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# **Developing Services in Student Union**

Case The Student Union of Häme University of Applied Sciences



Bachelor's thesis

International Business

Valkeakoski, Autumn 2015

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Valkeakoski  
International Business  
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ABSTRACT

The thesis was made for the student union of Häme University of Applied Sciences. Student unions have quite bad situations with the funding they receive. Universities of Applied Sciences are making losses, cuts are made to higher education and the funding for the student unions are getting cut as well. It is time for student unions to look for other means to finance their operations. This can be achieved by increasing rate of self-financing. Basically it means getting new members to pay the membership fee. Goal for this thesis was to find results how case organization could develop their services so thatr student would feel that it is worth to pay the membership fee.

Primary data was collected by questionnaire. The questionnaire was sufficient but it should be developed to get even better results. Some questions were unclear to some students. The questionnaire was implemented during HAMKO On The Road –tour in Häme University of Applied Sciences campuses.

As suggestions the student union HAMKO should improve its messages in all the media they use but also focus on how the student see the student union HAMKO. Most of the feedback from the questionnaire stated that students do not know about the student union HAMKO or what services they have. Same or same kind of questionnaire should be implemented annually to see the present situation about services and the member satisfaction.

**Keywords** service design, service development, development in student union

**Pages** 25 p.

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## TIIVISTELMÄ

Opinnäytetyön toimeksiantajana on Hämeen ammattikorkeakoulun opiskelijakunta. Opiskelijakunnilla yleensäkin on vähän heikko tilanne nykyisellä markkinatilanteella. Ammattikorkeakoulut tekevät tappiota, koulutuksesta leikataan ja näin myös opiskelijakunnille tulevat avustukset pienenevät. Opiskelijakuntien on aika etsiä muita rahoituskanavia sekä vahvistamaan omarahoitusosuutta opiskelijakunnan toiminnassa. Tämä tarkoittaa käytännössä keinoja, millä saadaan uusia jäseniä opiskelijakunnalle. Tässä opinnäytetyössä oli tarkoituksena löytää toimeksiantajalle keinoja kehittää palvelutoimintaa, jotta opiskelijat kokisivat opiskelijakunnan jäsenyyden kannattavaksi.

Opinnäytetyössä käytettiin dataa, joka saatiin opiskelijoille suunnatusta kyselystä. Kysely oli riittävä, mutta kyselyä tulisi kehittää saadakseen vielä parempia tuloksia. Kyselyn kysymykset olivat erälle opiskelijoille hieman epäselviä. Kysely suoritettiin HAMKO On The Road –kiertueen aikana. Opiskelijakunnan toimijat vierailivat kaikilla Hämeen ammattikorkeakoulun kampuksilla ja opiskelijat saivat täyttää kyselyn kiertueen aikana. Jatkoa ajatellen, kiertueella olevien opiskelijakunnan toimijoiden tulisi kerätä vastauksia kyselyyn aktiivisemmin, jotta kampuksilta saataisiin paremmin vertailtavaa dataa.

Johtopäätöksenä toimeksiantajaa suositellaan panostavan viestintään ja siihen, kuinka opiskelijat näkevät toimeksiantajan. Opiskelijakunnan toiminnan tulee olla läpinäkyvää ja opiskelijan tulee haluta kuulua opiskelijakuntaan. Suurin osa kyselyssä saadusta palautteesta kertoi sitä, ettei opiskelija tiedä opiskelijakunnan toiminnasta tai palveluista. Samaa tai samantapaista kyselyä tulisi käyttää vähintään kerran vuodessa, jotta opiskelijakunta näkee nykyisen tilanteen ja pystyy reagoimaan siihen.

**Avainsanat** palvelukehittäminen, palvelusuunnittelu, opiskelijakunnan kehittäminen

**Sivut** 25 s.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Political discussion about financing higher education has been rather aggressive lately. As 2015 is year off parliamentary elections, student unions are lobbying for benefits to parliament candidates. Suomen opiskelijakuntien liitto (later SAMOK) stated in one of their lobbying materials that funds for higher education in universities of applied sciences have dropped more than 100 million euros from 2012 to 2015. During this same time period funds for universities have dropped approximately 300 million euros. This drop can be seen not only on paper but also in the quality of the teaching. This drop in the finance sector will eventually have an effect on the financing activities and operations of the student unions. If university cannot get financing from the government, student union cannot get as good financing from the university as years before. The drop in student union funds gotten from the university itself is not immense. But it does make student unions to count every penny they have. It is time for student unions to look for other methods for extra income to help them be free from the financial distress.

The research goal for this thesis is to define what needs to be taken into account when developing services for the student union. In the thesis the author will concentrate on the case organization Hämeen ammattikorkeakoulun opiskelijakunta HAMKO. Even though student unions across Finland are looking constantly for new services to implement, this thesis is not considering anything but the aspects that are affecting HAMKO's services. The ultimate goal for this research is to find possible services that the student union HAMKO could implement. But not only services that bring money but also services that have value for the members of the student union.

## 2 BACKGROUND

In today's world many organizations revenue comes in from different kind of services. Companies have adopted a new culture with regards to the service industry. This same kind of business model could be implemented in student unions as well. Quite often student unions are looking for methods to stabilize the financial side of the operations. Creating extra revenue from services might be the answer.

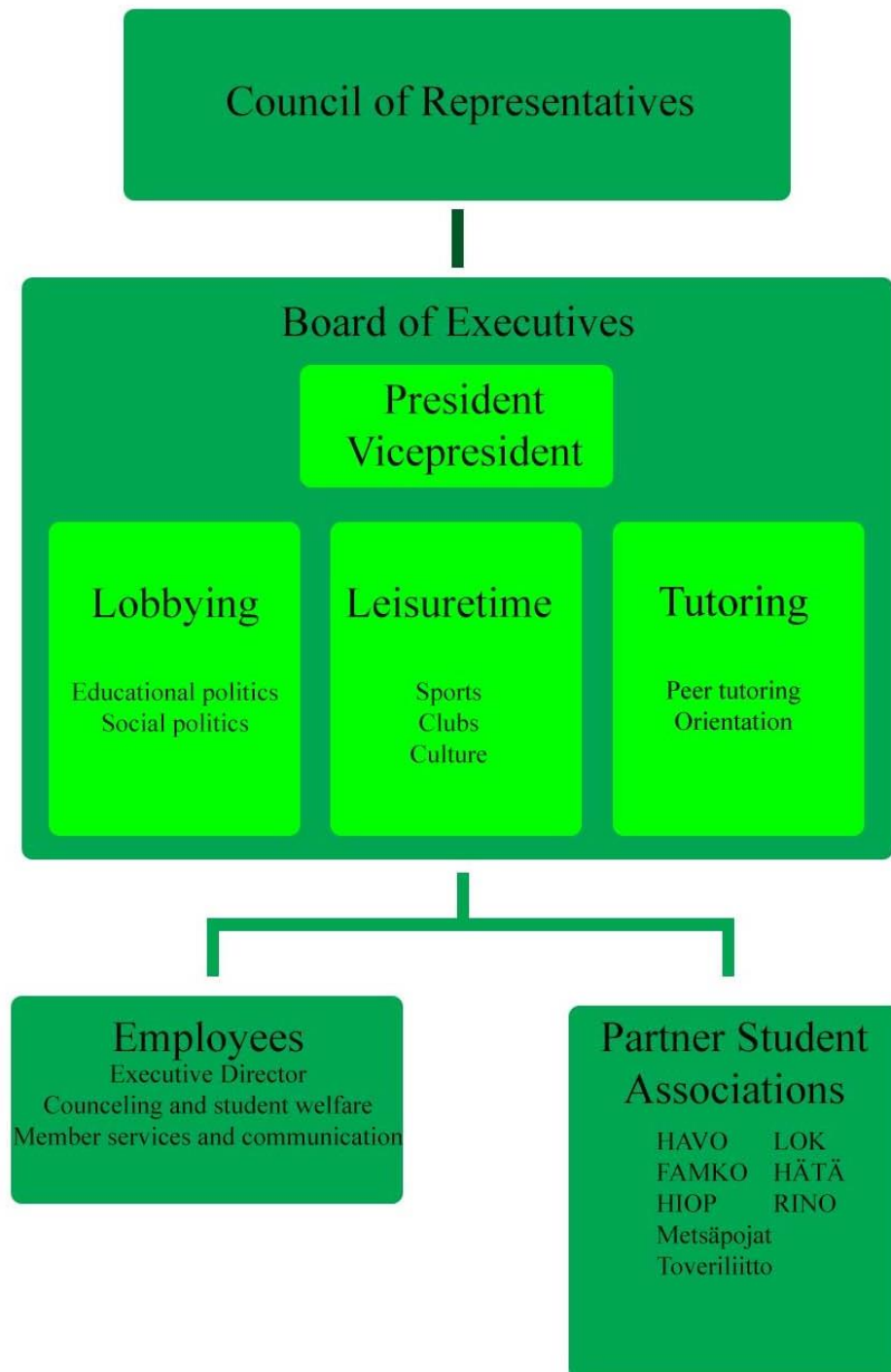


Figure 1 Organization chart of Student Union HAMKO

### 2.1 Hämeen ammattikorkeakoulun opiskelijakunta

Hämeen ammattikorkeakoulun opiskelijakunta (later the student union HAMKO) is student union based in Häme University of Applied Sciences. The student union HAMKO has been operative from 2006 and nowadays represents approximately 7 200 students. The student union has three full time employees. These employees are: the executive director, the adviser of counselling and the student welfare and the adviser of communications. Among these employees the student union HAMKO has a board of executives and a council of representatives. The board of the student union has 8 members who are all students in Häme UAS and also members of the student union HAMKO. Council of representatives has 21 members from most Häme UAS campuses. This council has the highest decision making power in the student union HAMKO.

#### 2.1.1 The Council of Representatives

The council of representatives of student union HAMKO is chosen annually in October. It consists of 21 members who are all members of the student union as well as students in Häme UAS. The council meets at least once a month. As previously said, the council has the highest decision making power in the student union. That means that the board of executives is responsible for the council. As the council of representatives meets, the board of executives are presenting its operations. The council of representative creates the guidelines for major decisions and also validates major official guidelines such as the political program.

#### 2.1.2 The Board of Executives

The board of executives runs the business in the student union. Members of the board makes the everyday decisions about operations. The council of representatives gives the direction where they want to lead the student union and the board of executives gets the student union there.

The board has 8 members. Again all of the members are student of Häme UAS and also members of the student union. These students are chosen by an election held every November. Every member of the board has their own responsibilities. The board of executives represents the student union locally as well as nationally. The board of executives is the most visible organ of the whole organization for members and co-operative partners.

#### 2.1.3 Operations

At this point it should be said that the student union HAMKO is non-profit organization. The revenue the student union gets from the operations is re-

invested. The major part of the income for the student union comes straight from Häme UAS. It is said in the legislation that every university of applied sciences has to have student union lobbying student's benefits (Finlex.fi, 2015).

By lobbying the author means that the university of applied sciences have to have an organ that watches the rights of students. The board of executives in Häme UAS can make decisions that are harmful for student welfare and the student union's task is to bring student's perspective to these decisions. This lobbying is happening in the meetings of the board of executives as the president of student union is attending those meetings. The student union takes part in nationwide lobbying too. A good example is parliamentary vote in March 2015. Parliament voted against their own proposal. Before the actual vote, every student union in Finland were lobbying against the proposal. Preliminary vote ended for the proposal but after lobbying the proposal were declined, with votes 1 for the proposal and 185 against it.

The student union HAMKO's task in the student community is to advance the student welfare. This is done with varying methods. First and most visible on is that the student union organizes events for its members. Few times per year the student union organizes bigger events that has participants from all Häme UAS campuses. These events have approximately 1 000 participants and brings little less than 10% of the annual income. These events are crucial for financing the operations of student union HAMKO. (Heinänen, 2015)

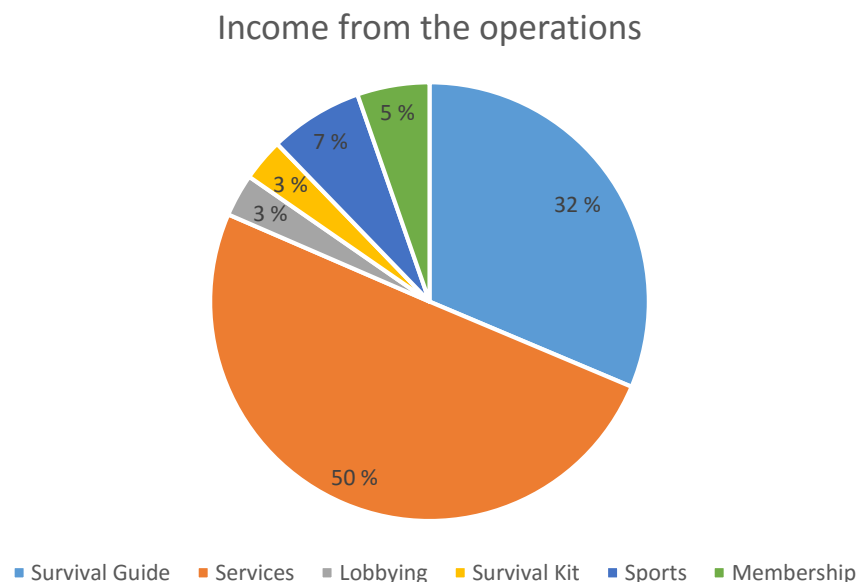


Figure 2 Income from the operations in %.



### 2.1.4 Finance of the Student Union

Generally the financial side of the student union HAMKO is rather stable. From the annual income approximately 35% is fixed income from the Häme UAS. This financial aid has been negotiated to last until 2017. With this aid the student union HAMKO is able to run its operations. Rest of the income is generated from different services and membership fees. The Finnish legislation does not state how much universities of applied sciences have to give to the student union as financial aid. (Asikainen, 2015)

Each member HAMKO have brings €18.00 income. From this HAMKO pays SAMOK membership fees for every member. SAMOK membership fee is €6.50 for year 2015. It means that every student member HAMKO have does generate income after expenses €5.75 per member per semester. With the current level of members total income is not enough to run all the operations the student union would like to.

As mentioned under the operations title, the most visible part of the operations are the events the student union HAMKO organizes. These events also work as a big income generator. Major part from the income comes from two main events, Loppurysäys and Alkupamaus. These two events generate approximately 50% of the income from the actual operations. These events are student parties held in Hämeenlinna. It is also the location for the main campus of Häme UAS. One might ask “if the parties are such a good way to generate more income, why don’t you organize more parties?” It is been noticed that the more similar events the student union have per semester drops the desirability of the events. With this rate of student parties organized by student union HAMKO the desirability is high and the price elasticity is therefore low. (Heinänen, 2015)

### 2.1.5 Current situation

In the service portfolio of the student union HAMKO there is wide array of services they provide for their members. There are supervision of interests, events, sports and clubs to name a few. These services the student union HAMKO has should give value especially to a students as they are our members and customers. Student union HAMKO works quite tightly together with Häme UAS so the student union also provides services for the university, such as tutoring.

In Häme UAS feedback is collected quite often. This feedback has revealed to the student union that students feel HAMKO’s visibility in “satellite-campuses” could be improved. This means that even though the student union HAMKO would have services for students, it might be that they don’t know about these. Basic services of course are marketed well and are known in every campus of Häme UAS.

Häme UAS tries to be international and tries to get more international students to apply. This one service of student union HAMKO has gotten really good feedback from the international students. The service is renting of Survival Kits. Survival Kit is a box that includes basic supplies one might need in their exchange period. There are plates, utensils, cooking ware, glasses, mugs and these kind of items needed. Also bed linen are included in the Survival Kit. In Finland and especially in students apartments it would be extremely expensive for incoming exchange student to just buy everything one need. This service does generate some income, but as the student union watches interests of its student members, price of this Survival Kit is kept quite low. This small payment the exchange students pay is used for upgrading damaged items in the boxes.

Earlier mentioned feedback has given results from the international students as well. This feedback shows that international students would like to have more services that help their everyday life in Finland. Bicycle rent has been one example. The student union HAMKO could acquire bicycles and run some kind of renting operations.

### 3 SERVICE THEORY

Businessdictionary.com defines word service “a valuable action, deed, or effort performed to satisfy a need or to fulfil a demand”. Service is an activity done by organization of some sort to gain economic benefit. In service business that economic benefit can occur either directly or indirectly from the transaction customer is making. Car dealership is a good example. When customer is buying a car there will be warranty included in the sales. In this case car is the actual product but warranty is service. Customer buys your car as you offer longer warranty than other manufacturer. Therefore you get the benefit indirectly from the sales. But when customer brings the car back for repair or annual service, customer pay you to fix the car. Customer doesn’t actually receive anything but still consumes service. This way you get the economic benefit directly from the service.

Difference between service and product is that a when a customer buys a product he gets the product. When one buys milk from a store, s/he gets milk. Most of the time product is tangible, that means it can be seen, touched or smelled. It is different story with services. When service is bought, one might not receive anything tangible but receipt from the transaction. Service can be something for benefit of the buyer. For an example cleaning service. Buyer of cleaning service does not receive anything tangible but the service is noticed by noticing that the target of cleaning is actually clean. As product and service has this basic difference, they also differentiate in development and marketing. It should be noted that service actually is a product but in this thesis author uses word product for tangible item one can buy from a store. (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012)

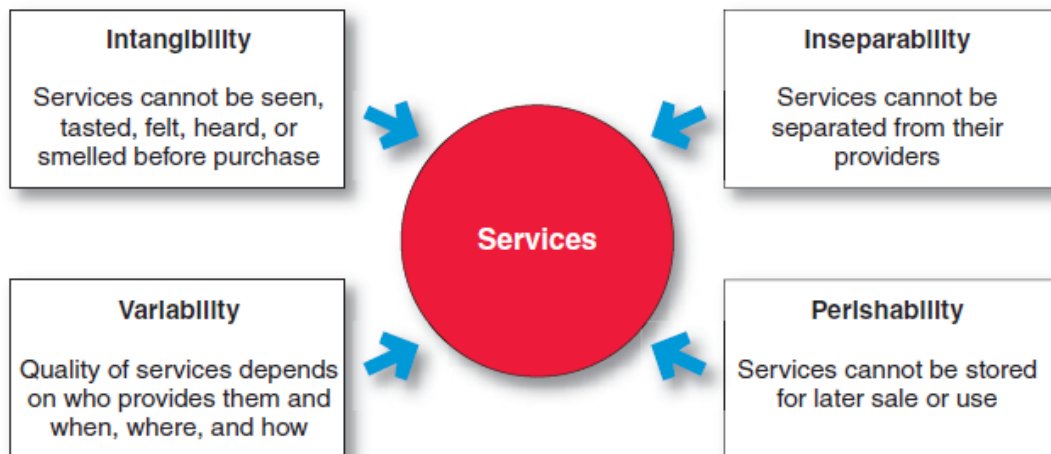


Figure 3 The four characteristics of service. (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012)

### 3.1 Four Characteristics of Service

Service has four characteristics. These are intangibility, inseparability, variability and perishability. When conceptualizing a service, organization must go through these characteristics to have efficient marketing.

#### 3.1.1 Intangibility

As mentioned before, services quite often are intangible. Buyer won't get anything at hands when buying service. This brings challenges as buyer cannot really see what is being provided. For an example, when you buy a bus ticket you only get a piece of paper that is a promise you will get to your destination safely. Before purchase you cannot see the bus ride you are going to have. This uncertainty can be diminished by giving potential customer more information about the service, when the bus leaves, which route does it take and so on. (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012)

We can continue with the car dealership example. As a customer comes back to have the annual service, customer pays money to get the car fixed or checked. They might not receive anything but receipt. There might be no evidence customer can touch and notice that car has actually been checked.

#### 3.1.2 Inseparability

When producing ordinary product, producer can sell the product for retail. Then an end customer can buy the product from the retail. This is different with services. Production and consumption of a service cannot be separated. Every time service is produced, customer is consuming it at the same time. Also this inseparability means that the service produced cannot be separated from the provider itself. (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012)

#### 3.1.3 Variability

There are many cleaning services available but they all have different quality. It does have an effect on the service quality who produces it, when it is produced, where it is produced and how it is produced. For an example you hire two cleaners from different cleaning services. First one cleans the house perfectly but the second one forgets to dust. These both are cleaning services but the quality varies as the producer is different. (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012)

#### 3.1.4 Perishability

Value life of a service and a product has immense difference. Ordinary tangible product might have same value over many years but for services value life is lot shorter. Services cannot be stored for later use as normal products

can. Therefore the service has value when the service is produced. Kotler has an example in the Principles of Marketing book. If you miss the doctor's appointment, they will charge anyways because the value for the service existed only at the time of appointment. (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012)

### 3.2 Marketing Mix

Marketing mix is the more detailed plan how the organization or company implements their marketing. It sets the tool and tactics how the company will success. Different marketing gurus have different subtopics in marketing mix but Kotler has the basic four Ps. These are Price, Product, Place and Promotion. (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012)

#### 3.2.1 Product

This is the actual value what customer gets when product is bought. In this case when the thesis is about the student union HAMKO services, product mean the gain student members get when they pay the membership fee. Also the extra service as the Survival Kit goes under product.

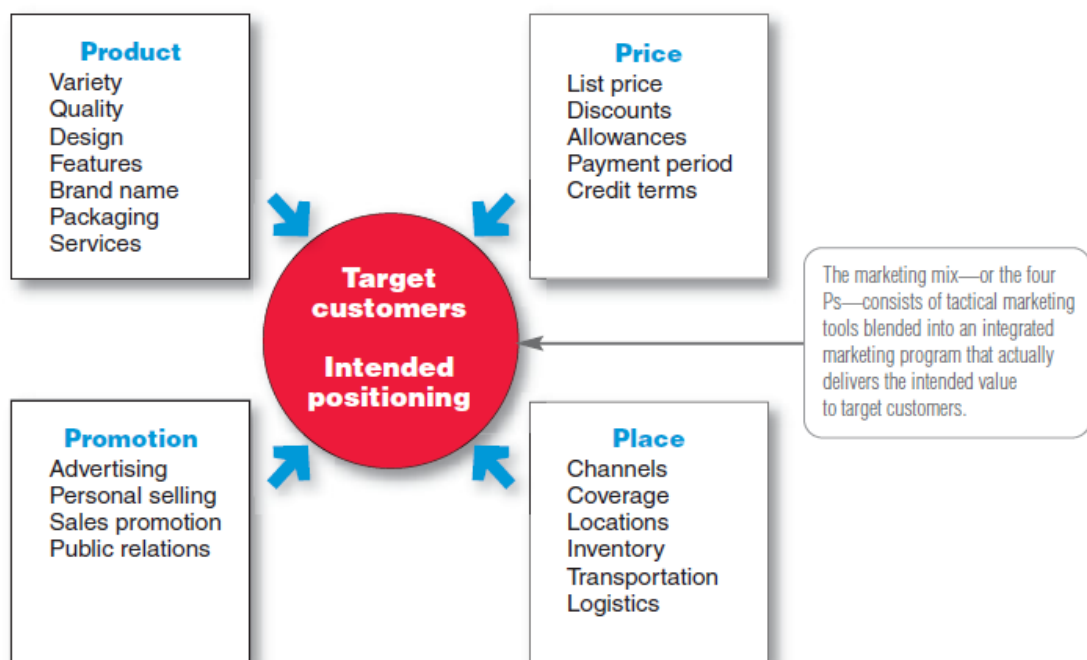


Figure 4 The Four Ps in Marketing Mix. (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012)

### 3.2.2 Price

There is no such thing as a free lunch. Price defines the monetary value of the service or product. Straight forwardly it is how many euros student needs to pay to have the membership.

### 3.2.3 Place

It is vitally important to have the product available. Place means the activities organization has to support its visibility in various medias/places. In this case it is a good example that the student union HAMKO mainly works in the main campus of Häme UAS in Hämeenlinna but they have partner student associations in other campuses which provides the student union HAMKO's services to local students.

### 3.2.4 Promotion

The last P, promotion, is sometimes thought not be that important. Promotion means the activities organization has to let people know about their services or products. This promotion should include more information than just the basics of the product. By giving more information about the organization itself can strengthen the buying decision in the customers.

## 3.3 Service Marketing

Back in the 70's marketing was mainly focused on goods. From onwards researchers found out that the economic value of services was beginning to exceed other kind of activities. First efforts of service marketing were working out what services is and adapting service as an additional value to the product.

Earlier mentioned four P's in marketing does apply to service marketing but marketing services has moved from traditional marketing's emphasis on pricing and transaction to understanding real reasons why customers interacts with an organization. Good example to this is Kottler's P's theory that got three more P's added to this. These extra P's stands for Participants, Processes and Physical evidence. These are explained in more detail in the chapter Service Design.

Creating and building stable relationship between customers and producers is marketing. Especially in service business as it co-creates value to the service. Marketers define who the potential customers are and as those are defined they can be included into the processes. Marketing also gives some insight about customer's practices and values. Understanding relationship between people and organization, between people and other people, between organizations of other kind is what matters when starting designing services. (Kimbell, 2011)

### 3.4 Service Design

“Service Design helps to innovate (create new) or improve (existing) services to make them more useful, usable, desirable for clients and efficient as well as effective for organizations.

It is a new holistic, multi-disciplinary, integrative field.” (Moritz, 2005)

Service design thinking is a relatively new way to create and develop products and services from customer-centered perspective. Target of this process is to design services according to customer needs and competences of service providers. There are no guides or books that say “do this and you will succeed”. Service design is more learnt via trial and error. Book “This is Service Design Thinking” by 23 different service design professionals/authors is closest to that guide.

Marc Stickdorn, one of the authors of “This is Service Thinking”, explains core principles. These 5 points tries to illustrate and explain the outlines of the way of thinking required to design services.

#### 3.4.1 User-centered

First point of service design core principles is that service should be designed with user-centered way of thinking. This means that when services is designed customer will be at the center of the service design process. Designer has to have full and genuine understanding of the customer. This understanding is beyond empirical analyses. To get service designer slip into customers shoes one needs to gain authentic customer insights that includes methods and tool to understand individual service experience and its wider context.

Marc Stickdorn has a perfect example for user-centered approach: “If you remember an occasion when you tried to get technical assistance, like using a telephone helpline for example, it is common to have problems in how both parties involved understand each other. You and the hotline agent literally speak the same language, and yet it is often difficult to communicate because you exist in different realities. -- staff and customers, can often misunderstand one another – simply because we all have individual backgrounds and experiences”. (Stickdorn, 2011). During the development of the service it is crucial to understand this. Having user-centered approach to development process gives customer and producer a common language.

#### 3.4.2 Co-creative

Organizations have different stakeholders. Earlier mentioned user-centered perspective gives us the common language that every stakeholder understands. Now that different parties understand each other, organization can group them and involve them in the design process creating a new service or developing existing one. For an example, the student union HAMKO invites its cooperative partners from other campuses to have a two day meeting in Evo campus. Point of this meeting is to strengthen the bond between

the student union HAMKO's partner associations. Every partner association have their own events and services. It is benefit for all when the partner associations develop their services together to accommodate needs of students from other campuses too. Partner associations are a bit like customers to the student union HAMKO too as partner associations get some financial aid from the student union HAMKO. This is called co-creation. The more customer is involved in the service design, it is more likely to increase customer loyalty and long-term engagement. (Stickdorn, 2011)

### 3.4.3 Sequencing

Service is like a movie. It consists multiple touchpoints or scenes. Also services are dynamic processes that happens over time, like a movie. Therefore rhythming and sequencing service is important. Customer gets bored if service takes too long time or might get stressed if service is pushed too quickly. It is visualization of the interrelated service processes and touchpoints that creates the full service experience. Quite often this sequencing is like a stage play – actors have to go through multiple rehearsal to master the play. In this case service processes must be completed several time to see the perfect pace and achieve excellence. (Stickdorn, 2011)

### 3.4.4 Evidencing

Problem with services is that sometimes the moment customer realizes that service has been consumed is when customer is paying the bill. Services like housekeeping in hotel is designed to be inconspicuous but sometimes the inconspicuousness might create gap between expected and provided service. Services should be designed so that customers are aware of intangible services. For an example, the student events in Finland. When student attends an event of some kind one gets a badge that one can sew onto one's student overall. In this kind of case student gets the intangible service but also is aware of that as student gets the badge. Hence service evidencing, there is an evidence from service consumed. Service evidencing help reveal the backstage services but it can be harmful though – junk mail for an example. (Stickdorn, 2011)

### 3.4.5 Holistic

Most of the services are fully intangible but produces in tangible world. Those services takes place in tangible environment and quite often generating physical outcomes other than mentioned in evidencing. In a case of housekeeping the physical outcome is clean house but evidence is the bill. Customers subconsciously perceive the service with their senses. They feel, hear, taste, smell and taste the physical outcome of the service. Of course all of these aspects cannot be taken into consideration when designing services. Intention of this is to see the wider context of the service design and where the service process takes place. When designing service, holistic thinking helps keeping unwanted outcomes away from the service. (Stickdorn, 2011)



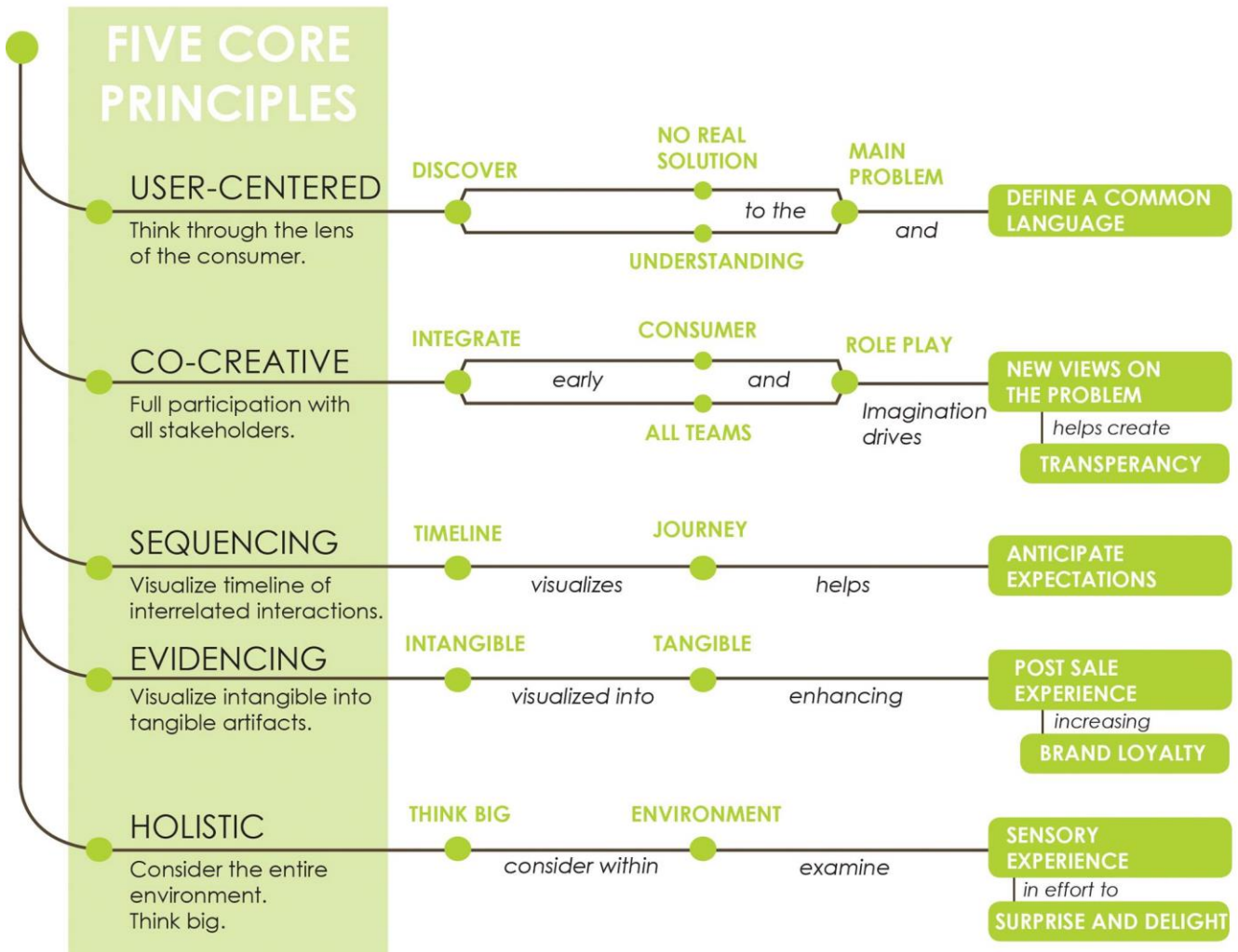


Figure 5 Five core principles of service design thinking.

## 4 FEEDBACK COLLECTION

Customer feedback is vitally important for developing the organization. Feedback should be collected from various aspects, such as the product itself, customer satisfaction, and visibility of the organization. There are many ways to give and receive feedback. For the case organization student union HAMKO the most important media for feedback is questionnaires. Students in Häme UAS are so spread that personal contact or local interviews are quite challenging. Therefore a questionnaire will be produced to find out what kind of services would be needed among students. Author will also use personal interviews but not to gather the primary data. (Lofgren, 2015)

### 4.1 Survey

Surveys are one of the most effective ways to gather feedback. There is no time limit when customer can answer to the questions. As it is effective, it is also hard to create a good survey. Questions asked needs to be thought thoroughly because people don't want to answer if it takes too much time. Too little questions and then the survey is not giving any results. The fine balance between effective short questions is hard to find.

First of all, the time needed to complete the survey defines will you get answers or not. Thirty minute survey might give you answers to many questions but the point is to get people to answer. Having too long survey will bring few problems. The first one is that the answer rates will drop. Secondly the longer answerers get, more they tend to frustrate as they believe the survey will never end. This is a problem as at the end your customers don't really think their answers anymore. Keeping your survey relatively short should increase the answer rate and bring relatively valid results.

Survey should be open. By open author means that do not have too many multiple choice questions or rating scales. With open-ended questions your customers will have opportunity to give exactly the answers they want you to hear. It is better for you and also customers feels that they are listened. (Lofgren, 2015)

### 4.2 HAMKO On The Road

HAMKO On The Road (later HOTR) is an on-the-road tour that takes place twice a year. HOTR means that the board members of student union HAMKO mobilizes and visits every campus of Häme UAS. During these visits, some feedback is collected. Feedback is used to improve HAMKO's activities but feedback is also gathered for the university itself. These visits are great for feedback gathering as it always makes some life to the campus when the student union HAMKO is visiting. Students are there and they are

curious what the student union HAMKO is doing there. The board member's job is to discuss with student and try to find is there anything wrong at the campus. Feedback is collected with personal discussions but students are also encouraged to fill up feedback forms available.

Gathering feedback during these events is good solution in terms of this thesis. It has been noted that surveys among students has rather pessimistic approach. Students in Häme UAS clearly don't like to answer on those. Therefore personal discussion with the students are required.

### 4.3 Feedback Analysis

According to The Marketers Guide to Surveying Users by Qualaroo it is rather good rate to have 40% response rate on average survey distributed via email. Anyhow, the results must be analysed. The purpose of the research needs to be taken into account. Even though the survey would be a good one, it still might get bad response rate nor would the response rate be important. For an example, if you would get insight about your organization, the amount of answers would not be critical but the actual feedback is the thing that contributes for your research. (Qualaroo - Behavior Insight Surveys For Smarter A/B Testing, 2015)

Already in the survey creating process it should be noted that the results needs to be analyzed. Making categories for the questions helps to categorize the answers. After the categorizing it is easier to evaluate the results. There is no written rule how the categorizing should be done. Survey maker can make categories however it is seen well. Every survey is unique therefore results are unique too.

### 4.4 Case

In this research survey is used for gathering the primary data. Author does have all the email addresses of the student in Häme UAS but group email in Häme UAS is not very good solution. The survey link would have to go through double check before author would even have authorization to send the group email. The actual survey is built in to Webropol survey service. Author will concentrate on what students would like to get more from student union HAMKO but also how students see the student union. As mentioned in the Introduction, the ultimate goal is to find a totally new service or develop existing one for student union HAMKO's portfolio.

Members of the student union are students meaning that survey has to be timed so that there will be as many views as possible. Students quite often tend to forget school related things during summer holidays. That is the least favorable time to publish the survey as most of the students would just ignore it. Most of the degree programs starts the first week of September. This

would be much better to publish the survey than middle of summer. First few weeks of September are still quite often a bit busy for both the students and the board members of the student union HAMKO. To get the best initial visibility for the survey it would be best to publish during weeks 38 or 39 or later. These weeks are good choice as students have returned to their schedules and during these weeks student most likely will be most active.

HAMKO On The Road tour on 2015 takes place on beginning of November. To maximize survey answers, survey will be available until HOTR tour is completed. Having face to face interaction with the student will definitely boost answer rates. HAMKO wants to have as many as possible gain reliable data from the survey. HAMKO has approximately 2 600 paying members from 7 200 students. Confidence interval that is used in statistics to describe reliability of the survey should be kept quite low. For this survey author has planned to get confidence interval around 5% to 8 %. For the confidence coefficient author has planned to get 90% confidence level. With these percentages in mind survey would need to get around 130 answers to be valid.

Seven services that were selected to the research are the core services the student union HAMKO produces to the students. These seven services are student discounts, student events, clubs, HAMKO Lounge, Survival Kits, member services and harassment officer. Student discounts and student events are quite self-explanatory. The student union HAMKO organizes event to students, mainly in Hämeenlinna but also in other cities. The student discounts in the area where Häme University of Applied Sciences operates are negotiated by the student union HAMKO. These discounts are usually available only to the students who have the student card.

Clubs are one of the newest services the student union HAMKO produces. There has been clubs earlier by partner associations but year 2015 the student union HAMKO introduced “Docventures Movie Club”. Students gathered to the HAMKO Lounge to watch Docventures documents with their friends. The club was a success and most likely will be done again in the next season of Docventures. The HAMKO Lounge is great place for students to hang out, even after school hours. Basically any student of the Häme University of Applied Sciences can use that room when ever.

The student union HAMKO has an employee whose responsibilities are member services. Her job is to hand out the student cards, give new semester stickers and help student in issues which are related to the student unions operations. The job is kind of a customer service job but the customers of the student union HAMKO are the members they have. Therefore that service is called member services.

The last two but maybe the most important services taken into the research regards the student welfare, the Survival Kits and the harassment officer. Earlier in the thesis it is explained what is the Survival Kit concept but the harassment officer service is something that the members of the student union HAMKO does not know that well. Harassment officer is a person on the board of directives in the student union HAMKO whose responsible is to

address issues like bullying or harassment in the Häme University of Applied Sciences. Student can contact the harassment officer anonymously and tell the officer s/he is being mistreated in some way. It is low-threshold channel to get help, the officer might not know answer to the problem but knows who does.

### 4.5 Survey Questions

Häme UAS is truly international university of applied sciences. As the student union HAMKO has lot of members who does not speak or understand Finnish, survey has to be bilingual. Question in the survey are both in Finnish and English. Only English is not an option as there are members who do not understand English well enough to complete the survey. Therefore both English and Finnish questions are required.

At first some basic information is needed from the students. As the student union HAMKO has operations over all the seven campuses, survey has to identify from which campus the answer is from. Simple “Choose your campus” dropout question is used for this. Usually in HAMKO surveys there is a question where one chooses when his/hers studies started. By adding this question, the student union can identify does it affect when the student started his/her studies.

1. Millä kampuksella opiskelet?  
In which campus do you study? \*

Visamäki ▼

2. Opintojen aloitusvuosi.  
Starting year of studies.  
\*

4 merkkiä jäljellä

Figure 6 Questions 1 and 2 in the questionnaire.

In the research author wants to find the usability levels of the services the student union HAMKO provides. This data can be gathered by simple question. “I have used HAMKO’s services”. Seven most popular service was selected to the questionnaire. These services which usability levels author wants to gather are student discounts, student events, clubs, HAMKO Lounge, Survival Kits, member services and harassment officers. Interviewee answers by rating from 0 to 3. 0 meaning not used at all and 3 meaning used often.

## Developing Services in Student Union

### 3. Olen käyttänyt seuraavia HAMKOn palveluja, I have used these HAMKO services,

0=en ole käyttänyt, 3=käyttänyt usein.  
0=have not used, 3=have used often.

	0	1	2	3
Opiskelijaedut Student discounts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opiskelijatapahtumat Student events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Klubit Clubs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HAMKO Lounge ja bänditila HAMKO Lounge and music room	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Survival Kits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jäsenpalvelut Member services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Häirintäyhdyshenkilöt Harassment officer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure 8 Question 3 in the questionnaire.

Quality of the services is the thing that matters most to the student union HAMKO. Therefore author had separate question for usability levels and quality to reduce errors. Question where interviewee rates quality is fairly similar as the question for the usability level. Minor change is that the rate is from 1 to 6. With rating from 1 to 5 interviewees often choose rate 3 if they do not know is the service good or bad in their opinion. This factor was removed by implementing earlier mentioned rating from 1 to 6. Interviewee must chose is the quality of the service more bad or good.

### 4. Kokemukseni palvelun laadusta, My experience on quality of service,

Arvioithan palvelun laadun. 1=todella heikko, 6=todella hyvä.  
Please rate the quality of the service. 1=extremely bad, 6=extremely good.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Opiskelijaedut Student discounts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opiskelijatapahtumat Student events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Klubit Clubs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HAMKO Lounge ja bänditila HAMKO Lounge and music room	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Survival Kits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jäsenpalvelut Member services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Häirintäyhdyshenkilöt Harassment officer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure 7 Question 4 in the questionnaire.

As the thesis is about developing the services of the student union HAMKO, interviewees were asked how they would improve services which quality they rated weak. This question was open ended so the interviewees could answer exactly how they felt. Open ended question are a bit harder to evaluate but it gives more detailed insight when interviewee can describe his/hers feelings freely towards the service quality.

**5. Mikäli koet joidenkin palveluiden laadun heikoksi, miten sitä voisi mielestäsi kehittää?  
If you evaluate some services to be weak, how would you improve them?**



Figure 9 Question 5 in the questionnaire.

The last question in the questionnaire is about the student union HAMKO trying new services. The student union HAMKO implements the services they have for its members. To have services valued by the members, the student union HAMKO has to listen which kind of services the members want to receive. The last question is again open ended and fairly simple one. In the question interviewees describes which kind of services they would like to receive.

**6. HAMKOn tarkoituksena on palvella jäseniään parhaimpansa mukaisesti. Jotta voimme kehittää palvelujamme tai jopa luoda uusia, tarvitsemme apuasi. Millaisia palveluita haluaisit HAMKOn toteuttavan jäsenilleen?  
It is HAMKO's interest to serve it's members as well as possible. To develop services or create new ones, we need your help. Which kind of services would you like HAMKO to produce?**



Figure 10 Question 6 in the questionnaire.

## 5 RESEARCH RESULTS

The research questionnaire was implemented during weeks 45 and 46 in the Hamko On The Road –tour. The student union HAMKO visited all the seven campuses Häme University of Applied Sciences have. These campuses are Evo, Forssa, Lahdensivu (Hämeenlinna), Lepaa, Mustiala, Riihimäki, Valkeakoski and Visamäki (Hämeenlinna). In Forssa campus there was a mix up with the dates when the student union HAMKO is coming to have a visit. The day the student union HAMKO visited ended up being a day when there were only handful of student in Forssa campus. Therefore there are no answers from Forssa campus at all. Author himself participated in two of these campus visits, in Valkeakoski and Visamäki. This can be seen in the results as these two campuses generated over 75% from all the answers. Altogether the questionnaire got 70 answer. It is a bit lower than what was needed for the confidence interval and confidence level mentioned earlier in the thesis.

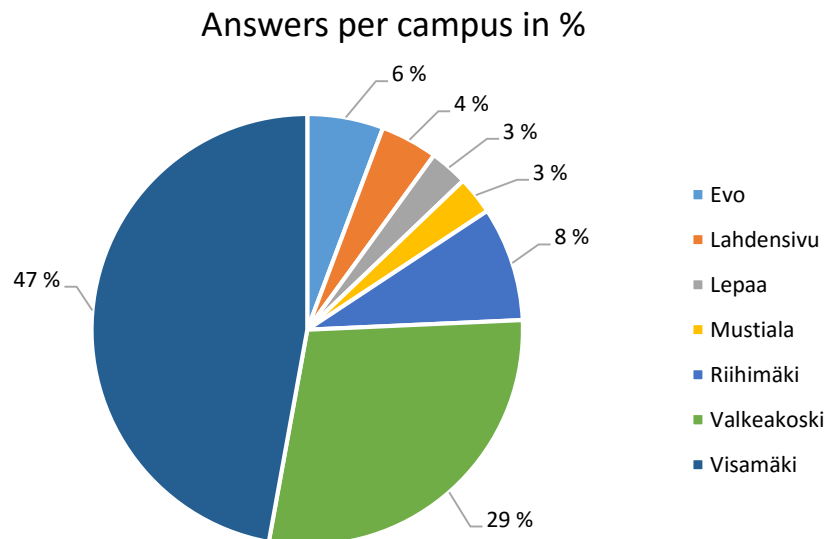


Figure 11 Amount of the answers per campus in percentages.

The students interviewed represents quite well those students who are the main customers of the student union HAMKO, according to the starting year of studies. Usually students who has started their studies 2012 or earlier do not actually go to the campus that often. The “younger” students who visit the campus almost daily are those who see the activities that the student union HAMKO have in the campuses. For an example, they are those who will be present when the student union HAMKO visits the campuses. A huge portion of the answers came from the newest students, those who started their studies in the autumn of 2015. These students most likely will still be customers of the student union HAMKO after two to three years of their studies. Reacting now to their feedback helps the student union HAMKO sell the membership better for the new students in 2016. In the meanwhile as these students from 2015 see that things have changed into



better, they will get their membership too. Answers from the students that has started their studies 2012 or earlier are fairly irrelevant. To have maximum results in developing services the student union HAMKO should prioritise the feedback from the newer students.

Starting year of studies in %

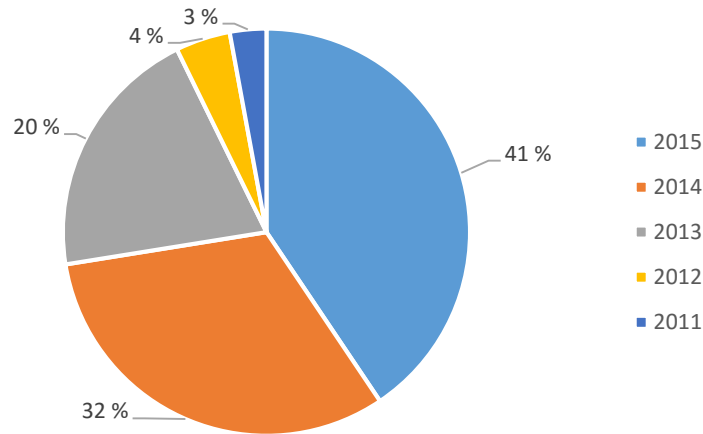
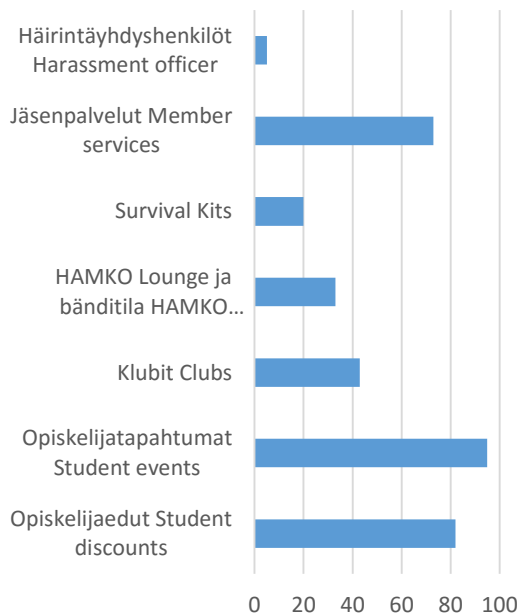


Figure 12 Students' starting years in percentages

Level of usage in %, 2014



Level of usage in %, 2015

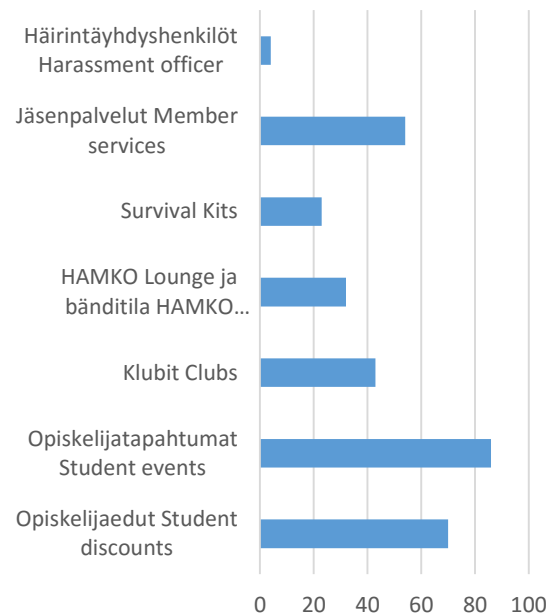


Figure 13 Level of usage of the services in percentages among the students that have started their studies in 2014 and 2015.

One of the most important result in the research is the usability levels. It clearly shows that some of the services the student union HAMKO produce are not used in a way the student union HAMKO would desire. Services like student discounts or student events seems to be well acknowledged and used. 91% from all the interviewees said that they have participated in the

student events. The lowest usability level is with the harassment officers. Only two interviewees have used that service even though it is kind of an important service. By comparing levels of usage between study starting years of 2014 and 2015, it can be seen that starting year does not have a major effect on the usability of the services. It can be assumed that as the usability levels are this consistent, most likely the answers about the level of the quality are uniform as well.

Like mentioned above, when comparing results of the quality of the service between different starting years, it can be said that the starting year does not have an effect on the quality students perceive. In the graph below can be seen the average how interviewees rated the qualities of the services in the research. When collecting answers, interviewees were told to assess not only the quality but also that how is the services available to them. It means that interviewees included the availability to the quality of the service. For an example only two interviewees answered that they have used harassment officer –service but total of 31 interviewees rated the quality. In this case the quality includes that interviewees rated that how they feel they can use the harassment officer. Even though service produced can be high quality but no one knows about it, the overall quality is low.

As seen from the graph, students are fairly happy with the student discounts and the student events. Of course there is room for improvement. If the student union HAMKO keeps up the quality of the student events and the amount of the local student discounts, there should not be significant impact on the amount of total members the student union HAMKO has. It is noted for the action plan for the 2016 that the student union HAMKO tries to improve student card benefits even further by getting new discounts in all the cities where Häme University of Applied Sciences have campuses.

### Level of the quality, all interviewees

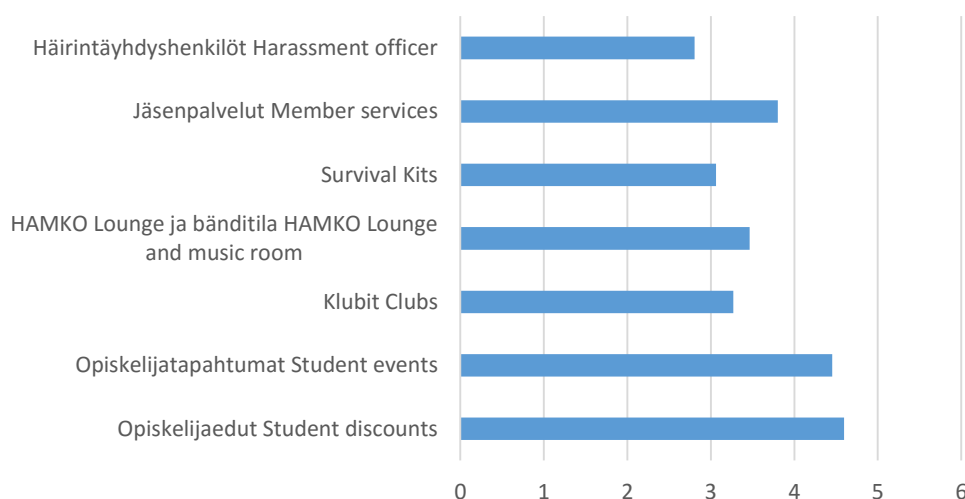


Figure 14 Level of the quality of the services as an average from all the interviewees.

When the student union HAMKO implemented the clubs, it got quite a good reception from the students. The quality interviewees rated is surprisingly low, most likely due because not that many students know about these clubs. Three lowest rated services were harassment officer, the Survival Kits and the clubs. For the year 2016 these services have to be developed to gain better availability and overall quality.

For the open ended questions the survey got few really good answers how the services should be developed. There are so many different instances working in the Häme University of Applied Sciences that it was already known that some of the answers from open ended questions will concerns for an example the student union HAMKO's partner associations. Interviewees were told that the questionnaire is about the student union HAMKO but still few interviewees have answered about events organized by HAKO (Hämeenlinnan ammattikorkeakoulun opiskelijat). Most likely it means that students do not actually know which events are organized by the student union HAMKO and which one by others. 20% of the answers pointed out the communication the student union HAMKO does. Interviewees did not know about these services or even that the student union HAMKO has these services. In the next question interviewees were asked to opinion which kind of services the student union HAMKO would produce. Some of the answers were more suitable for the question number 5. All in all question number 6 was a bit of a failure since there are only one or two answers that actually tries to answer on the question "which kind of service should be produced". To get the best possible conclusion and suggestions derived, it might be the best option just to merge question number 5 and 6 together.

"It would be nice to know more about the operations of the student union HAMKO and how to join the decision making process. I don't know how I could vote for the student union HAMKO's future". This sentence written by one of the interviewees does somewhat summarize most of the answers in the question 6.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

It is quite visible from the feedback that students want to know more. They want to know more what the student union HAMKO does, where and when. As the student union HAMKO is lobbying organization, the operations should be transparent and the members should always be informed what is done. Sure, the student union HAMKO has the council of representatives whose task is to represent all the student in the Häme University of Applied Sciences but the council's activity has dropped as there are not enough applicants to the council. This could be improved by improving message to the students that tells them about the core activities of the student union HAMKO. By improving message, it surely will improve awareness of the student union HAMKO among students. This would be beneficial in two ways. Firstly, students would know what the student union HAMKO is up to and secondly, feedback regarding activities of another instance would go to the right address.

This increase in awareness would be beneficial for advertising not so well known services such as clubs or harassment officer. Lately the student union HAMKO has received request from the employees of the Häme University of Applied Sciences that the harassment officers should be more visible to the students. There has been cases where student has felt mistreated but the threshold to contact personnel has been too high. The point of the student unions are to improve student welfare in every aspect, by lobbying but also helping individuals in problems they might have. The issue is that student do not know what harassment officer or even that they exist. The student union HAMKO should improve the visibility of the harassment officer so that every student in the Häme University of Applied Sciences knows who these harassment officers are and how to contact them. The student union HAMKO has a member in the campus safety workshop in the Häme University of Applied Sciences. There has been plans to implement "Safety Day" for all the new students every year. The student union HAMKO should participate this "Safety Day" by taking harassment officers to the campuses so they could brief every new student who they are. As all the students love overall badges, Safety Day could have its own designated badge students would receive after completing some tasks during the day. It should not be only relied on this Safety Day but also improve the message about harassment officers in all the media the student union HAMKO has.

The student union HAMKO's visibility to the students is another place for improvement. As the office of the student union HAMKO is located in the Visamäki campus, sometimes it is easy to forget how students from other campuses sees the student union HAMKO. That is the reason for these HAMKO On The Road –tours but the feedback shows it might not be enough. The student union in Laurea University of Applied Sciences has good results for being visible to the students. They have offices in every campus Laurea University of Applied Sciences have. That is something the student union HAMKO should check would it be possible or appropriate to implement as well. By having offices in every campus would definitely increase visibility but might end up being way costly with given human and

financial resources. It should be benchmarked does extra offices end up increasing member satisfaction. If it does, it would boost up memberships and therefore increase income. The partner associations are a bit like the student union HAMKO would have offices in every campus but as these partner associations are working under their own name, it does not benefit nor harm the image of the student union HAMKO.

As the question number 6 in the questionnaire was a bit of failure, it is not possible to give recommendations for the totally new service the student union HAMKO should implement. Developing existing ones and making sure students know about these leads to increased amount of student members who pays the membership fee. This helps stabilize the finance of the student union HAMKO. That being the original reason for this thesis and research.

The student union HAMKO should continue developing itself by checking where they stand and act according to it. The questionnaire used in this research has to be edited little bit. For an example question number 6 should be more explanatory what actually is asked. The questionnaire as it was did help giving better insight how students perceive the services provided by the student union HAMKO. This kind of questionnaire would be the most beneficial when the questionnaire would be implemented once a year every year. That way the data can be compared how it has change and is the development going forward. The student union HAMKO has to develop to stay even with the changes occurring in the environment they are in.

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Appendices have their own style:

Appendix 1

TITLE OF APPENDIX

There is no numbering on the Appendix pages.