education market, certain institutions and the degrees they offer are perceived to result in higher social status and improved lifetime opportunities to the students who study and graduate from them than others (Maringe&Gibbs 2009). Acquiring this status is what schools should aim for to ensure their popularity in the highly competitive market.

It is nearly impossible for any one university to be the best at everything, so it is important for schools to find their core competencies and position themselves in the market based on them. Schools need to find ways to differentiate themselves from others by making available products or services that are different from what others offer. (Maringe&Gibbs 2009) Indeed, Moisan (1987) concludes that effective positioning is not about being everything to everyone, but about recognising the higher education institution's strengths, weaknesses and limitations, and based on these deciding what and to which target group the university can deliver. (Moisan 1987) KUAS has done this by choosing its core competencies, one of which is game studies.

Positioning should always be done with the target segment's needs in mind. There are three different positioning options:

- Strengthening organisation's current position against competitors
- Finding a position that hasn't yet been occupied
- Repositioning competition (McDonald et al. 2011 159)

Moisan (1987), when writing about effective higher education marketing, wrote that "positioning answers the following questions: 1. What are we going to provide? 2. How and to whom will we deliver it? 3. What will we charge? 4. How will we promote it?" He writes that as a part of marketing planning, positioning comes from developing a strategy with the marketing mix ingredients. (Moisan, 1987) Indeed, positioning goes hand in hand with the marketing mix elements. The marketing mix, which will be discussed in the following subchapter, is used to implement and communicate positioning.

When implementing the positioning plan, it needs to be done thoroughly. Every interaction with the target segment must reflect the positioning. Everyone in the organisation need to be aware of the positioning and send a message that communicates the positioning message consistently with everything they do. (McDonald et al. 2011 160) Positioning must also be realistic; the organisation should only claim to be what it can prove it is. Claiming to be the biggest or the best if it is not the case could do more damage than good. The positioning should be unique, the organisation should find a position where it can offer something the competition cannot or is not yet offering. (McDonald et al. 2011 159)

Positioning strategy is never long-lived as the marketplace that the organisation operates in is in a state of constant change. Because of this, it is important to review and adjust the positioning strategy regularly to make sure it stays up to date and relevant to the target market. (McDonald et al. 2011 160) Moisan (1987) points out that successful competitive positioning should be based on ongoing marketing research and marketing planning (Moisan 1987).

3.2.4 Services Marketing Mix 7Ps

Marketing mix is a tactical tool for developing marketing strategies, both short term and long term strategies. It is a conceptual framework that details the main decisions that marketing managers need to make when tailoring their products or services to suit customer needs. The seven elements of the services marketing mix are Products, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Processes and Physical Evidence. All of the elements are used with one aim in mind – profitably satisfying customer needs. (Palmer 2009 21)

The traditional marketing mix is made up of only four elements: Product, Price, Promotion and Place. The services industry differs a great deal from traditional businesses, and so three more elements are generally added to the services marketing mix, sometimes called the extended marketing mix. These additional elements are: People, Process and Physical Evidence. (Palmer 2009 22) Sometimes marketing mix is quoted as having a different amount of elements, 4, 5, 7, and 9 for example. Sometimes marketing mix elements are named differently, or different elements are included in the number of Ps chosen for the specific case.

Though a marketing mix is divided into a differing number of elements, these elements cannot be removed from each other. The elements are intertwined and need to interact with each other. The purpose of the list of elements is to give headlines around which marketing management can plan practical actions, not to divide the marketing efforts into independent pieces. (Palmer 2009 25)

Below, the different Ps chosen for this thesis are explained in detail. As Palmer states, the definitions may vary but that is not the important thing. The important thing about the marketing mix is that it gives a framework for the marketers that help them in planning marketing efforts.

Products

A product is anything an organisation might offer to potential customers to satisfy their needs. It can be a tangible physical product, or an intangible service. The product mix consists of the elements of the product that can be controlled. (Palmer 2009 23) These include: Variety, quality, design, features, brand and packaging (Kotler&Armstrong 2012 52). It is not possible to perfect all these qualities in a product or a service, but compromises must be made (Palmer 2009 23).

In higher education marketing the product refers not only to the courses but to the whole university experience. Activities, experiences and services provided by the university as well as the facilities are included as the product. (Mills&Rudd 2008) Product also refers to the programme portfolio, product quality and branding. All the services the higher education institution offers include educational service as the main product, additional services such as research and third sector services (Nicolescu 2009). From the student recruitment point of view, the main product, the educational service, is of course the important one. Support services can bring more value to the university. When analyzing the product for a marketing plan, its unique selling points should be considered. Factors such as location, history, culture and interesting features in the vicinity of the university, or anything else that might attract students to the university, would qualify as these (Mills&Rudd 2008).

Branding can be seen as a part of the product policy. Branding, the creation of an attractive image of the product or service, in this case a higher education institution or a degree pro-

gramme offered by it, has been adopted into the higher education markets. Branding and reputation are similar concepts, but whereas reputation is something that develops organically over time, a brand is created and enforced artificially. Critics of higher education branding argue that instead of creating a brand, higher education institutions should concentrate on reputation. Either way, when it comes to higher education, a brand is not developed in order to sell products but as means of communicating attractive and inviting institutional identity. Creating a brand is one way to stand out in the relatively homogenous market place. (Nicolescu 2009)

Pricing

In regular business marketing, pricing is an important element in most organisation's marketing mix because the revenue is directly related to it. If the product or service is priced too high, it might be difficult to sell it. On the other hand, pricing a product or service too low will, while generating sales, be unprofitable. The balancing act of setting the correct price is one of the most difficult decisions involved in designing the marketing mix. (Palmer 2009 23)

Apart from bringing in the profits, price can be used to communicate quality. When the price is high, customers expect the product to be of a higher quality. If the price is high and the product is perceived to be high quality but turns out not to be, the customers will feel let down and disappointed, making them likely to complain and not return to the organisation. Pricing strategy is important when positioning a new product or service on the market. (Blythe&Megicks 2010 192)

In higher education, price refers to the price that a student should pay to attend a course and be awarded a degree (Mills&Rudd 2008). It is important that the students see the quality of the education offered, and the future opportunities that completing the education results in, as worth the investment they have made. (Hemsley-Brown&Oplatka, 2006)

However, because until about a decade ago higher education was free of charge for students in many countries – and in those countries that charge tuition fees the government still sets the fees, or sets limitations to what they can be, leading to most institutions charging the same fee – pricing as a marketing mix element is not directly relevant to the higher education

sector because the sector lacks the freedom to price its services. (Nicolescu 2009) However, Nicolescu points out that pricing should not be discarded as a marketing mix ingredient for higher education despite its limitations. Price related information, such as tuition fees, cost of living and scholarships, are still important information that play a part in a student's choice.

Pricing is not directly relevant to Finnish higher education because Finnish universities do not collect tuition fees (OPH). However, for the purpose of marketing, indirect costs – such as the cost of living in the town where the university is located – could be taken advantage of. These are not costs that the university has any control over, but they are important information that prospective students can use in their decision making when choosing which university to apply to.

Place

With physical products, it is rarely financially intelligent to produce it in the same place where it is made available to the customer. Production is usually more affordable and convenient in places that are not so convenient for customers. Since customers prefer to purchase their products where it is easy for them to do so, the products need to be transferred to these places. The decisions that need to be made for this are what the channel of distribution will be like and how the logistics of the process are to be managed. (Palmer 2009 23) The location where the purchase or consumption of offered products or services takes place has an effect of the image of the organisation. Both the geographical location and the quality of the outlet can affect the perception of the organisation, both positively and negatively (Blythe&Megicks 2010 192).

Nicolescu states that the place part of the marketing mix (also called distribution policy in some texts) means is the method by which the product or service is made available to customers. According to her, distribution is a part of the marketing mix that is not applicable to higher education sector. However, Mills and Rudd claims that for higher education marketing, place explains when and where the marketing happens. It refers to the time of the year when marketing is done intensely, usually during the application period, and where this marketing happens. (Mills&Rudd 2008) There are no outlets where higher education is marketed

at all times, but events such as higher education fairs can serve as an 'outlet' where the education is 'sold' to potential customers.

Promotion

Promotion is considered one of the most important marketing mix ingredients for higher education. Moisan (1987) wrote about promotion, describing it as marketing actions that "stimulate a prospective...student to respond in a desired way." He stresses that more than one promotional activity should be used, because different people react to stimuli in a different way. Nicolescu (2009) describes promotion as the means by which the organisation communicates with its target markets (Nicolescu 2009)

In general business marketing theory, promotion is described in the following way: promotion is what is used by the organisation to make the target customers aware of their products and their benefits. Elements of the promotion mix are: advertising, personal selling, public relations, sales promotion, and sponsorships, as well as direct marketing methods. (Palmer 2009 24)

The decisions that need to be made related to promotion include: what message to send, and through which media? What the timing should be? How much should be spent, and how can the effectiveness be evaluated? Promotions need to change to reflect the changes in marketing environment and customer needs and only up-to-date promotions will be effective. (Palmer 2009 24)

The promotional message is used mainly to attract new customers, because existing customers have already built a perception of the organisation through interactions with the organisation's products or services. It is difficult if not impossible to change existing perceptions through promotion. Promotions should be considered carefully, because there are risks involved in many promotional elements and the wrong kind of promotions can hurt the organisation's reputation. (Blythe&Megicks 2010 192)

According to Mills and Rudd (2008), in higher education, promotion is a collective term for the marketing activities and communications that are undertaken in order to attract interest in the service offered. Promotion consists of all the communications, selling, and advertising

efforts done in order to promote the university. (Mills&Rudd 2008) Promotion mixes used by schools often include advertising, personal selling, public relations and special promotional actions. General publicity is gained through fact sheets and brochures as well as sending spokespeople to different schools and industry events. (Moisan 1987) Nicolescu (2009) agrees that advertising, public relations and personal selling are communications tools used to attract students to the higher education institution. She concludes that promotion policy in higher education means marketing communications and information dissemination, both of them mainly aiming at helping the prospective students choose the university for their higher education. (Nicolescu 2009) Moisan stresses that promotion must be honest, well planned and well coordinated to be successful. (Moisan 1987)

There are various different promotional actions that can be undertaken and various different marketing media that can be used. Different approaches to promotion include promoting the university to potential students through teachers and university counselors, and marketing the university directly to the potential students. Advertising can be done through television, radio, and brochures, among other means, including telemarketing, direct mail, university visits, open days and higher education fairs. (Mills&Rudd 2008) Emergence of online marketing has provided a whole slew of new marketing media that universities can take advantage of and most of it is free or relatively cheap to use. Different marketing media that can be used in promotion will be introduced in chapter 4.

People

People are one of the additional marketing mix items, and especially relevant to services marketing. Because the employees of a service company come to direct contact with customers, the way they act has a huge impact on how the customers perceive the company. The best marketing efforts cannot change the experiences customers have had interacting with the front-line employees. (Palmer 2009 24) Marketing management needs to co-operate with human resource management when it comes to controlling the people part of the marketing mix. Decision need to be made about the skills and qualities of those employees who

come into direct contact with customers as well as about rewarding and motivating the employees. (Palmer 2009 24)

For higher education, the people part of the marketing mix encapsulates the university employees, especially the teachers. Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006) found that faculty members were in a critical role when it came to forming students' perceptions of the higher education institution's reputation and through that affecting customer loyalty. (Hemsley-Brown&Oplatka 2006)

Faculty members can also be used for marketing purposes more directly. It should be noted that employees can often be used as marketing tools cheaply or even for free. One option for using employees to promote the university is different kinds of out-reach programs where employees of the university interact with young people who might one day grow up to apply for the university. Another way is to use employees' accomplishments to market the university, for example by listing them on the university's website. (Mills&Rudd 2008)

Process

Process is another element of the marketing mix relevant to services marketing. The process of producing the service can be a lot more important than the process of producing physical goods, because the customer is often involved in the process. Elements of the process that need to be considered are the friendliness, speed, and quality of the service provided. Operational managers should work together with marketers, and the process of handling customers should be designed to be profitable and customer friendly. (Palmer 2009 24)

Process is rarely discussed in higher education marketing literature, but it is obvious that just as for services marketing the process means the process of producing the service, for higher education process means the process of producing the education service – in other words, teaching. The start of the process is application, and process covers the entirety of the education, ending with competition of the programme. Marketing can be made part of the process by making the teachers and other key faculty members aware that their daily actions affect the perception of the university's image and the university's reputation. Teaching and other services should be high quality, student oriented and friendly.

Physical Evidence

Physical evidence is another element that needs to be added to the mix when it comes to marketing intangible services. Physical evidence is a way to show the intangible services as something tangible to the customers and guide them in making a purchase decision. It can be provided through a variety of forms, including brochures (pictures, description), appearance of the staff (quality, care and attention), or the physical surroundings where the service is provided (clean, bright environment). (Palmer 2009 24) Anything that can be touched can be considered physical evidence. It is the physical proof that the service has taken place. Physical evidence can be used to build the brand image and create the desired impression in the minds of the target markets. (Blythe&Megicks 2010 193)

Physical evidence is not usually mentioned in higher education marketing literature. However, based on the services marketing theory, it is clear that both the facilities as well as the marketing materials fall under the physical evidence part of the marketing mix. However, the part where physical evidence is described as the physical evidence that the service has taken place is harder to measure in higher education, where the results of the service are intangible and the main result is the knowledge and skills the graduates acquire during their education. For game studies specifically, the games that graduating students are able to produce and develop during their studies could be considered physical evidence.

3.3 Marketing Plan

A marketing plan is the most important written document to come out of the marketing planning process. A marketing plan is a document that describes what has been learned about the marketplace that the organisation is positioned in and details how the company plans to reach its marketing goals. (Kotler&Keller 2009 96) It is a guide to be followed in order to implement the designed marketing actions and reach set goals.

In a big company, it is the job of a product manager to come up with a marketing plan for the products, product lines or brands that they are in charge of. According to Kotler and Keller (2009), each product line or brand needs to make a marketing plan for itself. Echoing

this statement, the purpose of this thesis is to write a marketing plan for KUAS game studies.

3.3.1 Content of a Marketing Plan

The marketing plan should contain all the information required by all the members of the organisation to know what the next step is. The recommendations that a marketing plan makes should be concrete steps that are easy to begin putting into action. (Blythe&Megicks 2010 14) The length of a marketing plan is generally from 5 to 50 pages. Most marketing plans cover a one year time period and the marketing actions planned for that year. (Kotler and Keller 2009 97)

A marketing plan should be a set of concrete actions and instructions. It should be consistent with the organisation's overall strategy and aim to benefit the organisation as a whole. By reading the plan, people should be able to tell what their responsibilities are; it should also help them understand how their roles benefit the organisation as a whole. A good plan does not only offer instructions but also motivates and encourages commitment. (Blythe&Megicks 2010 14)

A marketing plan should consist of the following elements:

- Executive summary

- Situation analysis (including current marketing situation, description of the market, product review, competitor analysis and SWOT and PESTEL analyses, objectives and issues)

- Marketing strategy

- Action programs (detailed information about actions and when they should be done)

- Budget

- Controls (Kotler&Armstrong 2012)

3.3.2 Evaluating a Marketing Plan

According to Kotler and Keller (2009), the usual shortcomings of a marketing plan are a lack of realism, insufficient competitive analysis and short run focus. According to them, the following questions can be used to evaluate how good a marketing plan is:

- Is it simple and easy to understand and act on?

- Is it specific, focusing on concrete and measurable objectives?

- Is it realistic?

- Is it complete and sufficiently in-depth?

Based on these, it can be concluded that a good marketing plan should be written in a way that it is simple to understand and follow, specific enough that it lists realistic concrete actions that are effective and that can be measured to assess their success, and it is in-depth enough and doesn't leave anything out.

4 MARKETING MEDIA

All marketing communications that are used to send a certain message to target customers through various different methods can be considered promotion (Knowthis). Communications include advertising, public relations, personal selling and direct mail (Hemsley-Brown&Oplatka 2006; Nicolescu 2009). Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka lists the following tools as the best promotional tools used in the UK higher education marketing: use of alumni, friends and relatives, websites, and promotional media such as TV (Hemsley-Brown&Oplatka, 2006). Moisan (1987) lists direct mail, videos, media coverage, brochures, factsheets, recruiters, advertisements, slideshows, personal letters, postcards, telemarketing and follow-up contacts as well as computer technology as tools that higher education marketing strategies incorporate (Moisan 1987).

There are a growing range of media outlets that can be used for marketing communications. Each medium have their strengths and weaknesses as a marketing communications tool. The choice of media has an effect on what kind of message can be sent out and how it will be delivered. Examples of different media outlets that can be used for marketing communications are television, radio, print publications, direct mail, signature, product placement, mobile devices, sponsorships, other media outlets. (Knowthis)

Most marketing communications media require a payment before they will deliver the marketing message. However, there are also marketing media that can be used to send a promotional message for free, though sometimes these come with indirect expenses. (Knowthis) Moisan (1987) concludes that "effective marketing means commitments of time, money and other resources, and necessitates an understanding of professional marketing techniques." The requirement for money has become less important with the emergence of internet marketing, but time and human resources are still required, sometimes even more so (social media can require a great deal of time commitment) and understanding of professional marketing techniques is key, though the techniques that need to be understood have changed with the changing marketing media. Because of the nature of this thesis, the focus is going to be on the free to use or cheap media outlets, most of which are the tools provided by the new emerging media, mainly online marketing.

Online marketing media is more relevant than the traditional media for another reason as well: in today's changing media landscape, most traditional marketing media are losing their attraction when compared to modern, usually Internet based marketing media that offer similar services with better targeting, analytics benefits for a lower price.

It should be noted that while promotional activities and communications are extremely important to increase the number of applicants, effective marketing does not end with promotional activities. If the services offered are not high enough quality and as advertised student satisfaction will not be accomplished. Student satisfaction holds a key position in forming a higher education organisation's image and reputation. No amount of marketing promotion can make up for lacking quality in the service itself. (Nicolescu 2009)

4.1 Traditional Marketing

Traditional marketing methods include television, radio advertisement, print publication advertisement, word-of-mouth, direct mail and personal selling. This chapter will introduce them briefly. However, because 84% of American schools report traditional marketing methods alone are not enough, and because this trend is likely true worldwide (Doteduguru) and traditional marketing methods are already used to promote KUAS mainly by the KUAS marketing department, and due to their usually high prices, the main focus of this thesis will be on the cheaper alternatives that the emergence of online marketing methods has provided and which will be introduced in the subchapter following this one.

Television and radio

When used for recruitment purpose, the aim of both television and radio advertisements are to interest the customers in the organisation. These advertisements are often short and simple, directing interested audience to another source of information, such as the organisation's website, a phone number they can call, or a physical location they can visit to find out more. (Busgurus)

The main benefit of television marketing is that it can be used to reach a large audience at once. However, this is also its downfall. As a mass medium television cannot be used to tar-

get a specified target group. Targeting possibilities for television advertisements are limited to targeting based on the TV programs and geographical location. Television advertisement work best for products and services that are sold to the general public. Another issue with television advertising is lack of analytics data. Television is losing popularity as a marketing media with the emergence of new advertisement media and technology, mainly the internet. (Knowthis)

Radio is one of the oldest mediums for marketing. Radio advertisements can be aired locally or nationwide. Nowadays internet radio makes it possible to air radio shows, and with them advertisements, internationally. Radio promotion faces similar problems as TV promotion, that is it suffers from lack of targeting options and analytics information. Radio advertisements are also limited to sound only. (Knowthis)

Because of their high price and inability to target a small niche or market segment, TV and radio advertisement are not relevant to the marketing plan in this thesis. The research also shows very little support for the notion that television or radio advertisement would be especially interesting to the target market.

Print publications

Print publications include different kind of newspapers and magazines. Newspapers are good for reaching local markets. Magazines can be targeted to specific markets and niches and offer better targeted advertisement than broadcast media. Magazines generally offer better quality advertisement than newspapers, with full colours and high quality images. (Knowthis) Magazines that are especially relevant to KUAS game study marketing would be Finnish game magazines, such as Pelit and Pelaaja.

In addition to newspapers and magazines, there are 'special issue publications', publications that are published just once or periodically and focus on just one subject, for example buyer's guides, tour guides, and college and university rating guides. These can be effective for targeting highly specified target groups. (Knowthis)

Direct mail

Direct mail marketing means sending marketing materials directly to customers via postal services. Marketing materials can include any printed materials such as postcards and leaflets, letters, brochures and catalogues. The most effective direct mail advertisements appear personalized; recipient's name can be included in the message or at least on the address label. (Knowthis)

Since high volume printing is cost effective, so is direct mail marketing. It is affordable to target large markets with direct mail marketing materials. However, there is no guarantee that the targeted customers read the mail or take any action based on it. Direct marketing mail is considered 'junk mail' by many. Because of this, direct mail is only effective when it is targeted properly. (Knowthis)

Word-of-Mouth

Word-of-mouth marketing means getting people to talk about the products or services the organisation offers. Word-of-mouth marketing happens automatically when people are pleased with a service and talk about it. It can be encouraged by listening to consumers and meeting their wants and needs more precisely as well as by making it easier for them to talk about and share their experiences. (WOMMA 2007)

Moisan (1987) points out that the most successful higher education marketing programs use representatives who are passionate, committed and enthusiastic about the education they are marketing. He also notes that that the best person to sell a product is a satisfied customer who can share their personal opinion and positive experiences with prospective customers. (Moilan 1987) There are two uses for this information: marketing should use satisfied students as their representatives when talking to prospective students at other schools or at fairs. Marketing should also find ways to make satisfied customers talk and share their experiences with prospective students.

The best way to encourage positive word-of-mouth and to get satisfied students to talk is to ensure that the students are satisfied with the educational service. This will create positive word-of-mouth, which in turn will encourage new students to apply for the higher education organisation in question. (Ghosh et al 2007)

Word-of-mouth has its online equivalent, viral marketing, and it is said that the online marketing environment 'turbo-boosts' Word-of-Mouth. Social media has brought word-of-mouth marketing into a whole new importance and there is no way to ignore the potential of this marketing tool in today's marketing environment because it will happen whether the organisation wants it or not. The best an organisation can do is taking steps to encourage positive word-of-mouth, online and offline.

Higher education fairs

Higher education fairs are generally free for the public to enter and they give prospective students the chance to meet personnel and admission representatives from various schools. For schools these fairs are great places to recruit students who live further away from the organisation and are harder to attract otherwise. (Mills& Rudd 2008)

The biggest higher education fair in Finland is Studia where most of the Finnish universities and polytechnics gather to showcase their education. The size of the fair causes it to be considered a vital part of student counselling in Finland. (Finexpo) It is an important place for higher education marketing and student recruitment because it offers a chance to reach prospective students from all around Finland in one place and at once.

Higher education fairs can be compared to trade shows and other industry events where an organisation can be advertised. In addition to higher education fairs, when marketing a degree programme it would be possible to take advantage of relevant industry events. Finnish game industry events include Assembly Summer and Assembly Winter, DigiExpo, Global Game Jam and other big game jams and lan-parties.

4.2 Online Marketing

Already Moisan (1987) mentions that computer technology has important implications for higher education marketing (Moisan 1987). Back then it was impossible to know just how prevalent the usage of computer technology in marketing would become. As the internet has become more widespread and commonly used, online marketing has become a growing trend. The internet has changed things for both the customers and the marketers, and online

marketing is now the fastest-growing direct marketing channel. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012 508) One big thing the internet has done is changed the way customers consider convenience, product information, service and speed of delivery. For marketers, the internet has brought whole new options for creating value for customers, communicating and building and maintaining relationships with them. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012 508)

Whereas traditional marketing is about sending a message out to a wide audience and hoping that the target audience sees it and acts accordingly, in online marketing the organisation is making itself visible and available to people who actively seek it out at every stage of the marketing process. In online marketing, it is also easier to engage a much more targeted audience. Online marketing does what traditional marketing does, but the main difference is that it does it in a way that is cheaper, effective, direct and authentic. The online environment boosts such marketing means as word-of-mouth. (Reed 2012 4)

The perks that online marketing, especially social media marketing offer are: driving traffic to the website, offering new ways to connect with the target market, ability to build trust and start conversations, build and maintain communities and relationships, create value, and provide quick and current information. Online marketing also offers new ways to do market research and record data of the market customers, their attitudes and behaviour – and all of this is effective, low-cost and low-risk. (Reed 2012 4)

Online marketing can be divided into four distinctive categories: website, search engine marketing (SEM), email marketing and social media marketing (Reed 2012). These incorporate the 'The big Free Three' marketing tools: SEO, Social Media, Google Analytics (Doteduguru). The subchapters below describe the most important online marketing means in more detail.

4.2.1 Website

The website is the most important marketing tool, and should be the core of online marketing efforts. The aim of all the rest of the online marketing tools is to drive traffic to the website. (Reed 2012) In an American study conducted by the Robert Morris University, it was found that 94% of the respondents say they visit and study a university's website before

thinking about applying to that university. (Schimmel, Motley, Racic, Marco & Eschenfelder 2009)

Though the aim of other online marketing efforts is to drive traffic to the website, the website should also send people out to the other platforms where the organisation provides content online. The main purpose of the website is to offer information and sell products and services. (Reed 2012)

An online presence is not an option anymore, it's a requirement. In this day and age, without a website, an organisation does not appear very professional and will surely lose potential customers and profits. A website is an equivalent to a shop window, though one that can be seen everywhere in the world at every hour of the day. A website makes it possible to reach global markets, promote products and services and even offer an option to buy products at any time of the day, anywhere in the world. The perks of establishing a web presence are that it gives the organisation credibility and is a way for customers to contact the organisation. (Reed 2012)

Making a website is easy. There are content management systems that will help anyone make good looking websites quickly and easily. But before making a website, plans should always be made about the content and structure of the website. When planning the structure, it should be kept in mind that people prefer websites that are simple to navigate and where the information is easily accessible. Easy and intuitive to use navigation that offers the most important information upfront is the best solution. The content of a website should be dynamic and change over time. Websites that are updated often attract more visitors and rank higher with search engines. (Reed 2012)

The study *The Importance Of University Web Pages in Selecting a Higher Education Institution* shows that prospective students are interested in the following information: majors, costs, ranking of the university, size and location. The website should provide clear navigation options that lead to pages that detail these things on the first page, to ensure easy navigation and positive customer experience. The website is the university's chance to make a positive first impression on the potential applicant, so it is very important that the website provides the information the potential students are looking for, in a way that it is easy and pleasant to find. (Schimmel et al. 2009)

To make sure the website works as it should, the statistics should be analyzed. There are different tools that provide website analytics statistics. These should be used to monitor the statistics and measure the effectiveness of the website. (Reed 2012 38)

The key to successful online marketing is making the website easy for people to find. Search engine marketing (SEM) is about making content easy to find on search engines. The higher the results the website gets on search engine result pages (SERPs), the better the chance that the target audience ends up on the website. There are three ways to ensure high placement on the result pages:

- Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- Paid Placements, for example Google Adwords
- In-bound links, i.e. using article marketing (Reed 2012)

The main way to make the website accessible to people is by search engine optimization (SEO) because the main way people find different organisations' websites is through search engines. The most popular search engine is Google, but it is not the only one. (Reed 2012 43)

SEO is a free way to ensure the website shows up higher on the search results pages. All it takes is some time to optimize the website for search engines. The key to successful SEO is making sure the website has the right content and that it includes code that will tell search engines which keywords are relevant to the content. The following things should be paid close attention to in order to optimize the website for search engines:

- Page titles – each page should have its own title that is relevant to the content on the page
- Page descriptions – Pages should have metadata descriptions for the search engines. These descriptions do not show up on the website itself but provide information about the website to the search engines and people searching for information through them. (Most content management systems provide an easy way to add metadata description and keywords)

- URLs – the websites addresses, URLs, should contain keywords that are relevant to the content
- Website Content – The headings, links included in the texts and (invisible) image tags and descriptions all function as keywords for search engines so it should be made sure that these are provided and relevant. (Reed 2012)

4.2.2 Social Media

Social media consists of various free online tools and platforms that are used to publish, share and communicate about content online. Social media tools include blogs, podcasts, video and photo sharing websites, social networks, virtual worlds and social bookmarking sites. (Reed 2012 4)

The 2009 Nielsen report reported that in the UK, one out of every six minutes spent online is spent on social media websites (Reed 2012 4). According to ComScore social media research, in 2011 91% of Finnish online population used social media (ComScore). In 2010, Tilastokeskus reported that 83% of Finnish 16 – 24 year olds and 76% of Finnish 25 – 34 year olds had registered an account in some form of social media service. 44% of Finnish 16 – 24 year olds followed some social media service every day. (Tilastokeskus) In the light of these statistics, it is obvious that social media is so popular it cannot be ignored as a marketing tool.

Social media marketing is appealing to small businesses and non-profits because it is the ideal environment for building customer relationships, rather than broadcasting big, impersonal, expensive marketing campaigns. To strive in social media marketing, it is important to 'be yourself', give the brand a voice that shows personality, rather than going for the impersonal, 'sterile' corporate voice. Online marketing shouldn't be viewed as just another marketing channel, but a whole new way to engage with the target audiences. Offering the audience valuable content is the key to success in social media marketing. (Reed 2012 4)

When using social media for marketing, it is crucial to understand how social media works, to understand the culture of it. This will help avoid misjudgments of when, where and how

to use it and prevent the organisation from annoying the target market by 'spamming' them. (Reed 2012)

Facebook

Facebook is perhaps the most famous social networking tool available at the moment. It is a social website that connects people with those around them. It is used to stay in touch with friends, upload photographs and share opinions, links and videos. (Reuben 2008) Facebook is one of the fastest growing social networks and increasingly used by professionals for networking and marketing purposes as well. (Carter&Levy 2012 66)

Facebook offers different options for sharing content. The content that is shared with the target customers can create a more personalized image of the brand and tell the customers more than just the logo or marketing slogan. Another good reason to establish a corporate presence on Facebook is the fact that Facebook drives more traffic to websites than Google does now. (Carter&Levy 2012 67)

Facebook has a platform for establishing corporate presence on Facebook, called Pages. Pages is, according to Facebook, "A voice to any public figure or organisation to join the conversation with Facebook users, a public profile [that] lets users connect to what they care about." (Carter&Levy 2012 69)

Pages is designed for brands, organisations, celebrities, politicians and other public figures so that they can create a place where they can interact with their fans, customers or prospects. Pages is a public place, which means all their features are generally visible to anyone, whether they Like the Page or not. It also means that Pages is visible to search engines. Anyone can Like a Page and become a Facebook fan of it, and promote the Page and Posts that are made on their own newsfeeds. (Carter&Levy 2012 92)

Pages get analytics information, statistics about the traffics, views, fans and posts. Facebook analytics tools should be used the same way website analytics, or any other analytics tools with any other online marketing are used. Analytics help modify the message and the way it is sent out, choose the correct topics and approaches and engage the audience in an effective

way. In the ever changing marketing environment, adjusting marketing efforts as needed is an important thing to do, and the analytics tools offer the perfect tools to help with these decisions. (Carter&Levy 2012)

Facebook has a useful feature called Facebook Events, which can be taken advantage of if the organisation hosts events or arranges webinars, meet-ups or anything where people could be invited, online or offline. The Facebook Page can be set as the organizer of the event and Facebook users can register for the event and share the news on their newsfeed. This will spread the word about the event, and at the same time of the Page and the organisation behind it. (Carter&Levy 2012 79)

There are several ways to promote a Facebook Page and spread the knowledge of the Page among the customers. Most of these are quite simple, like adding a link to the Facebook Page to email signatures, or mentioning the Facebook Page on the organisation's Twitter occasionally. Members of the organisation can use their social networks such as Twitter and Facebook to spread the word of the Page as well. An invite to join the Facebook Page should be included to newsletters and other outgoing communications messages. A link to the Page should be added to any marketing material that has contact information. Naturally, the website should also direct people towards the Facebook Page as well as other social networks that the organisation is active in.

Other ways to promote a Facebook page are by traditional marketing means: TV commercials, radio advertisement and newspaper and magazine ads. Basically, a link to the Facebook Page should be included to all of the organisation's marketing materials. Another way to promote a Facebook Page is the Facebook Ads. (Carter&Levy 2012)

Facebook Ads

One of the best promotional tools on Facebook is the Facebook Ads. It is possible to run a targeted advertisement that appears in the sidebar of customers who fit the target criteria. These adds can be used to advertise a Facebook Page, website, or the organisation in general. (Carter&Levy 2012 89)

Facebook advertisement is a powerful tool that can be used to promote anything to a wide and highly targeted audience on Facebook. The information that Facebook users provide

about themselves when signing up for Facebook and using its services can be used to target advertisement to the exact target market of the product or services. The criteria that can be used to select the appropriate target markets include: interests in the form of Facebook 'Likes', age and gender, location, marital status, workplace and education. (Carter&Levy 2012 96)

When creating a Facebook Ad and choosing the criteria to be used to determine who sees the Ad, Facebook shows an estimate of the number of Facebook users that can be reached. Customers should be targeted narrowly even though it means less people will see the Ad. There is no point showing an ad to a huge number of uninterested Facebook users when it is possible to narrow down the audience to the exact target demographic. A well-targeted advertisement will create more interest and sales. (Carter&Levy 2012 99)

It is possible to set the ad to run continuously or on certain dates and times only. When buying Facebook advertisements, the buyer decides how much they are willing to pay for the campaign. In addition to the overall budget, a daily budget can be set as well. It is also possible to change the attributes and adjust the ad campaign while it runs if necessary. These controls make Facebook Ads flexible, effective and a worthy investment. (Carter&Levy 2012)

Other Social Media

YouTube is the leading online video service. It is a website where people from all around the world can watch and share videos. Uploading videos to YouTube is fast and easy. It is a good tool for higher education institutions that have been making recruitment videos for years, because it lets them distribute the videos faster, wider and without extra costs. (Reuben 2008)

Flickr is an internet photo album where users can upload photos, organize them into sets and collections and share them with the world. Others can view and comment on the photos shared. Many schools use Flickr and similar services to share photos of events and happenings with their students and with the world. (Reuben 2008)

Twitter is a microblogging service, a blog where users post text message sized updates. Users can follow each other and see the 'status updates' of those they follow. Users can also respond to friends and for example corporations by 'tagging' them in their tweets. (Reuben 2008)

Blogs are online journals where an author or authors write about topics that interest them. In most blogs, readers can also comment on the posts. In higher education marketing, a popular use for blogs is having existing students write about their experiences in the university. However, when doing this it is important to make sure the students who write the blogs understand the purpose of their blogs and write content appropriate for marketing purposes. (Reuben 2008)

Del.icio.us is an example of a bookmarking website. It allows users to save bookmarks that they can access and add to from any computer. Higher education institutions have found use for such websites by bookmarking news and articles about their university throughout the web and sharing them with their audience. (Reuben 2008)

This is just a brief introduction to a few of the most popular social media platforms. There are many more social media tools than the ones covered here and new ones emerge all the time. Some of them are similar to the ones featured and some provide completely different services.

4.2.3 Concerns with Social Media

Higher education institutions who think about incorporating social media in their marketing mix face several concerns. These concerns need to be considered before social media is employed. (Reuben 2008) Loss of control is a risk that should be considered. Having a blog or a Facebook page that allows people to comment freely can cause problems. Opening up to comments opens the university up to negative feedback. Many institutions have found that it is a risk worth taking, however, as it gives them awareness of these negative opinions and a chance to change negative perception. (Reuben 2008)

Another cause of worry is the time commitment engaging in social media requires. This is the reason why strategic planning is needed before diving into the world of social media marketing. Social media should be used as a tool that complements other marketing tools, not just because everyone else is using it too. When planning the strategy for social media use, marketing personnel need to consider which tools are relevant and which ones they have time to use. Blogs should be updated at least once a week, and Facebook and Twitter conversations need to be addressed more often. 1 to 10 hours a week of social media when it is a part of the overall marketing mix should be enough. It is important to be strategic when selecting which tools to use. (Reuben 2008)

Another risk worth noting is that anyone can create a Facebook page or a Twitter account under a university's name. So even if Facebook and Twitter or whichever social media tool is in question is not something the organisation wants to start using now, it might be a good idea to reserve the name in case they might want it in the future and to make sure no one unauthorized starts using it. (Reuben 2008)

4.2.4 Online Marketing Plan

It is quick and easy to sign up for the online services (such as Facebook, Wordpress, Myspace, Twitter, YouTube) but that does not mean a marketer should make an account on all the available sites. Online marketing, like any other form of marketing, should be started by assessing marketing aims and objectives, identifying the target audience and where they 'hang out' online, and once this done the most appropriate tools to reach them should be chosen and utilized. (Reed 2012 3)

As with any other kind of marketing, it should go without saying that online marketing should be planned beforehand instead of just diving right in. Unless the different options are evaluated and the actions are planned, it is easy to end up wasting time and resources doing the wrong or ineffective things. The marketing plan does not have to be long, a one-page plan can be enough to get started with. (Reed 2012 3)

When planning the online marketing efforts, the things to be considered are the same as with any other marketing efforts: target market, where the target market can be reached,

which tools are the most appropriate to use and how will the results be measured? (Reed 2012 3)

It is not possible to start planning any kind of marketing efforts without a clear idea of the aims and objectives. Knowing the target market, the target audience, is crucial for any marketing efforts. In online marketing, it is important to consider what 'unique value' the organisation can provide to the target market. (Reed 2012 3)

It is not enough to know who the target audience is if it is not known where they can be found. Different groups of people populate different sites and services online as well. Different tools can be used to reach the target audience, but different tools also require different kind of time and resource investment. It is important to find a tool that reaches the right audience and is manageable with the available marketing resources. As with all marketing, it is important to be able to assess whether or not the efforts have been successful. When planning the marketing, decisions should be made about how the success of the marketing efforts will be recorded and evaluated. (Reed 2012)

5 RESEARCH METHODS – MARKETING RESEARCH

For as long as the marketing concept has been applied to higher education marketing, marketing research has been recognized in the sector as well. Market research can be conducted to either study external opinions about the higher education institution (Moisan 1987) or to study customer insights, including students' decision making process and information gathering habits (Nicolescu 2009; Hemsley-Brown&Oplatka 2006)

Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006) were looking at research papers written in the field in UK and concluded that in the UK higher education market, the marketing materials higher education institutions used were not successful in providing prospective students sufficient information about the study programmes they promoted. They stated that a more customer oriented approach should be taken when planning marketing materials, and in order to do so, it is important to be aware of the students' needs. (Hemsley-Brown&Oplatka 2006)

These studies Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka were looking at were done before the internet became prevalent in providing information about higher education institutions and made more information accessible. Still, even with the emergence of internet and addition to easy-to-access information available to prospective students, it is important to research what it is that the students want to know, and whether or not they are getting all the information they want. Students' needs and wants can then be the central starting point in all marketing efforts, and prospective student needs and wants (which change over time) can be met effectively.

Other reasons for market research in higher education are the fact that student satisfaction is born when the reality of the teaching experience meets with students' expectations, and so it is important to be aware of the expectation and measure how satisfying the performance is perceived as. It is also important to know the motivations behind applicants university choices because it can help the higher education institution with positioning efforts. (Nicolescu 2009)

Simply put, marketing research can be defined as the "systematic design, collection, analysis, and reporting of data and findings relevant to a specific marketing situation facing the company," as described by Kotler and Keller (2009 130). Marketing research aims to uncover and understand "customer motivations, purchase behaviour and satisfaction." It helps organisations to study how effective their marketing mix strategies are. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012 103)

Compared to situation analysis, which was explained in detail in an earlier chapter, marketing research is a more focused form of study that aims to gain customer insights to help make specific marketing decisions. Customer insights are an important addition to situation analysis. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012 103) The purpose of marketing research is to provide information for the marketing decision makers to help them solve marketing problems and plan and implement marketing strategies that effectively satisfy customer needs. (Malhotra&Birks 2007 5)

Marketing research can be used in different kind of situations that face the organisation to help make all kinds of important decisions. There are different types of objectives that marketing research may have. The three common types of objectives are exploratory research, descriptive research and causal research. Causal research studies cause-and-effect relationships. Descriptive research aims to describe the object of study, which could be, for example, the attitudes of a consumer or the potential a new product has. Exploratory research aims to gather information that would help define the marketing related problems the organisation might be facing and then suggest hypotheses. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012 103)

The research in this thesis is part descriptive, part exploratory. The research aims to uncover customer insights from KUAS game students and prospective students in an attempt to understand what information they want of game studies and how they want it to be provided to them, as well as find out if there are problems with the marketing and how the marketing efforts could be improved.

Marketing research process has five phases: Defining the problem, making a research plan, collecting information, analysing information and presenting the findings (Kotler&Keller 2009 131). Each of these phases will be introduced in more detail in the following subchapters of this thesis.

5.1 Qualitative and quantitative research

The two different methods for performing marketing research are qualitative and quantitative data collection. Which method should be used is determined by the research question (Daymon&Holloway 2011). The following chapter discusses these options and their pros and cons in detail.

Quantitative

Quantitative data collection is a method which uses numbers to record and assess information. Because of its numerical nature, data collected by quantitative methods can be analysed using statistical methods, which makes the research ideal for studying large groups of people and the makes results potentially representative of the whole target market (Knowthis). Quantitative research prefers numbers and statistics over words, because they are more objective and help draw conclusions about larger groups. Quantitative research is often large scale and studies the relation between specified factors. (Daymon&Holloway 2011 11)

Quantitative research often uses structured and controlled research design that turns the measured phenomenon into numerical form. Quantitative methods can be used for a variety of different researches, but it is especially effective for testing hypotheses. (Knowthis) Quantitative research aims for objectivity, and the techniques used help to keep the researcher separate from the data that is collected. (Daymon&Holloway 2011 11)

Qualitative

Qualitative research is the better choice when the goal is to understand the social world from the point of view of the customers. The goal of qualitative research is to understand the world views of the study participants. (Daymon&Holloway 2011) In marketing research, qualitative approach is especially useful for discovering and explaining customer needs and behaviour. (Knowthis)

Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research does not offer statistical support to the conclusions the researcher draws from the findings. Qualitative research lacks statistical con-

trols, making it potentially less reliable than quantitative research. For example, asking different questions from different participants may increase the researcher's understanding of the issue, but lacks statistical controls that could support research reliability. (Knowthis)

Qualitative research is also more time consuming to conduct, expensive and impossible to use on a big group of the target market, which – in addition with the lacking controls – makes the results less likely to be representative of the target market as a whole. (Knowthis) In qualitative research it is especially important to show how the conclusions were arrived at, to describe the whole research process so that the readers can understand why certain conclusions were drawn and determine how valid they are. (Daymon&Holloway 2011 11)

The research in this thesis used open-ended questions, which allowed for the respondents to fill in their answers in detail and encouraged qualitative data. However, for the purpose of analysing the results and drawing conclusions about them, the data was translated into quantitative form by grouping together similar themes in the answers. This was possible because the questionnaire was a structured questionnaire and all respondents were asked to answer the same questions. Where applicable, the quantitative answers have been used to explain or add meaning to what the qualitative analysis shows.

5.2 Defining research problem and objectives

The first step of the marketing research process is defining the research problem. Before the research can be conducted, the researcher needs to understand the quality of the problem that needs solving. This step is also the most important one. If the research problem is not clearly and accurately defined, it does not matter how well the rest of the research is planned and conducted, the outcome of the whole research could be flawed and the results misleading. (Malhotra&Birks 2007 33)

When defining the research problem, one should be careful not to leave it too vague or narrow it down too much. Too broad a problem statement will bring back too much unrelated information, whereas a problem statement that is too narrow will restrict the researcher and might cause them to miss important insights. Once the research question is clear, it is possible to set research objectives. (Kotler&Keller 2009 131)

The research problem should come from the commissioner, the marketing decision maker who has asked for the research. The commissioner should explain the problems they perceive to the researcher, so that the researcher can design the research to find answers to these problems. (Malhotra&Birks 2007 34)

If the commissioner unsure about the nature of the marketing problems facing the company, it is also possible to conduct more exploratory research where the problem is not specifically defined. This kind of marketing research can aim to discover what the problems are and then suggest solutions or provide new ideas. (Kotler&Keller 2009 132)

The research question and objectives of the marketing research in this thesis was discussed and set in co-operation with the commissioner's representative, Tanja Korhonen. Research question was 'how could KUAS game studies marketing be improved?' and the objective was to find out

- Which marketing channels should be used to market KUAS game studies

- Which marketing messages interest the target market

- Which kind of content interest the target market and should thus be used to send out the marketing messages

5.3 Developing the research plan

The research plan is a framework for the marketing research project. It describes the methods for collecting the information needed to find answers to the research problems and provide the information that is necessary for making the marketing decisions. (Malhotra&Birks 2007 9)

After the research problem and objectives have been decided on, the researcher needs to define what information is needed and then formulate a plan that outlines how to effectively gather that information. The research plan should explain secondary data sources, if there are any, as well as describe how the primary data will be collected. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012 104)

In order to create a research plan, decisions must be made concerning information sources and research approaches, including research instruments, a sampling plan and contact methods. (Kotler&Keller 2009 132) The next parts of this chapter explain the theory behind the decisions that need to be made, as well as detail how these decisions were made when planning this thesis' marketing research. Different options will be addressed briefly, with a focus on the approaches chosen for this thesis.

For the research in this thesis, the following decisions were made about the thesis approach:

- Research approach: Survey research

- Contact methods: Personal

- Sampling plan: current KUAS game students and new applicants; at least 100 (received 120) responses; Probability sample – simple random sample

- Research instrument: Questionnaire

5.3.1 Data sources

There are two types of data that can be collected: primary and secondary data. Primary data is data that is collected specifically for the research in question. (Kotler&Keller 2009 32). Secondary data is information that already existed prior to the research and has usually been collected for other purposes than the research problem. Secondary data can be previous marketing intelligence or other data that gives the researcher details about the marketing environment. (Malhotra&Birks 2007 94)

Secondary data can be collected from different databases, whether they be the organisation's internal databases or external, commercial or for example governmental databases or other data sources. Primary data should be collected carefully, ensuring that it is completely relevant, accurate, current and unbiased. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012 104)

There was no relevant secondary data available regarding game students and potential applicants in Finland or abroad, so primary research had to be conducted to get relevant customer insights. Students who are interested in game studies are a narrow market segment of their

own and so similar data collected of the age group in general would not give answers to game study marketing questions.

5.3.2 Research approach

There are different ways to collect primary data. Kotler and Keller (2009 132) list five main methods: observation, focus groups, surveys, behavioural data and experiments. For the research in this thesis, survey research was chosen.

Survey research is the most commonly used primary data collection tool. It is very well suited for gathering descriptive information about respondents' knowledge, attitudes, preferences and behaviour. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012 109) When done according to quantitative means and carried out reliably, survey research can be used to gather these insights in such a manner that the results are representative of the general population. (Kotler&Keller 2009 134)

Survey research is a research approach where primary data is gathered by making people answer questions related to their knowledge, attitudes, preferences and behaviour. What makes survey research so widely favoured is its flexibility. Surveys are useful for gathering many different kind of information and suited for many different situations. It is possible to conduct survey research in various different ways, for example by phone, mail or email, in person, or by different methods on the Internet. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012 109)

Survey research was chosen as the data collection method used in this research because it is well suited for the purpose of finding out about potential applicants' motivation, wishes and preferences, as well as the thoughts and levels of satisfaction of existing students. Another reason why it was chosen is because it is a quick and easy way to collect relatively vast amounts of data compared to other methods.

Commonly documented problems with survey research include the fact that sometimes it can be difficult or impossible for some people to answer survey questions because they might not have given much thought about what they do and why they do it. Sometimes people may be unwilling to respond to a researcher they do not know, especially if the questions deal with information that could be considered private. It is also possible that people

answer questions they do not know the answers to just to appear more intelligent or answer dishonestly in the hopes of a reward. People might also answer with what they think the researcher wants to hear in order to please the researcher. Some people may become offended, not wanting to waste the time or disapproving of the breach of their privacy. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012 109)

It needs to be considered that it is possible that these kinds of problems affected the results of the research conducted for this thesis. Most of the current students were familiar with the researcher which could have affected the way they answered, making them more likely to want to give pleasing answers. New applicants were contacted right after their entrance exam, before they knew whether or not they will be accepted into game studies, and might have been eager to please in the hopes of it affecting their chances, although it was communicated clearly that the research is not related to their application process. It is also possible that the current students did not manage to provide as detailed information as was desired because it had been from one to three years since they had applied for KUAS game studies.

5.3.3 Research instruments

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2012) there are two main research instruments marketing researchers can use in collecting primary data. These are questionnaires and mechanical devices. Mechanical devices are mostly used to record customer behaviour. These tools could be, for example, checkout scanners that monitor the shopper's purchases or devices that measure the respondent's / subject's physical responses to different stimuli. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012 117)

Questionnaires are the most commonly used research instruments. A questionnaire consists of a set of questions that are given to a number of respondents. It is an easy way to collect large amounts of data, but questionnaire questions need to be planned with care and tested so there are not misunderstandings and the information that the respondents provide will be relevant to the research question. (Kotler&Keller 2009 134)

There are several ways questions can be asked within a questionnaire. Two main types of questions are open-ended and close-end questions (Kotler& Keller 2009). Close-end ques-

tions have all the answer options written down in the survey form and the respondent is asked to pick his choice. The answers close-end questions produce are easy to interpret and turn into statistics. Open-end questions are questions where the respondent has the chance to write down their answer in their own words. Open-end questions work well for exploratory research where the aim is to find out what is it that people think about certain things instead of how many people think certain thing. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012 117)

It is important for the researcher to work with care when planning the questions. Close attention should be paid to wording of questions as well as ordering of questions as both of these can affect the answers. The wording should be simple and easy to understand as well as free of any kind of bias. The order of questions should be logical, starting from easy-to-answer, interesting questions and leaving till last the more difficult and personal questions which might make the respondents defensive or give up the survey all together. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012 117)

The research in this thesis used a questionnaire with open-ended questions. Open-ended questions were deemed more appropriate than close-ended questions with set answers because the purpose of the thesis was to learn about the respondents' thoughts and ideas. Open-ended questions gave the respondents a chance to write down their thoughts in their own words, which made processing the information more complicated but offered better insights into the way people think and feel. Not all of the respondents took advantage of the opportunity to fill out their thoughts in detail. There were long and in-depth answers, but there were more one word answers.

5.3.4 Sampling plan

Once the research approach and instruments are decided on, the researcher must consider a sampling plan. For the sampling plan, decisions need to be made about the sampling unit, sample size and sampling procedure (Kotler&Keller 2009). According to Kotler and Armstring's (2012) definition, a sample is a "segment of the population selected for marketing research to represent the population as a whole." (Kotler&Armstrong 2012 114)

Sampling size means how many people will be surveyed. The larger the sample is, the more reliable the results are. (Kotler&Keller 2009 140) But while large sample sizes give more reliable results, they can also be more time and money consuming to study. It is not necessary to study every individual of the target population in order to receive results which are reliable. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012 114)

Sampling procedure means how the people to be studied in the sample should be chosen. There are two main procedures, probability and non-probability samples. When probability sampling is used, every member of the target population has an equal chance to be included in the sample. It is easy for the researcher to calculate the "confidence limits for sampling error" in the case of a probability sample. Though it is impossible to measure the sampling error in the case of a non-probability sample, marketing research often use this procedure when using probability sampling would be too time consuming or costly. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012 114)

The different probability sampling procedures are: simple random sample, where every member has a known and equal chance to be selected; stratified random sample, where the population is divided into segments by mutually exclusive criteria (age, gender) and random samples are chosen from each of these segments; cluster (area) sample, which is the same as stratified except the divide into segments is done by geographical criteria. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012 116)

The different non-probability sampling procedures are: convenience sample, where the researcher obtains the information from the member of the target population that are the easiest to access; judgement sample, where the researcher decide which members of the target population are most likely to give accurate information; and quota sample, where the researcher has a set number of people in several categories and people matching the criteria are found and interviews. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012 116)

For the purpose of the research in this thesis, the sampling unit consisted of two groups of people from the target market: students who were currently studying in KUAS game study programmes, and new applicants who had applied for KUAS game study programmes in the spring of 2012 and been invited to the entrance exam. All applicants who met the programme requirements were invited to the entrance exam.

Sampling size was originally decided to be 100, out of which 50 would be current students and 50 would be new applicants. However, current students were not as eager to respond as new applicants, so the final sampling size ended up being 34 current students and 80 new applicants. The difference in the sample size of these two groups was taken into account when analysing the results.

The sampling procedure used in the research was probability sampling, and more specifically simple random sample because all the members of the researched population had an equal chance to respond to the survey. The survey was presented to current students at Kajak Games Co-operative's annual meeting where all of the game students were invited. Afterwards, the survey was presented to different game students in their classrooms so everyone who was in university had the chance to take part. For the new students, the survey was presented after the entrance exam when they were leaving the university and so everyone who took part in the entrance exam had a chance to take part in the survey.

5.3.5 Contact methods

The different options for how data can be collected are by mail or email, by phone, by personal interview, or by various means online. Different methods of data collection work for different situations. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012)

Mail questionnaires are good for collecting a great deal of information at a low cost. It is sometimes possible to get more honest answers to private questions by mail questionnaires than it would be over the phone or in person. But mail questionnaires are inflexible, because they cannot be adjusted to suit individual respondents. They have a low response rate and take longer to complete. There is no control on the sample because it is impossible to effect which groups of people actually answer. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012)

Telephone interviews are very good for gathering information fast and have more flexibility than written questionnaires. In a telephone interview, the researcher or interviewer has the ability to explain, skip and expand questions as needed. Response rate is generally higher than with mail questionnaires and there is more control over the sample. The problems with telephone interviews are the high cost and time involvement, as well as the fact that some

people are not comfortable discussing personal questions over the phone with a stranger. There is also a risk that the way the interviewer asks the questions, such as the interviewer's tone or phrasing, may affect the answer, leading to interviewer bias. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012)

There are two different forms of personal interviewing: individual and group interviews. Individual interviews can be conducted on the street, in offices or people's homes, practically anywhere that people go. Group interviews are usually conducted in a more controlled setting. Examples of group interviews would be focus groups. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012)

A personal interview is flexible. It offers the same possibilities to guide and modify the interview as it goes along as telephone interviews as well as the additional option of showing subjects relevant items and observing their reactions and behaviour through body language. The biggest downside of personal interviews is the high cost. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012)

The internet has changed the marketing research industry drastically, offering whole new ways to conduct research. Online marketing research, which includes internet surveys, online panels, experiments and focus groups, are growing in popularity as a cheap and easy way to collect primary data. The drawbacks of online marketing research are inability to control the online sample. This makes it difficult to know the characteristics of the respondents as well as making it impossible to confirm they really are who they are claiming to be. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012)

For the thesis research, questionnaires were printed out and given to the respondents to fill out by the researcher. The researcher was personally present to instruct the respondents and answer questions, but did not interview respondents individually. This contact method was chosen because the researcher had an easy access to the sample population. Another viable option, email surveys, were considered but decided against because of the slow response time and low number of responses email surveys usually receive.

5.4 Collecting the information

After carefully considering all of the above mentioned points and putting together a research plan, it is time to put the research plan into action. This means collecting the data, processing the data and analysing the findings. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012 119)

Collecting the information is the phase that is the most prone to errors (Kotler&Keller 2009 141). Researchers should be careful to make sure that the plan is put into action correctly. Problems may arise when interacting with respondents, with the quality of given responses and with interviewers who might be lazy or make mistakes. These problems should be avoided if at all possible. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012 119)

Primary data for this research was collected from current KUAS students in classrooms and Kajak Games Co-op annual meeting, and from new applicants when they were leaving the university after the entrance exam. The researcher was present in most of the data collection situations. The respondents received a short briefing about the purpose and content of the survey and their questions and concerns were addressed if they had any. The respondents were given the choice to answer in English or in Finnish (which is their mother tongue) in order to ensure more insightful responses by letting them use the language they are more comfortable and better able to communicate with.

5.5 Analysing the information

Before the information can be analysed, it needs to be prepared. Data preparation means editing, coding, transcribing and verifying the data. If the data is not originally on the computer, it needs to be transferred onto one for easier analysis. Verification process means making sure that the original data from the questionnaires did not change when it was being transcribed. (Malhotra&Birks 2007 10)

Part of the process is processing the information so that it can be analysed, and then analysing it to find important insights and information. The data must be checked to make sure it is accurate and complete. It should be coded for analysis. Statistical methods can be used to arrange and analyse the data. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012 119)

Analysing the data is what gives meaning to the information that has been collected. The data collected for the thesis research will be analysed in the next chapter called research findings.

Evaluating the data

Before the information can be analysed, it needs to be prepared. Data preparation means editing, coding, transcribing and verifying the data. If the data is not originally on the computer, it needs to be transferred onto one for easier analysis. (Malhotra&Birks 2007 10) It should be coded for analysis. Statistical methods can be used to arrange and analyse the data. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012 119)

The data must be checked to make sure it is accurate and complete (Kotler&Armstrong 2012 119). Verification process means making sure that the original data from the questionnaires did not change when it was being transcribed. (Malhotra&Birks 2007 10)

It is possible that the data recorded is not in the correct form to be analysed properly. Reasons for these errors can be numerous. Incomplete responses are a common problem with the data correctness. Some participants may skip questions or otherwise not complete the whole survey. It is also possible that the respondent does not answer the questions honestly, which will show in the inconsistence of the given answers. There may also be problem with recording the data, especially if the data is collected electronically. (Knowthis)

In the case of obviously incorrect data, the researcher can abandon the incorrect answers to individual questions or, if necessary, abandon the whole survey. (Knowthis)

In the case of the thesis research, incomplete questionnaires were one or more questions were left without answers were received. However, it was decided these questionnaires did not need to be abandoned because of the missing information because the answers that were provided were valid. When the results are discussed, the number of respondents who left the question unanswered is mentioned.

Analysing data

Once the data has been collected, recorded and evaluated, it is time to analyse it. Different data analysis methods are used for data collected using different methods and with different research instruments. There are two main ways to conduct data analysis: descriptive data analysis and inferential data analysis. (Knowthis)

Descriptive data analysis is a method of data analysis that describes the results of the research. Descriptive data analysis can be used for both qualitative and quantitative research. For quantitative research, the data will be presented through visual tools such as charts and tables that visualize the results. For qualitative research where the analysis focuses on how the researcher interprets the data, grouping categories can be used to summarize the findings. (Knowthis)

Inferential data analysis is a more advanced method of analysing the data. Whereas descriptive data analysis provides a picture of the results, whether in the form of charts or descriptive writing, inferential data analysis aims to use the data collected as a representation of a larger group, make comparisons between different groups and make forecasts based on the information that was collected. To reach these aims, inferential data analysis uses advantaged statistical methods. Inferential data analysis can be used only if the data was collected in a well-structured, systematic manner. Inferential data analysis is mostly reserved for quantitative research. (Knowthis)

The data analysis method used in analysing the thesis research findings is descriptive data analysis, which means that when analysing the respondents' responses the results were described in writing in addition to providing them in statistical form. First, research responses were grouped together into categories to turn the findings into statistics, and graphs were drawn using Excel to provide visual representations of the data collected. Then the findings and conclusions drawn from them were described in writing.

5.6 Presenting the findings

At the end of a traditional marketing research, the findings will be presented in the form of a report. This report should document the whole marketing research project. The report in-

cludes the research questions, details the whole research process, presents the results and explains the insights and conclusions drawn from those results. (Malhotra&Birks 2007 10)

The reports are aimed for the management, and the researcher should try to avoid filling the reports with too many numbers and statistics. Instead the important findings and insights should be presented in an easy to understand way so that they will be helpful for the management when making the decision for which they required the information. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012 119)

There are usually various ways in which findings can be interpreted. The researcher should discuss with the management and work together with them to find the best interpretations. The results will be the most helpful for the marketing decisions the organisation faces when the researcher and the management work together to interpret the findings. (Kotler&Armstrong 2012 119)

The marketing research that is part of this thesis is detailed within the thesis. Research plan in the form of decisions made is included in this chapter, along with the theory behind the research methods. The research findings will be presented and analysed in the next chapter. In the final part of the thesis, the marketing plan, findings of the research will be used to suggest appropriate marketing actions.

5.7 Quality of research

Research will be judged by its quality and integrity. According to the traditional criteria, the standards that reflect these are validity and reliability. These criteria can be used to evaluate quantitative research as is, and qualitative research with some reservations. (Daymon&Holloway 2011 77)

Validity

Validity is the way to evaluate whether the research is trustworthy or not (Saaranen-KauppinenPuusniekka 2006). Whether the research is valid or not comes down to the question, does it really measure what it claims to measure? A research is valid when the right questions have been asked from the right group of people. (Knowthis)

Evaluating validity includes assessing whether the research was done thoroughly or not, and whether data gathered and the conclusions drawn are correct (Saaranen-KauppinenPuusniekka 2006). To assess the validity of a research, the research process should be visible and information about how the data was gathered should be available to assess. (Knowthis)

Reliability

A research is reliable, when the results can be applied to a wider group than the participants of the study. The results should stay similar if the research was conducted again, with different participants from the same target group, or with a different number of participants. (Knowthis)

The reliability of a research comes down to data gathering methods that were used in the research. Reliability can be measured by letting another group of researchers conduct the same study following the same methods. If they get the same results, the research and research methods used are reliable. (Knowthis)

When assessing the reliability of the research, it needs to be considered whether the nature of the research or the subject of the research have affected the way the respondents respond, and how. (Saaranen-KauppinenPuusniekka 2006)

6 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The purpose of the thesis was to study applicant insight, and to assess KUAS game study marketing and help plan future marketing actions. The questions that were asked were 'what, where and how'; what are the highlights of KUAS game studies and what is the information that applicants want to receive? Where do potential applicants search for information and where should KUAS advertise its game development studies? How should the desired information be delivered?

The objective was to discover what information should be sent out, which marketing channels or media should be used to send out this information, and in what form should the information be presented.

To gain a wider perspective and an idea of how KUAS game studies marketing has improved over time, both current students and new applicants were interviewed. There were 114 responses altogether. As illustrated in the graph below, 34 responses were from current game students and 80 responses were from new applicants who applied and took the entrance exam in the spring 2012.
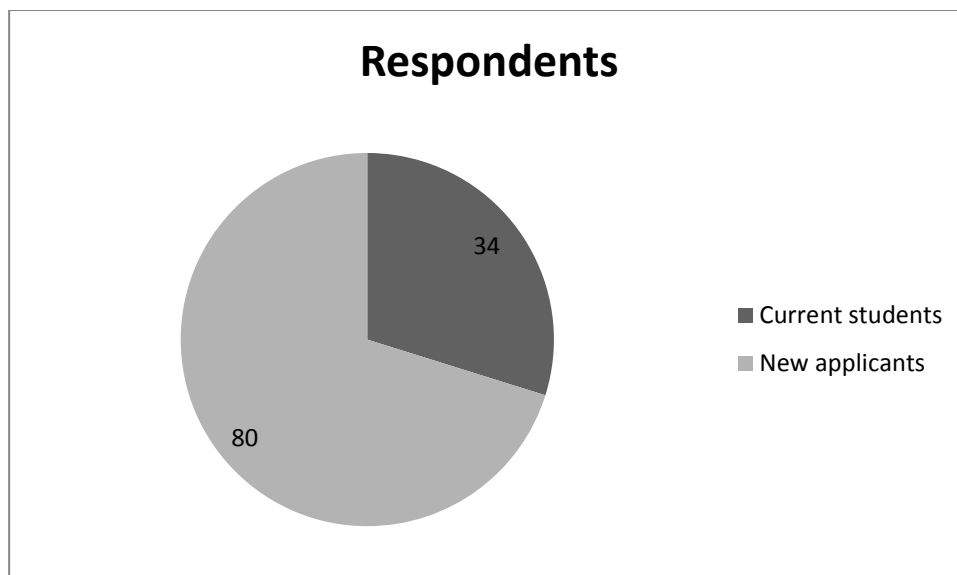
Graph 1: Division of respondents between current students and new applicants (n=114)

6.1 Analysing the results

For most questions the responses of current students and new applicants are presented separately. Because of such a large difference in the number of current student respondents and new applicants respondents, it is not possible to compare the two groups to each other directly. In addition to the questions asked from both groups, there were two questions that were asked only of the current students. Most of the questions were open-ended questions where the respondents were asked to write their answers in their own words. One question was a close-ended question where the respondents were asked to rate presented factors based on how interesting they perceived each one to be.

The responses are analyzed and explained in this chapter. Excel was used to draw visual representations of the responses. Percentages are calculated from the number of respondents who responded to that question. Questions are divided into groups according to their theme. These themes are motivation, information, marketing, website and questions for current students.

Respondents were not divided into groups by age, gender or geographical factors, because these criteria were considered irrelevant to the topic of the study. The target group was limited to students who have expressed interest in KUAS game studies, either by being a current students in the KUAS game study programme or by applying for the programme. Those who were qualified to be considered for KUAS game studies, were considered qualified to take part in the research regardless of their age, gender or location.
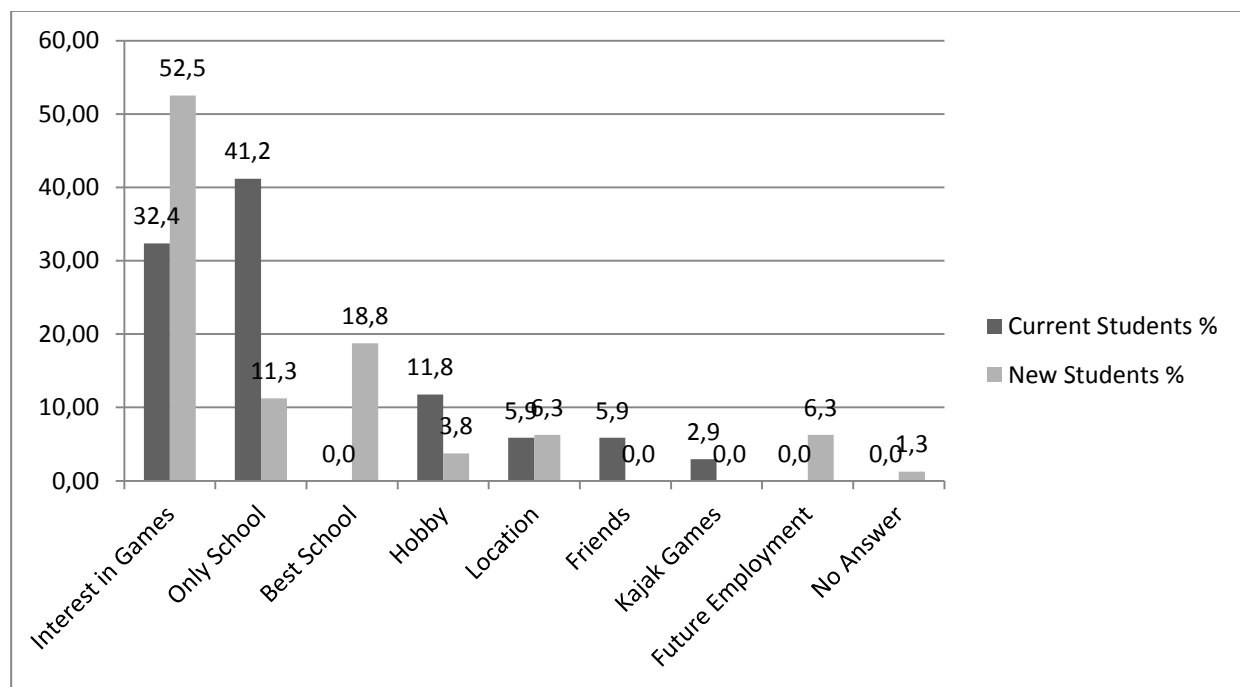
6.1.1 Motivation

Why did you choose to apply to KUAS Game Studies?

The purpose of this question was to study the motivation behind the decision to apply for KUAS game studies. The question aimed to discover why the respondent chose KUAS game studies specifically, but many of the respondents explained why they were interested in game studies in general.

For current students, the main motive for applying to KUAS game studies was because it was perceived as the only university with game studies (41%), the second most commonly stated reason was interest in games (32%) and third was desiring to turn a hobby into a profession (12%).

For new applicants, the main reason for applying to KUAS game studies was interest in games (53%), followed by having perceived KUAS as the best university for game studies (19%) and having perceived KUAS as the only university for game studies (11%)

Other reasons for applying for current students were having friends recommend the studies to them (6%) and the location of the university (6%). For new applicants, other reason for applying were future employment possibilities (6%), location of the university (6%) and wanting to turn a hobby into a profession (4%).

Graph 2: Motivation for applying to KUAS game studies. (n=114)

Current students had applied to KUAS game studies between 2006 and 2010, when competition in the Finnish game education field was nonexistent, which is shown from the high percentage of current students listing their reason for applying to KUAS game studies as it being the only university available. Interestingly, new applicants who applied in 2012 – when other schools were starting their own game study programmes – show that the perception of KUAS has shifted from it being the only university which offers game studies to the best

university that offers game studies. This shows that KUAS game study marketing efforts have been successful at positioning KUAS game studies. The fact that 11% of the new applicants still believed KUAS was the only university that offered game studies shows that KUAS is the most visible university offering game studies. KUAS' game studies' long history, compared to its new competitors, could be accountable for its reputation.

Current students were more likely to cite a desire to turn a hobby into a profession as their reason for applying to KUAS game studies than were new applicants. Interestingly, new applicants cited future employment opportunities as a more important reason for applying. This reflects changes that have occurred in the Finnish game development field in recent years. Game development has gone from the hobby of a few to a widely recognized and respected profession, and it shows in the attitudes of students.

It is clear that the main reason for applying to KUAS game studies is interest in games. Whether the reason the applicants chose KUAS game studies was because it was the only one or whether it was because they perceived it to be the best game study programme, it is an interest in games and desire to make a profession out of it that draws these applicants to KUAS.

List three things that affect you the most when deciding which university to apply to

The purpose of this question was to discover the factors that affect the decision making process of potential applicants when they are considering which university to apply to. Respondents were asked to list three of these factors. The aim was to gain an idea of the most important factors that affect the decision making process so that KUAS game studies could provide information relevant to these factors.

Not all of the respondents were able to provide three reasons. The figures in the graph reflect mentions of a word, not the sole responses of a single respondent. Current students provided 18 and new applicants provided 17 different factors. The graph below shows the factors that were mentioned most often. All of the current students answered the questions. 5 of the new applicants left the question unanswered.

Current students list location as the most important factor, with 21 mentions. Game studies comes second with 17 mentions. The factor that received the third most mentions was the reputation of the university, with 10 mentions.

There were factors that received less than three mentions. These factors are grouped under 'other'. For current students these included student services, friends, interest, website, software used and length of studies
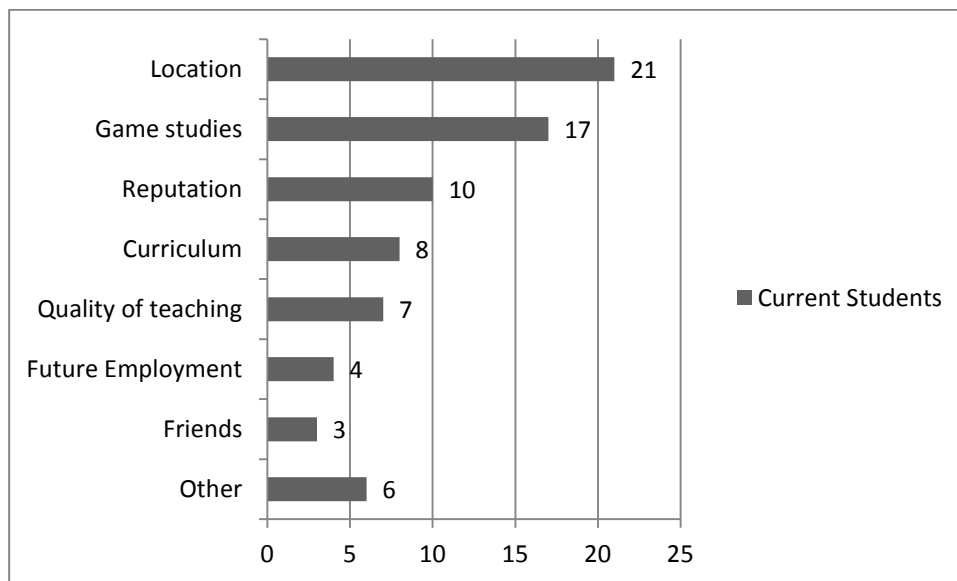
Graph 3: Factors that affect applying decision, current students (n=34)

For new students location was again the most important factor with 48 mentions. Game studies came second with 20 mentions. Quality of teaching and future employment both received 13 mentions.

There were factors that received fewer than four mentions. Those are group under 'other'. For new applicants, these factors included advertisement, atmosphere, motivation and exchange opportunities.
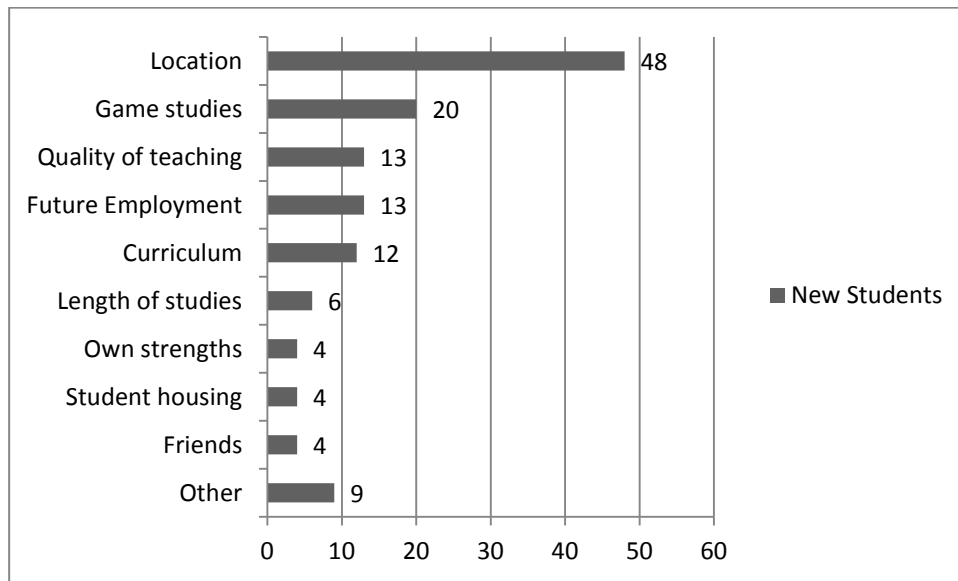
Graph 4: Factors that affect applying decision, new applicants (n=80)

Locations seems to be the factor that most affects applicants when applying. For both current students and new applicants it ranks as the most cited factor. For this question, it would be interesting to know where the respondents were from. KUAS game studies draws students to Kajaani from all over the country. It would be interesting to see how students from different geographical locations relate to KUAS' location. But the respondents were students who were either studying in KUAS game study programme or had applied for it, and because they rated location as the most important factor that affects their applying decision, it can be concluded that KUAS' location is not viewed as too much of disadvantage.

Predictably, game studies was one of the major reasons for applying to KUAS game studies for both current students and new applicants. For current students, the reputation of the university was important, which is interesting because in the previous question, most of the current students said that they applied for KUAS because it was the only university available.

For new students, quality of teaching and future employment opportunities rate highly when making decisions about where to apply. Current applicants find both of these important too, but not as important as the university's reputation. Quality of teaching might play a larger part for new applicants because they have more options than current students. If this is true, quality of teaching will become an even more important factor in the future when competition continues to increase.

6.1.2 Information

Where did you search for information about game development schools?

The purpose of this question was to find out which sources potential applicants are likely to use when searching for information about game studies, so that KUAS game studies would know where to focus their marketing effort. It was an open-ended question and respondents were not limited to providing one source. The numbers in the graphs below reflect the number of mentions each source received. All of the current students answered the question; two new applicants left this question unanswered.

For current students, internet received 26 mentions, and friends and magazines shared the second place with 5 mentions each. Other places that received less than 5 mentions included teachers and brochures.
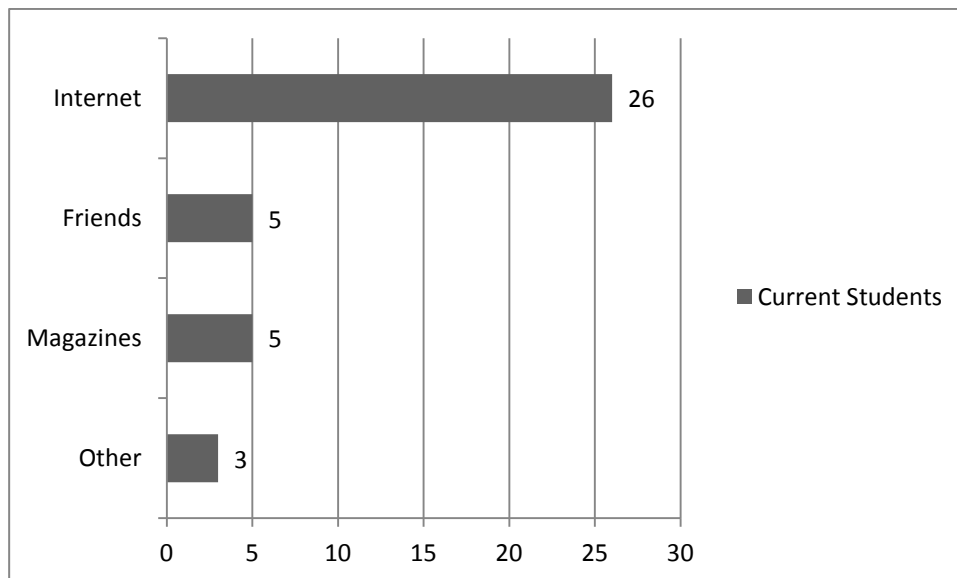
Graph 5: Where information was searched from, current students (n=34)

For new applicants the internet was number one with 63 mentions, and magazines (10) and friends (7) followed in second and third place respectively. Places that received fewer than 5 mentions were grouped under 'other' and included brochures, teachers, visiting the university, Studia higher education fair and game studios.
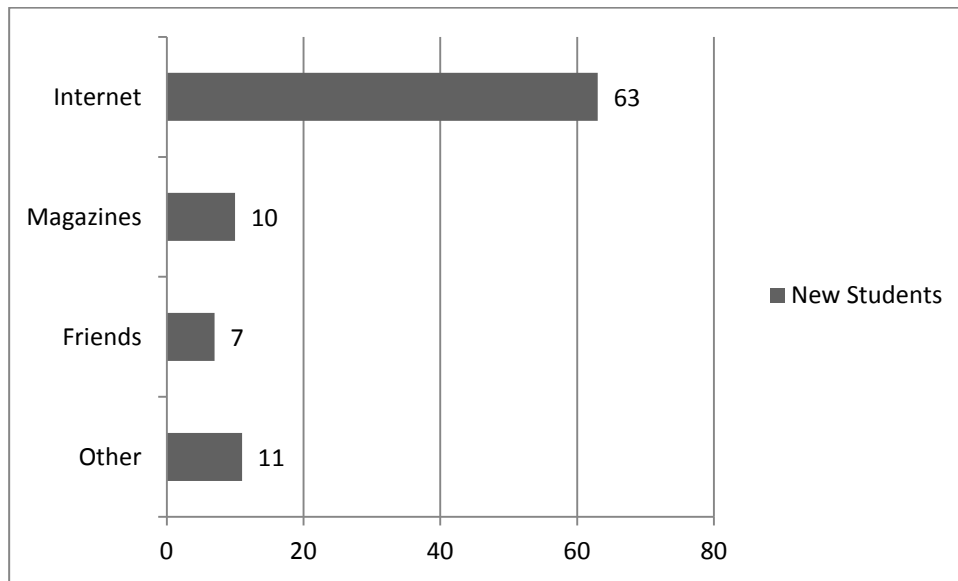
Graph 6: Where information was searched from, new applicants (n=80)

The results make it obvious that the internet is clearly the most popular source of information. They also show that both current students and new applicants named the same sources of information.

The study did not specify which sources of information were used together. It would be interesting to study in the future whether for example magazine advertisement drives traffic to a website.

It would also be interesting to study the online aspect in more detail. In this study, only some of the respondents in both current students and new applicants had specified where on the internet they had searched for information, but because most had only written 'internet' as their source, there is no way to draw conclusions about the popularity of the mentioned websites. However, the relevance of these websites in marketing can be studied later. Websites that were mentioned by name were: Google, Facebook, Kajak.fi, Kajak3d.com, GameReactor, GameCareer.com and Studentum.fi.

What information would you have wanted to receive when you were deciding which university to apply to?

The purpose of this question was to find out whether the respondents felt that they had received enough information before making the decision of where to apply. In the case that

not all of the desired information was available, the question aimed to uncover what extra information would be important to make available with applicants in mind. The question was an open-ended question and there was no limit on how many different things the respondents could mention. The responses were grouped together thematically and turned into statistical form. The graphs below show the themes that received the most mentions. The numbers reflect mentions. 5 of the current students and 9 of the new applicants left this question unanswered.

The current students' responses show that they would have been the most interested in discovering the course content beforehand (7). More information about the different specialization options (6) that for the old students included game programming, game graphics, game design and game production was on the second place along with more detailed information about the studies (6). Factors that received only single mentions are grouped under 'other'. For current students, these included competitors, exchange opportunities, seeing KUAs at higher education fairs, information about the location, student opinions.
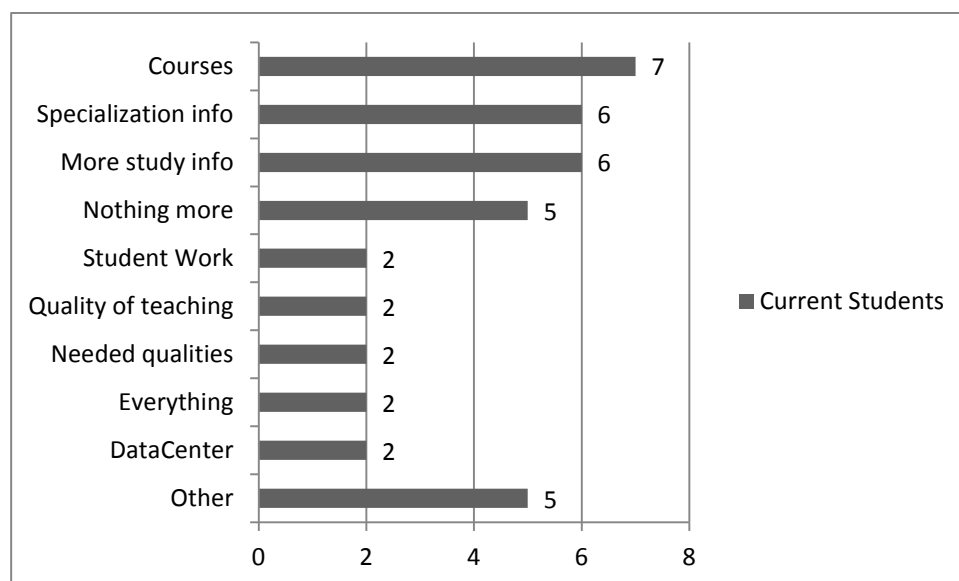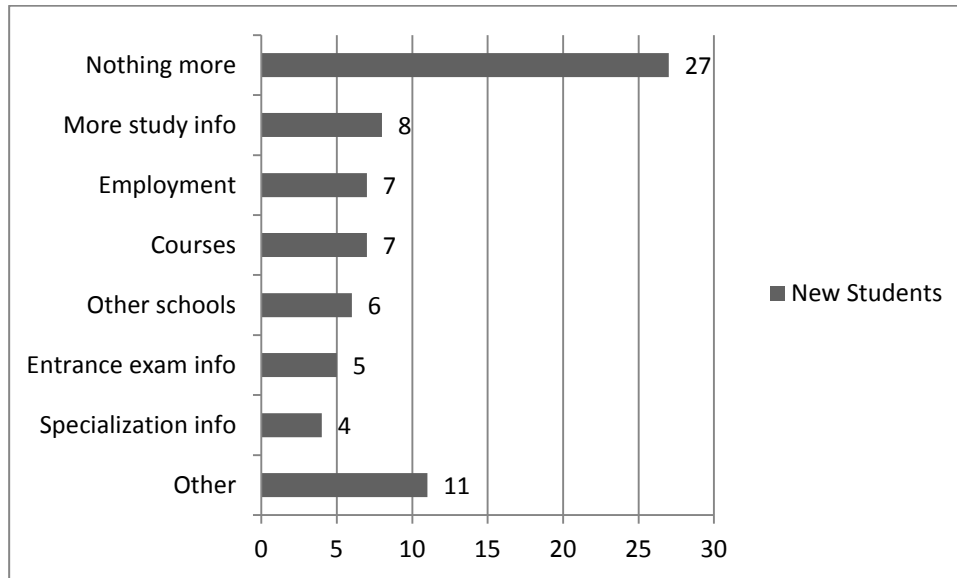

Graph 7: What more information was wanted, current students (n=34)

The majority of new students replied that they had received all the information they had wanted and needed. Nothing more was needed received 27 mentions. Those who would have wanted more information wanted more detailed study information (8) and more information about the course contents (7) and future employment (7). Factors that received fewer than 4 mentions are grouped under 'other'. For new applicants these included every-

thing, student opinions, information about the project studies, information about the location and methods used in game development.

Graph 8: What more information was wanted, new applicants (n=80)

The majority of new applicants indicated that they had received all the information they needed prior to applying. This shows that KUAS game study marketing has improved, as it should have. More resources were used for marketing before the 2012 application period. This included redoing Kajak3d.com website, which is the main portal for providing information about KUAS game studies. New applicants' satisfaction with the information they received shows that KUAS game studies has been able to provide the information that the target market wants, whether through Kajak3d.com or via other marketing means.

Current students stated that they would have preferred to receive more information about the course content and studies in general. These are similar to the topics mentioned by the new applicants who also wanted more information. However, the new applicants that wanted more information before applying also mentioned that they would have preferred extra information about future employment opportunities and other schools that offer game studies.

More information should be provided on the studies in general and course content. More information should also be provided concerning future employment opportunities, including statistics about how many graduates have found employment. Detailed employment information has not been available before because prior to 2009 only game programmers were

trained, and the students who started in the new kind of game studies that offer different specializations in 2009 are due to graduate in December 2012. Once graduate employment information becomes available, it should be made available to applicants.

6.1.3 Marketing

**List three best places online to advertise game studies. Explain how these should be used.**

The purpose of this question was to discover which websites the potential applicants use that might be good places to advertise game studies, and ways to use them to advertise to the target group. However, perhaps the question was a little unclear or should have been explained better. None of the respondents provided ways to use the websites they provided.

It seemed respondents also missed the word 'online', also providing offline places for advertising game studies.

Again, not all of the respondents were able to name three places. The numbers in the graphs below are mentions. This question proved to be difficult as 5 of the current students and 22 of new applicants left it unanswered.

According to current students Facebook (8) and different game websites (8) would be the best places for advertising game studies. Game magazines and their websites ranked third with 7 mentions.

Places that received only single mentions were listed under 'other'. These included newspaper articles, television and YouTube.
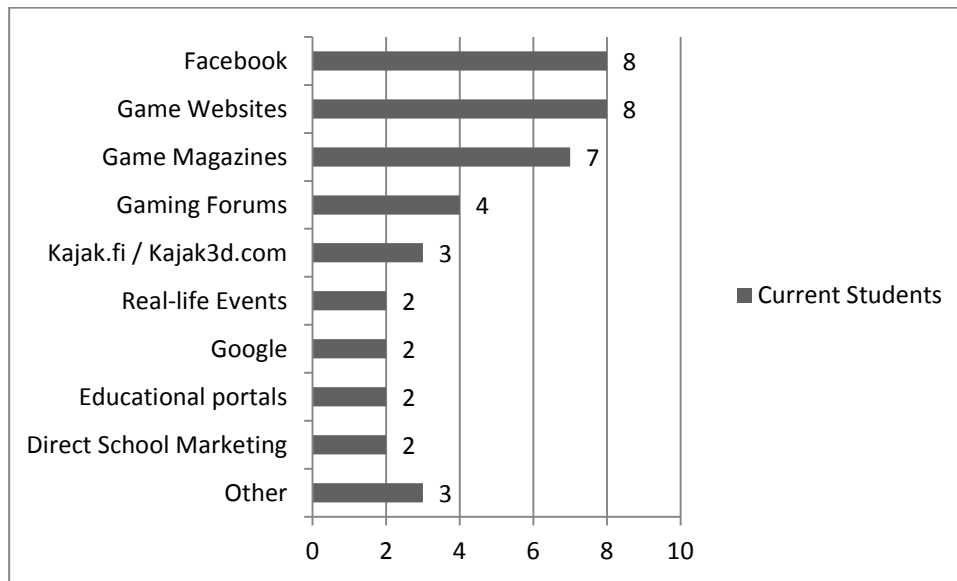
Graph 9: Online marketing, current students (n=34)

New applicants' responses echoed the current students. Facebook (23) was number one, different game websites (21) and game magazines and their websites (10) were the most popular places named by them as well.

Places that received less than 3 mentions were listed under 'other'. These included websites for artists, popup advertisements, direct marketing, other social media, Google, direct university marketing, game servers and radio.
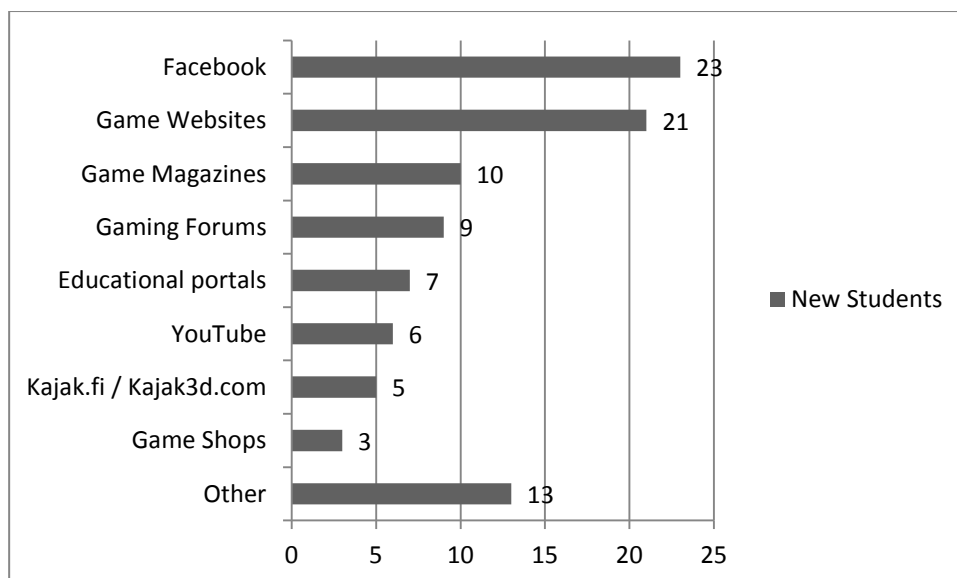
Graph 10: Online marketing, current students (n=80)

Predictably, current students and new applicants named the same places as the best places to advertise online.

This question can be used to supplement the information received in the question 'where did you look for information about game development schools?' under the Information section, which showed that most of the respondents used the internet to search for information. Responses to this question give a glimpse as to what websites the respondents think are the best for advertisement, and it can be assumed that these are websites they use themselves where they have or think they would have noticed an advertisement.

Most respondent provided vague answers, mentioning the type of websites rather than naming any actual sites. A few respondents had provided more thorough suggestions, mentioning website by their name. Because of the small amount of responses that named any websites, it is not possible to draw conclusions as to which of these websites would be popular enough to be recommended. They should be looked at and considered at a later date, if possible.

Websites that were mentioned by their name were the following: Muro BBS, Animewatch, V2, Pelaaja.fi, Pelit.fi, Aapeli.fi, HS.f, gamedev, gamasutra, ign, gamereactor, gamecareer.com, Koulutusnetti, DeviantArt, Peliplaneetta, Konsoli.fi, Iltalehti, Iltasanomat, gaming.fi, Tilt.TV, MMOHUT.com, Playstation.fi, kpedu.fi, dome.fi. These include online news sources (game related and general), different kinds of gaming sites, game related discussion forums and online education portals. These types of websites should be considered when planning online advertisement campaigns.

Rate how interesting the following [content] would be if you were considering applying to a university.

The purpose of this question was to discover which kind of content the target group is most interested in, so that future marketing campaigns could focus on delivering the most relevant content.

In the only purely statistical question of the research, the respondents were asked to rate different content based on how appealing they considered it. They were asked to rate each op-

tion on a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 is the most interesting and 1 not interesting at all. The graphs below show the average ratings. 1 current student and 4 new applicants left this question unanswered.

Current students consider games made by students to be the most interesting content with an average rating of 4.6 out of 5. Videos of actual universitywork (3.8) and interviews of current students (3.8) were also perceived as very interesting content. The lowest average rating was given to blog posts (2.9) but even that rating is not very low.
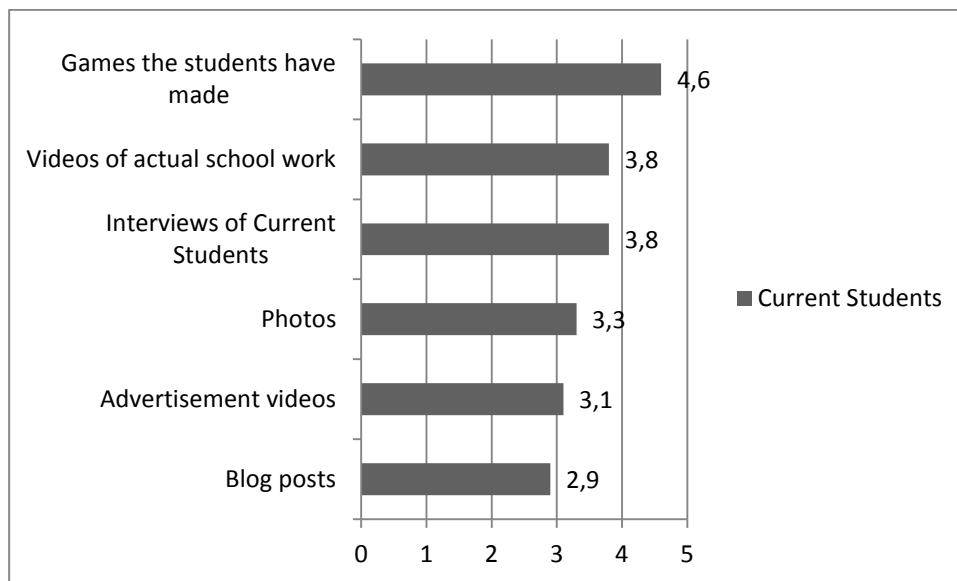
Graph 11: Interesting content, average ratings, current students (n=34)

The responses given by new applicants are very similar to the responses of current students. Again, games the students have made (4.6) is considered the most interesting content. Videos of actual university work (4.1) is a close second. Interviews of current students (3.4) are also interesting but interestingly, advertisement videos (3.3) were considered more interesting than photos. Blog posts (2.6) were again the content that is the least interesting out of the options provided.
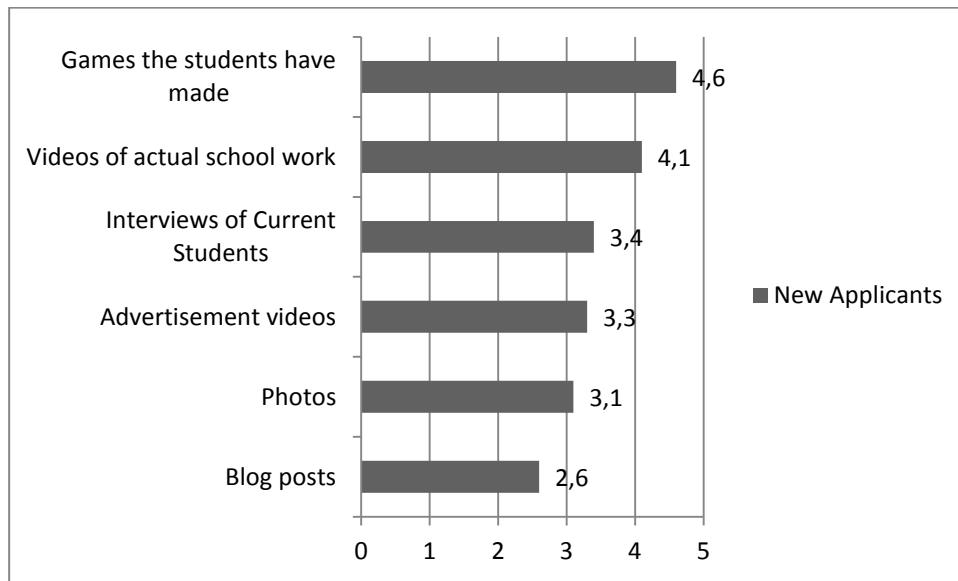
Graph 12: Interesting content, average ratings, new applicants (n=80)

Responses are very similar and show that the main content which applicants are interested in are games the students have made. There should be more information about games made by KUAS game students provided. In the written responses respondents requested the games in the form of videos, development stories and playable demos.

Videos and student interviews seem to be the most interesting forms of content. This tells of the applicants' desire to see and hear what is really happening in the university. The question did not specify which form the student interviews would be in, but based on the popularity of views as content student interviews should be on video as well.

6.1.4 Website

A large part of KUAS game study marketing has been the Kajak3d.com website, which is a website dedicated to KUAS game studies alone, a portal which aims to provide all the information about the game studies in a simple to find manner. The website was renewed for application period 2012.

The questions about Kajak3d.com website aim to discover whether the respondents find it useful for the game studies to have a website dedicated only to them. Inside the university organisation there are opinions that separate websites are unnecessary and all information

should be provided on the university's official website alone. This is why it was important to discover what the target group thought about the website and whether it is important to keep a separate website in the future.

Is it useful that KUAS Game Studies has its own website, Kajak3d.com, or would the information provided on the university's Kajak.fi website be enough? Explain why/why not?

The purpose of this question was to discover what the target group thinks about KUAS game studies having a website, Kajak3d.com, that is separate from the university's official Kajak.fi website and offers more information about game studies than the university's official page does.

The graph shows quite clearly that the target group thinks Kajak3d.com is important. 91% of current students and 76% of new applicants found Kajak3d.com useful. None of the current students and only 5% of new applicants thought that the information provided on Kajak.fi was enough. 9% of current students and 19% of new students had no opinion.
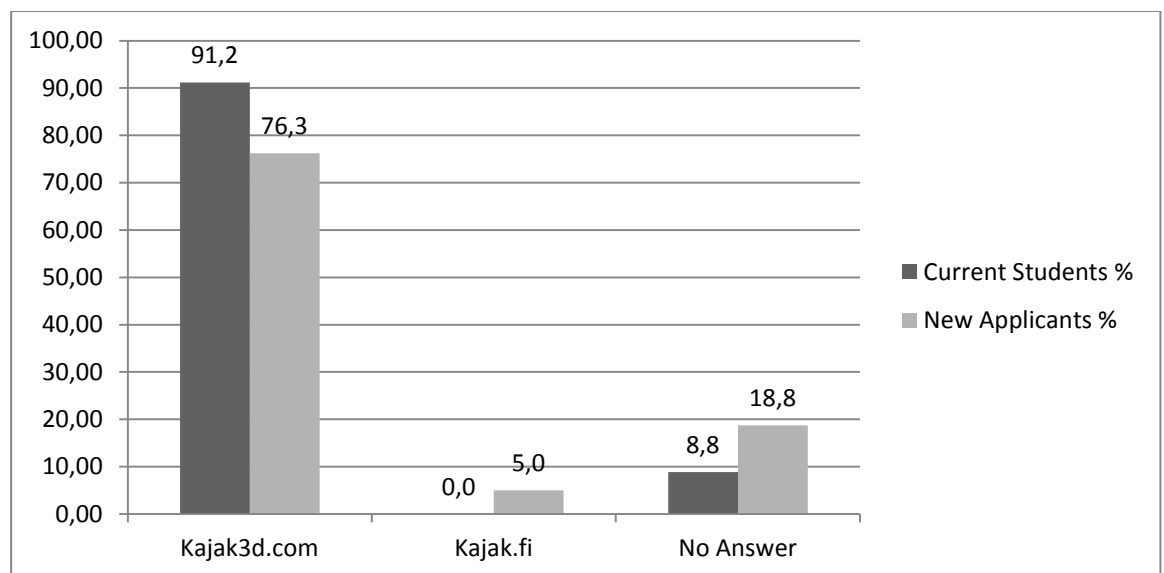
Graph 13: Preferred website, current students and new applicants (n=114)

The question was an open-ended question, so the respondents were able to explain their answers. Many current student respondents stressed that a separate website not only makes it

easier to find and provides additional and important information about the game studies, it also makes KUAS game studies seem more professional.

New applicants provided similar reasons – as to why they think Kajak3d.com website is useful – as the current students. The ability to provide more information and in more detail than the official website was a prevalent theme. New applicants found it helpful that Kajak3d.com offers not only the official information but also peer reviews of the studies.

A few also mentioned that Kajak3d.com appears before Kajak.fi when searching for game studies online and that they discovered the university through Kajak3d.com and not the other way around. This shows how important having a separate website for game studies is; the university could lose potential future students without it.

List three things that you think are the most important to have on Kajak3d.com/Kajak.fi website.

The purpose of this question was to discover what content the target group would like to see on the website related to game studies. Respondents were asked to provide three things, but not all of them filled out all three. The numbers in the graphs below are mentions. The graphs feature content suggestions that received the most mentions. 2 current students and 30 new applicants left this question unanswered.

Due to the similarity of this question and the marketing question where respondents were asked to rate interesting content, the responses to these two questions were predictably similar.

Current students found student work (13) the most important content for the website, followed by student interviews. Other content that was considered important to be on the website were videos (6), information about different specialization options (6), photos (6) and blog posts (6)

Content that received fewer than 4 mentions were grouped under 'other'. For current students these included suggestions like showreel, courses, what it takes to get into game studies, portfolios, applying, visiting lecturers, news, up to date information, software used and FAQ.
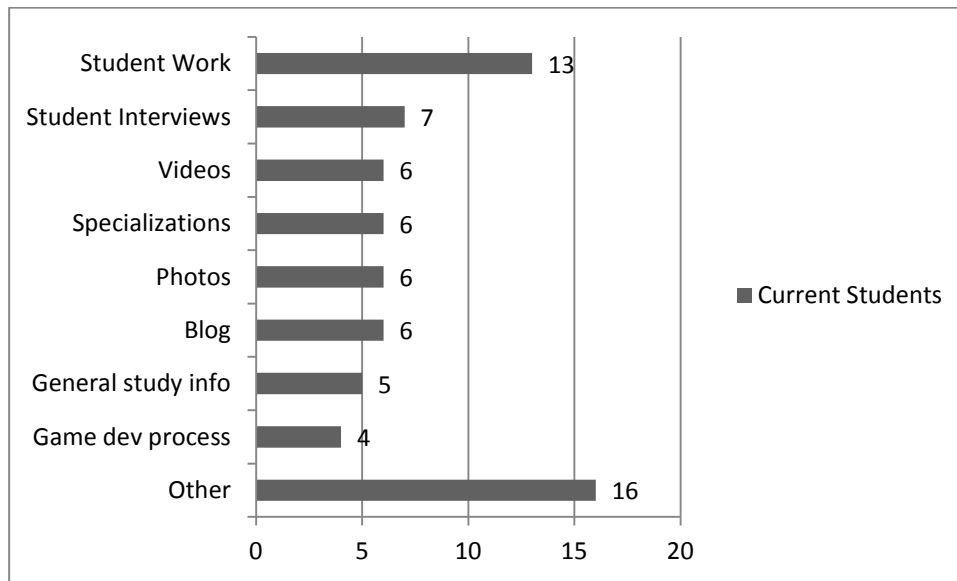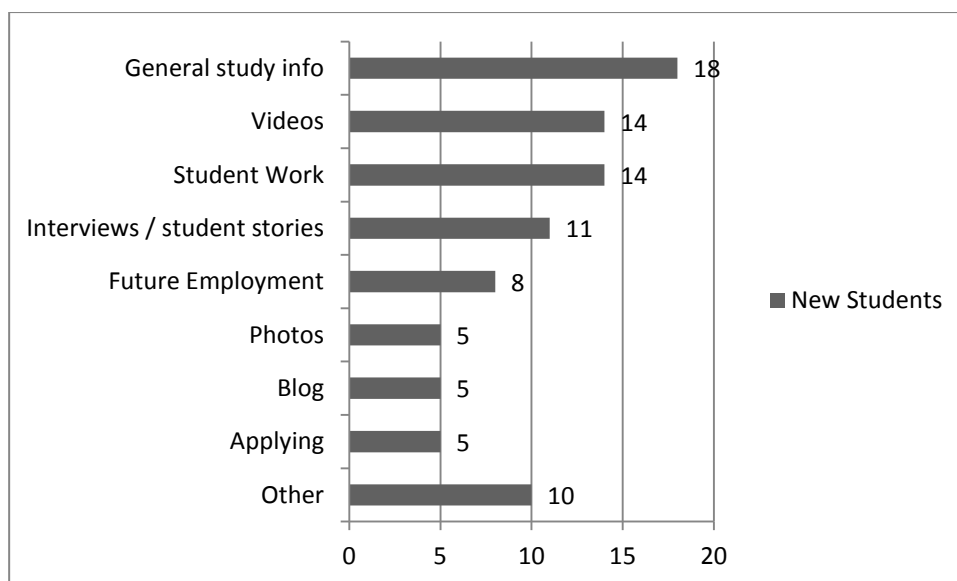
Graph 14: Content for Kajak3d.com, current students (n=34)

For new applicants who had themselves gone through the application process only a few months prior considered general information about the studies the most important (18) content of the website. Videos (14) and student work (14) were also considered important. Interviews of current students (11) were ranked as fourth most important.

Content that received fewer than 5 mentions was grouped under 'other'. For new applicants this included content ideas like specialization options, contacts, events, tools, associates, application statistics, and nothing more than there already is.

Graph 15: Content for Kajak3d.com, new applicants (n=80)
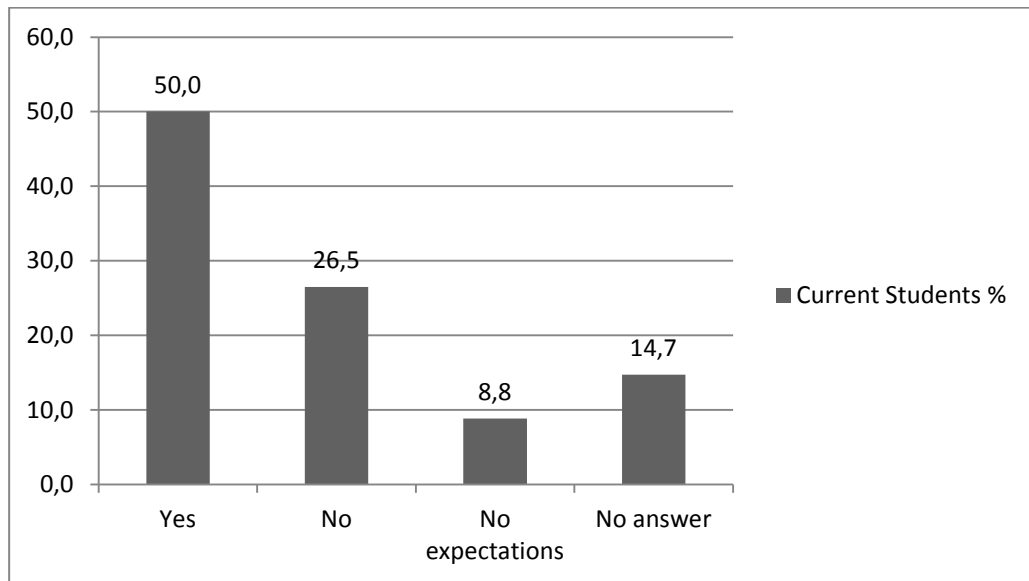
6.1.5 For current students

In addition, there were two questions that were asked of the current game students only. The purpose of these questions was to discover how successful KUAS' previous marketing efforts have been, as well as uncover some of the strengths and weaknesses of KUAS game studies.

Because of the limited number of respondents and the fact that there were respondents from all classes, meaning the respondents had applied between 2006 and 2009 and a lot has changed in both the study program and how it has been marketed between those years, the responses to these questions do not provide a thorough review of previous marketing efforts. The responses only provide a glimpse at a topic that should be studied again in more depth in the future.

Have KUAS game studies been what you expected them to be based on the things you knew about them before applying? Why/Why not?

The purpose of this question was to discover how realistic were the expectations current students had based on the information they had received prior to applying.

As seen in the graph below, 50% of respondents said that the studies had met their expectations. 27% of the respondents said their expectations had not been met. 9% of the respondents had had no expectations, and 15% left the question unanswered.

Graph 16: Studies made expectations, current students (n=34)

More than half of those who responded to the question had their expectations met, which shows that the quality of KUAS game studies is high and marketing has been realistic.

Of course there is room for improvements. In most cases, the respondents who said their expectations were not met gave the quality of teaching as the reason for their unhappiness.

Provide three reasons you would recommend KUAS game studies to your friends.

The purpose of this question was to discover the strengths of KUAS game studies by asking current students what are the reasons why they would recommend KUAS game studies to their friends. 1 of the respondents left this question unanswered.

The main reason current students would recommend the studies to their friends was friends (12) in other words, the people they had met through KUAS game studies. Practical studies (11) was the second reason, meaning that people find KUAS' highly practical method of teaching game studies appealing. The third reason, making games (8) is related to the second, as practical studies mean that the students get to make game throughout their studies.

Reasons that received less than 3 mentions were grouped under 'other'. There included motivated students, different specializations, technology and software, good overview of the game industry, small university, exchange opportunities, student housing, visiting lecturers, game competitions, Kajak Games co-operative and tutoring.
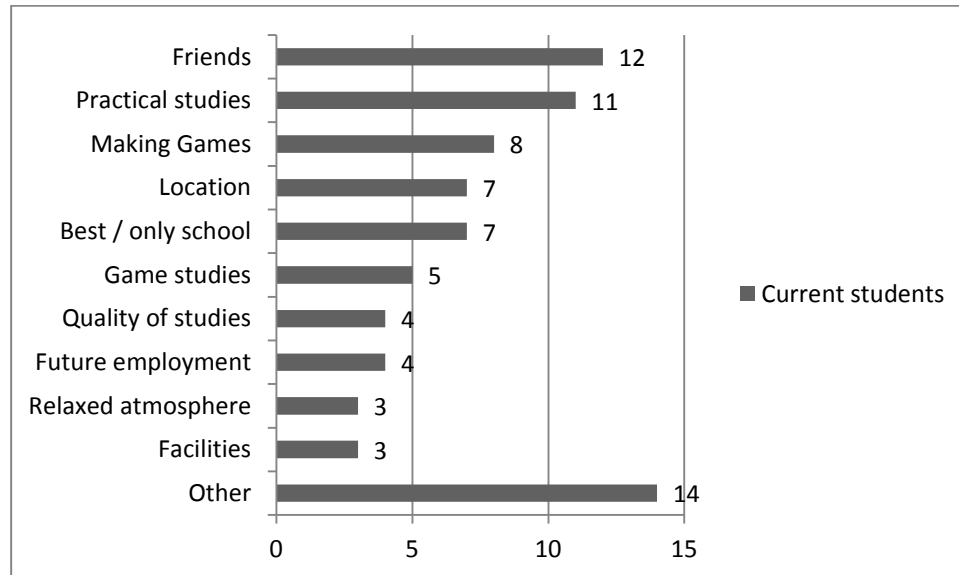
Graph 17: Reasons to recommend KUAS game studies, current students (n=34)

Many of the respondents mentioned that they had made friends in KUAS game studies. Respondents were content that KUAS game studies attract people with similar interest and that game students become a tight-knit group during their studies. Game development teams formed during the studies have gone on to begin their own game companies.

KUAS game studies embrace learning-by-doing principles, and many of the studies are practised via very practical methods in game projects. As the results show, students are happy with the practise and would recommend KUAS game studies to their friends because of it.

Because of the practical method of studying, students get to make games throughout their studies, starting from year one. Obviously, students are very happy about the possibility to make games throughout their studies and would recommend the studies to their friends because of that.

Interestingly, location was listed as a reason to recommend KUAS game studies. In the Motivation section it was concluded that location was one of the most important factors that affect students when they are deciding which university to apply to. It is clear based on this

research that current KUAS game students at least consider KUAS' location to be favourable. Future studies could be preformed to discover why KUAS' location is considered so favourable despite it being far away from the capital city area where most Finnish game companies – and thus future employment opportunities – are located.

7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Discussion

KUAS game study marketing has not been studied or planned prior to this thesis so this thesis has offered valuable insights into the target market and as a guide to marketing for the next year. Marketing planning should be made an integral part of KUAS game study marketing, to ensure that the university will retain its edge in the increasingly competitive marketplace.

The marketing research in this thesis is limited to studying those students and applicants who have expressed interest in KUAS game studies by either already studying in KUAS game study programmes or by having applied for KUAS game study programmes and who could be reached in the university's facilities.

However, because the number of respondents was approximately one third of the students who currently study in KUAS (there were three full year groups of game students at the time of the research and each group has from 25 to 30 students) and about one fifth of the new applicants, the amount of results gathered was satisfactory. With current students, the number of respondents was 34, and while it was roughly one third of the current students studying in KUAS game studies, it is a low number for a quantitative study and so the results are only suggestive when it comes to current students. The amount of new applicants who respondent was higher, and because of this the new applicants' responses are more representative of the group as a whole. For further research, it would be better to interview a larger group of people, possibly with purely quantitative means, and use an equal number of both current and new students to make it possible to directly compare the results. A preferable number of respondents would be from 70 to 100 of each.

It is also debatable whether the current students' and new students' answers can be compared to each other directly. Apart from the problem of differing numbers, it is possible that for the new students, the fact that they were interviewed right after their entrance exam made them more likely to answer in a way they thought the interviewer wanted them to respond. For current students, the time that had passed between when they applied and when

they were interviewed could have affected their answers. It might be difficult to remember what thoughts and feelings were involved in applying after years have passed.

To ensure the validity of the answers and to make sure that current and new students' answers can be compared, it would be better to interview students when they first apply, and then interview the same group of students again when they have been studying in KUAS game studies for some time.

As Moisan (1987) noted, feedback from internal and external environment is crucial to universities. The marketing research in question did not study external feedback as such, but it studied internal feedback from current students. The research showed quite high student satisfaction. From this research, it is possible to discover which factors are considered KUAS game study strengths and weaknesses from the point of view of the students. There were two main themes in the strengths that came up in the research: social factors and practical approach to studies. The main weakness that came out in the research was the quality of teaching.

What the research results show about competitors' game study programmes is that the respondents were unable to learn much information about them. Some respondents expressed interest in finding out about other game study programmes in other schools. It is important that while the competition in the field increases and information about competitors becomes more widely available, KUAS game studies must continue its effective marketing work to retain its positioning.

The respondents' motivation for applying for KUAS game studies was consistently related to games, interest in developing them, desire to turn a gaming hobby into a profession, desire to join like-minded friends in studying game development and a desire to employ themselves in the game industry in the future. As a market segment, the potential KUAS game study applicants are clearly a subculture of people who share an interest in video games and a desire to develop games as their profession. Many questions brought to light the socio-cultural aspects of KUAS game studies, which the respondents ranked highly. It was shown that more than geographical factors, cultural factors are behind respondents' motivation to apply to and satisfaction with KUAS game studies.

The established segment can be targeted with a positioning strategy. KUAS game studies is a specific degree programme that is offered to a specific segment of prospective students, as described above. However, since KUAS game studies offers specialization options to all the different roles needed in game development, it would be possible to segment the target group even further, into segments that consist of prospective students interested in one of the offered specialization. Game programmers, artists, producer-designers and those interested in game technology are even smaller segments within the target group. However, it is impossible to draw any conclusions regarding these smaller segments based on this research, and it is unnecessary at this time when a heterogeneous marketing message can be used to address all prospective game students.

Having established that KUAS game study students and prospective students form a subculture of a sort, KUAS game marketing and education should encourage this, and take advantage of this to improve both marketing and education alike. It is a resource that would be fatal to ignore. It would be difficult to artificially create something similar. It is also possible that this subculture, and finding a group that one feels one belongs to, make the generally unfavoured considered location matter less.

As discussed in chapter 3.2.3, positioning revolves around creating institutional image and communicating it to the minds of the public. KUAS game studies has been positioned as the game study programme with the longest history and the game study programme that is the most all-encompassing game study programme in Finland. Part of KUAS game study programme's positioning is the practical approach to studying. Research results show that the positioning has been successful. A vast majority of the respondents viewed KUAS game studies as the best, some the only game study programme in Finland. In addition, current students listed the practical approach to studies and the fact that games are made throughout the studies as one of the main reasons for recommending the programme, showing that the studies are successfully practical and that it satisfies the customers.

Another factor that could be used to position KUAS game studies, based on the responses received is the socio-cultural environment within the game student body. Respondents mentioned having made friends, formed game development teams and enjoying the company of like-minded individuals that make up the game student body.

When it comes to marketing media, the research shows clearly that internet is the number one medium that should be used to deliver promotional messages. Aside from internet, game magazines and word-of-mouth were mentioned as major marketing information sources. The most relevant traditional marketing media for the purpose of KUAS game study marketing is advertisements and articles in Finnish game magazines.

As for online marketing, respondents found it important that KUAS game studies should continue to have its own website, Kajak3d.com, where all the relevant information about KUAS game studies is gathered. A website that is separate from the university's official website offers the possibility to provide more in-depth information and better respond to prospective students' wants and needs when deciding what information to provide. On a separate website, it is possible to update the content constantly, keeping the website up-to-date and dynamic. A separate website for game studies makes sure that the important game study related information that the respondents are looking for does not go unnoticed among other information irrelevant to this specific target group.

Out of other online marketing media, Facebook received the most mentions in the responses. Chapter 4.2.2. detailed some of the most important ways Facebook can be used for promotion. Other social media received relatively few mentions, but because videos were a highly desired way of delivering marketing information, YouTube is a relevant service that should be employed.

7.2 Recommendations for further studies

As stated in Chapter 3 of this thesis, Marketing planning, marketing planning is an ongoing process and a marketing plan should be re-evaluated annually and in the process, marketing research should be used to evaluate the previous year's marketing actions and discover possible issues that need to be addressed when planning future marketing actions.

In addition to on-going marketing planning, other topics that would be interesting to study in the future came up during the process of writing this thesis. The research in this thesis

focused on the opinions of students (current or prospective) who had shown interest in KUAS game studies specifically. It might be interesting to see if it would be possible to study general public's opinion about game studies. All of the respondents of this research wanted to study in KUAS game studies, so the research couldn't uncover reasons why someone might decide not to apply for KUAS game studies.

The research in question did not take into account respondents' gender. The male-to-female ratio of game students is highly biased towards the male gender. It might be an interesting topic for future research to study the differences between male and female applicants who are interested in game studies and whether or not using different marketing methods to reach different genders could increase the amount of female game students.

Similarly, it could be studied in the future whether further segmentation of the target group based on the specifications they are interested in would be beneficial and if different segments within the target group should be approached using specific marketing methods. It is not relevant at the moment because all of the specializations (except game technology) are studied under the same study programme and there has been a sufficient amount of applicants interested in all different specializations. But if in the future the number of students interested in certain specialization starts to decline, studying further segmentation might be relevant.

7.3 Conclusion

The marketing research shows that marketing actions have been improved in recent years. As the number of schools that offer game development education have increased, KUAS has in the minds of applicants gone from being the only game study programme to being the best game study programme. This shows that KUAS game studies positioning has been successful. Continuation of effective marketing efforts and ensuring that the quality of education stays high are critical in making sure that KUAS retains its current positioning.

The research shows that Kajak3d.com website is an important source of information and an important tool for potential students when they are deciding whether or not to apply for

KUAS. The research brought up a lot of useful ideas for improvement for the website in the form of suggested content, which will be discussed in more detail in the marketing plan.

Marketing research itself should be repeated at the beginning of the next marketing cycle, after the application period next spring ends, to evaluate the effectiveness of current marketing actions and aid in making a new marketing plan. Marketing planning should be made an annual process to ensure that KUAS game study marketing stays up to date.

Writing this thesis has been a valuable learning process about marketing planning and marketing research. The results of the marketing research provide interesting insights that should be viewed by those involved in KUAS game study marketing and degree programme development as they provide interesting information about student satisfactions and the factors that affect it.

In addition to the marketing plan that is a confidential attachment of this thesis, the thesis itself can function as a brief introduction to marketing planning and marketing research for future project workers working with KUAS game study marketing. Hopefully this thesis will be able to guide them with conducting marketing research to evaluate the effectiveness of KUAS game study marketing in the future and instruct them in the marketing planning process so they can adjust the marketing plan or create a new one as needed.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - Marketing Plan For Kuas Game Studies (Confidential)

Marketing Plan for KUAS game studies – confidential

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