Creating a frame for marketing strategy with a digital twist

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to study strategic marketing planning and the effects of digitalization in it. The thesis is commissioned by Häme University of Applied Sciences (HAMK) and it aims to create a frame for HAMK’s upcoming marketing strategy. This frame should answer to the needs of the whole higher education institute and forward digitalization in the organization’s marketing processes.

The research question of this thesis is: What is the needed content for the marketing strategy and how does digitalization affects it? The answer was provided by looking at theoretical knowledge about the formulation of marketing strategies and the effects of digitalization on marketing planning. From this base of gathered theoretical information, a simplified model of a marketing strategy has been created to support the planning process. The practical side of the work concentrated on creating a marketing strategy frame suitable for the needs of HAMK which takes into account the special characteristics of a higher education institution and the willingness to toughen up the digitalization in their marketing processes.

As a result, it can be said that there are generally accepted contents of marketing strategy which can be utilized as a base for the marketing strategy. Still, the basic frame formulated with this technique will be too generic to be taken into usage as it is; its contents have to be defined to match the organization’s character and needs. In addition, because digitalization has an effect on all content of marketing strategy, it should be taken into account as a part of the whole marketing strategy, not just in tactical marketing plans.

Keywords Marketing, marketing strategy, strategic planning, digitalization

Pages 50 pages including appendices (3 pages)
Tämä opinnäytetyö kertoo markkinoinnin strategisesta suunnittelusta ja digitalisaation vaikutuksesta siinä. Opinnäytetyö on tehty toimeksiantona Hämeen ammattikorkeakoululle (HAMK) ja sen tavoitteena on luoda pohja HAMKin markkinointistrategialle. Pohjan tavoitteena on tukea koko korkeakoulun markkinoimistoa ja edistää markkinoinnin digitalisaatiota organisaatioissa.

Työn keskeinen tutkimuskysymys on mitä sisältää markkinointistrategiassa tulisi olla ja kuinka digitalisaatio vaikuttaa siihen? Tähän kysymykseen on pyritty vastaamaan tutustumalla teoreettiseen tietoon markkinointistrategian muodostamisesta sekä digitalisaation vaikutuksesta markkinoinnin suunnittelussa. Kerätyn teoreettisen tiedon pohjalta on työstetty yksinkertaistettu malli markkinointistrategian suunnittelun tueksi. Työn käytännön osuutena on luotu HAMKille sopiva markkinointistrategian pohja, joka ottaa huomioon korkeakoulun erityispiirteet ja halun vahvistaa digitaalista otetta koko markkinointiprosessissa.

Lopputuloksena voidaan todeta, että markkinointistrategialle on löydettävissä yleisesti hyväksyttyjä sisältöjä, joita voidaan käyttää markkinointistrategian pohjana. Näin syntyvä yleinen pohja on kuitenkin liian geneerinen otettavaksi sellaisenaan käyttöön organisaatioissa, vaan siihen liittyviä sisältöjä tulee tarkentaa kyseessä olevan organisaation tarpeisiin sopiviksi. Koska digitalisaatio vaikuttaa kaikkeen sisältöön markkinointistrategiassa, se on syytä huomioida osana kokonaisuutta, ei vain taktisissa markkinoinnin suunnitelmissa.

Avainsanat  markkinointi, markkinointistrategia, strateginen suunnittelu, digitalisaatio

Sivut  50 sivua, joista liitteitä (3 sivua)
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1 INTRODUCTION

Usually, when we speak about marketing, we actually speak about tactical marketing plans, advertising campaigns or even isolated ads. Strategic and tactical planning are often mixed up, and most of the organization’s resources are focused on planning and executing marketing campaigns. When starting to look deeper, it is obvious that the marketing planning process should start from the strategic level and then the gained strategic understanding should flow into tactical plans and single campaigns. Still, this seems to be hard to do and the importance of strategic marketing planning is often underestimated or forgotten in daily routines.

So, how can strategic marketing planning be restored in the marketing process? MBASkool (n.d.) defines strategic market planning as “an ongoing process through which the company creates marketing strategies and plans its implementations in the target market”. This view is also supported by other authors, detailed in Chapter 2. If we continue to think from this viewpoint, the next step towards strategic marketing planning is to have a marketing strategy. Then the question is, how is the marketing strategy formed? This is the part where things become tricky: where can instructions be found and what should marketing strategy contain? As most marketing managers who have to create marketing strategies know, there is a lot of literature about marketing strategy creation. And because of the amount of literature, the variation of opinions, the level of planning and needed content appears to be really wide at first sight.

I stumbled across this problem when I investigated how to develop a marketing process and create a marketing strategy for the higher education institution (HEI) where I work, being responsible for marketing. As the institution is going to publish their new strategy in the near future, its top management notified that marketing processes should also be renewed in order to fulfil new strategic goals. Therefore the HEI’s strategic communications department (SCD), which is responsible for the marketing of the HEI, started renewing marketing processes to match the expectations of the upcoming strategy. Based on my own experience, I think this is not a common perspective in the HEI sector. Also, authors such as Gibbs and Maringe (2008, p. 45) say that in HEIs marketing is often seen as advertising and promotion, not as a strategic process. In the HEI in which I work, the planning of new marketing process started with the goal of creating a marketing strategy that will fit the needs of all the business areas of the HEI, not just student recruitment. This chosen aim of creating a marketing strategy for the whole organization and not only focusing on student recruitment is a key change in the marketing of the HEI in question. This decision was made because the marketing of the HEI contains lots more elements than just student recruitment, even if that is obviously one of the main areas of marketing, it is not the only area and the marketing strategy frame should be usable for all the business areas of the HEI.
When I started to investigate how to create a marketing strategy, I soon noticed that there are no straightforward guidelines or simplified frames to start with. That was a starting point for this thesis: I wanted to find out “What is the content needed for a marketing strategy?” This is the main research question of this thesis. This question will be answered by looking into marketing strategy theory, comparing the views of different authors and summing up their perspectives on the marketing strategy frame, which can be used for the creation of the actual marketing strategy.

At the same time, when I was starting to study the content of marketing strategy, the discussion on how digitalization has changed marketing and how it will affect it in the future was, and is, still ongoing in the field. Even though the public discussion concentrated on the more isolated phenomena of digital marketing, such as marketing automation or artificial intelligence in marketing, I started to think that as digitalization plays a huge role in marketing practices and tools, maybe it should somehow also affect the content of marketing strategy. That thought formed the secondary research question of this thesis: how does digitalization affect the content of the marketing strategy? This question will be studied on a general level by looking at the existing publications and then comparing the gained knowledge to the created marketing strategy frame and its content. The secondary research question – how does digitalization affect the content of a marketing strategy? – is also highly relevant in the HEI that I work in at the moment. As digitalization is part of the HEI’s current strategy, aiming to also improve digitalization in marketing processes is important. Also, digital marketing plays a huge part in the HEI’s marketing tactics and campaigns, so it should be seen in the marketing strategy also.

When the question “What is the content needed for the marketing strategy and how does digitalization affect it?” had been studied, the gathered knowledge was converted into a simplified model to be used as a base for the creation of the HEI’s marketing strategy. The practical side of this thesis concentrates on creating an operable marketing strategy frame for the HEI. The frame can be used as a helpful tool in the HEI’s marketing when the actual marketing strategy work starts. As the final product of this thesis is just a frame for marketing strategy, the HEI will have a lot of work to do in the future to transform their needs, goals and knowledge into the form of the marketing strategy and maintain the strategic marketing planning process to meet the expectations. I hope my thesis and frame for the marketing strategy can help this work and give some tools with which to achieve success.
2 A MARKETING STRATEGY FRAMEWORK WITH A DIGITAL TWIST

The research question of this thesis is “What is the content needed for the marketing strategy and how does digitalization affect it?” and the theoretical background will be divided into three parts. The first part will focus on the marketing strategy: what is it and what content should it include? The second part concentrates on the effect of the digitalization and the third part takes a closer look at the more detailed content of the revealed topics of marketing strategy. By going through these three topics it should be clear which are the key elements of the marketing strategy frame, how digitalization affects to the marketing strategy and what kind of information each element should include.

The answer to the research question will be produced by using theoretical research: by studying the existing literature on the context of marketing and digitalization. The selected literature will be chosen by its relativity to the subject, the diversity of the industry, the point of view and the availability of research time. This theoretical knowledge will form a base for practical application: a marketing strategy frame.

2.1 What is a marketing strategy?

To be able to start the creation of a marketing strategy, it is important to understand what marketing strategy actually means. By looking the definitions from the marketing authors, an organization’s business strategy and marketing strategy seem to complete each other and sometimes also intertwine.

According to Paul Fifield (2007, p. 16) “marketing strategy is the process by which the organization aligns itself with the market it has decided to serve. Thus marketing strategy in fact translates the business objective and strategy into market terms and marketing activity.” In other words, creating a functional marketing objective and practical marketing strategy is not possible without a full understanding of the organization’s strategy and business objectives. This has a two-way effect, because the practical success of the organization’s strategy and business objective also depends on the success of the marketing strategy (Fifield, 2007, p. 16). Also, Tikkanen (2005, pp. 174–175) sees the marketing strategy as an extension of the organization’s business strategy. The content and core values of marketing strategy come straight from the business strategy, so the links between the strategies should be detected with care. Thus, the marketing strategy’s function is to realize these visions and goals in action, such as in marketing communications and pricing.

Another way to see the meaning of marketing strategy would be that marketing strategy is a definition of how an organization wants to act in the markets (Tikkanen & Vassinen, 2009, p. 23, 25). According to Tikkanen and Vassinen (2009, p. 23, 25), marketing strategy includes strategic and operative goals which help increase value for customers, owners and the network. McDonald (2007, p. 88) has come up with a similar description as he says that
marketing strategies guide the operational decisions to accomplish planned relationships with the market opportunities indicated in the previous analysis. According to McDonald and Wilson (2011, pp. 30–32), marketing strategy is also analyzing the early indicators of the forces that are affecting it and creating suitable strategic reactions.

Kotler et al. (2012, p. 96) say that marketing strategies should be made for the each areas of business for achieving the overall objectives of the organization. They call marketing strategy a marketing plan, which is described to be key for directing and coordinating the marketing efforts. They divide the marketing plan into two operating levels: strategic and tactical levels. The strategic marketing plan includes knowledge about the target markets and values for customers based on market analyses. The strategic level of the marketing plan seems to correlate with the concept of marketing strategy that other authors describe.

Blythe (2012, p. 235) continues the ideas of Kotler et al. (2012) as he points out the difference between strategic marketing and marketing strategy: strategic marketing is generated around a general business idea, the attitudes towards it and the premises of the business. It covers all the topics of marketing on all levels. Blythe also sees the marketing strategy as an operative action plan which implements the visions of strategic marketing in practice. The next lower level considers marketing tactics, which are individual operations that drive marketing strategy in practice. Blythe recommends that if an organization wants their marketing strategy and tactics to be most profitable, they should be based on the strategic marketing vision of the organization.

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, marketing strategy and an organization’s business strategy intertwine and complete each other. There seems to be a difference regarding if the marketing strategy is seen as an actual strategy document for the organization or if it is a focused marketing plan with a strategic background. Either way, it can be said that the marketing strategy or strategic planning of marketing is the key element of marketing planning. In this thesis, marketing strategy is understood as a strategic document for a whole organization, which completes and translates the organization’s business strategy into marketing planning.

2.2 The marketing strategy planning process as described by six sources

By looking at the marketing strategy literature, it looks like there are as many ways to create a marketing strategy as there are marketing strategy authors. To be able to find the connective features in the marketing strategy, the first thing decided to do was to take a look at the multiple theories of creating a marketing strategy and find the similarities.

For the theoretical research, six marketing authors or author groups were selected to be studied in this thesis. The authors have been chosen because of
the different angles, backgrounds and levels that they are concerned with and the years of publishing they present. The selected authors are detailed below:

- Paul Fifield (2007): A marketer and professor who addresses the manager level of business organizations regarding customer value.
- Paul Gibbs and Felix Maringe (2008): Marketers and marketing sceptics from the HEI sector who speak out for HEI management and marketers.
- Malcom McDonald (2007): A marketing professor with extensive industrial experience who speaks out for experienced practitioners and managers, and also for students.
- Ian Dodson (2016): The Chair of the Digital Standard Authority who targets digital marketing professionals, students and educators.
- Kotler et al. (2012): A collective of recognised marketing authors who target marketing students and marketers.

Blythe (2012), Fifield (2007), McDonald (2007) and Kotler et al. (2012) present more general perspectives which are directed at students, marketers and managers. Gibbs and Maringe (2008) were selected for their HEI focus and background, and Dodson (2016) because of his strong digital point of view. The publishing years vary from 2007 to 2016 in order to give perspective. With this variation and amount of authors, the similarities and differences in their views of marketing strategy content should be visible.

2.2.1 Blythe’s five questions

Jim Blythe is a university professor who in his book *Essentials of Marketing*, instructs to start the marketing strategy process by asking five questions (2012, p. 235):

- What are the target markets?
- What are the strengths and weakness of the organization in these markets?
- What is the goal of the organization for 5–30 years?
- How will competitors react in the markets?
- Are there enough resources to reach the decided goals?

Besides the first five questions, according to him, there are a lot of matters affecting the marketing strategy, tactical planning and the implementation. These topics are the organization’s goals, resources, competitors, the structure of the markets and the attitude towards changes and risks (Blythe, 2012, p. 235).

Blythe (2012, p. 235) also reminds us that there can be different strategies, for example, different strategies for different clients, customer segments or target countries. For implementation, strategy must be extended to all the marketing
activities of the organization and it has to be made with a good understanding of the business environment. There also needs to be a feedback system, which makes it possible to adjust to the upcoming environmental changes.

Blythe (2012, p. 254) parallels the creation of the marketing strategy and marketing planning to all other planning processes; there is a need for information, a wanted destination and the evaluation of outcomes and methods. Even the elements involved are not so simple and unambiguous as one might think; Blythe encourages simplifying the process, because it will help one to picture the whole process of creating the marketing strategy, and planning and evaluating the actions needed to fulfil it.

2.2.2 Fifield’s SCORPIO model

Dr. Paul Fifield is a widely cited university professor who has developed and published his own SCORPIO model for the formulation of marketing strategy. The SCORPIO model starts from the business strategy of the organization and extends it with the following elements:

- **Segmentation and targeting**: what kind of segments there are, which of the segments are the most important ones and what they want?
- **Customer**: who are the customers and what they want?
- **Organization - process and culture**: What kind of culture and processes there are in the organization, how the strategy should implemented?
- **Retention strategies**: how customer relationships are valued?
- **Positioning and branding**: what are the organization’s dividers from others, how brand should been developed and price competition will be avoid?
- **Industry or market**: what is the business where organization actually wants to be involved into?
- **Offerings**: What are the value propositions and how those will be communicated with different segments? (2007, pp. 131–133)

After the SCORPIO analysis, marketing plans can be created and implementation can be executed.

Fifield strongly differs his model from traditional strategy-formulation models such as Michael Porter’s and actually suggests that the SCORPIO model is more like a checklist than a model (Fifield 2007, p. 129).
2.2.3 Gibbs and Maringe’s CORD model

Paul Gibbs and Felix Maringe are both marketing authors with a university background who are specialized in higher education marketing. They have developed their own marketing strategy model especially for HEIs. It is called the CORD model, which should, according to Gibbs and Maringe (2008, p. 49), raise the profile, sharpen the strategic focus and develop the marketing of the HEI.

The CORD model includes the areas:
- contextualization
- organization and co-ordination
- research
- development.

Besides that, it includes multiple phases that are related to the four main areas.
Figure 2. The CORD model by Gibbs and Maringe (2008, p. 50)

Contextualization finds the relevance and connection to the strategy of possible actions by reflecting the development plans, ideology and mission of the organization and the challenges, competences and nature of the competition. A closer look at the development plans reveals the purpose and need for developing the marketing and what are the reasons that have led to this need. The ideology and mission need to be thought about to reveal the true mission of the HEI and whether it reflects the true situation of the ambient conditions. The challenges and competences of the HEI can be looked at via internal and external analyses of the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. It is also about reflecting the wanted development towards the needs of the HEI and thinking about how it will affect its core business. The nature of competition can be reflected by looking at who the competitors are in the intended field and how they have succeeded. Also, one must think about how to differ one’s organization from the competitors and how the HEI’s development will separate it from other HEIs (Gibbs & Maringe, 2008, pp. 51–53).

Organization and co-ordination stand to strengthen the marketing function in HEIs by developing structures and the co-work of people so that they work in teams with proper resources. Gibbs and Maringe (2008, p. 53) suggest that for
creating the functional structures for marketing, the first step is defining the roles and functions for all parties involved. The second step is to reorganize marketing efforts so that teams are in charge, which should create synergy and promote possibilities for having new ideas from different environments. This kind of development will require a rationalization of the resources allocated for marketing and for supporting marketing roles. The third step is to look at the data gathering and marketing intelligence resources, which are usually quite poor in HEIs.

The research part of the CORD model is focused on understanding the market segmentations and customer needs: who are the customers? What are their needs? And how can those needs be met by an HEI? Segmentation makes sure that the real and wanted customer segments have been detected. The customer needs focus on the curriculum of the HEI: what are the real needs of the customers in the curriculum? Are the given and received curricula at the same level? And what is the quality of the given curriculum from the customer point of view? According to the CORD model’s diagram (Figure 3), after the research part, actual marketing planning starts by adding the marketing mix elements to the table and starting to plan the marketing by setting aims, objectives and methods and doing small-scale trials and evaluations for those before full-scale implementation. In addition, evaluation and development of the product are also part of this cycle, which is shown to circle around curriculum development without an ending point in the diagram.

![Figure 3. The planning part of the CORD model (Gibbs and Maringe, 2008, p. 50)](image)

The development part of the CORD model focuses on developing the curriculum from the understanding gained in the research part. In Gibbs and Maringe’s (2008, p.50) CORD model, it can be seen that they focussed on the idea that developing the curriculum is the HEI’s core business (Gibbs & Maringe, 2008, p. 54).

### 2.2.4 McDonald’s strategic marketing planning

When looking the marketing strategy process from the side of the product marketing, McDonald’s (2007, p. 84) view of strategic marketing planning is a little bit different as he calls marketing strategy the strategic planning of marketing, which anyway includes familiar elements in the process:
Creating/retrieving a mission statement for the company
− Creating a financial summary of revenue and profit for the planning period
− Executing a market overview; marketing audit
− Identifying the key segments and doing a SWOT analysis on them
− Listing the plausible future assumptions
− Setting marketing objectives and strategies
− Summarizing the needed resources for the planning period for the budget.

In his process, McDonald calls marketing plans strategies, but reminds us that the objectives are goals that the company wants to achieve and strategy is the plan for how to reach those goals, but the objectives and strategies can be settled in the many levels of marketing and, because of that, should not be mixed up with each other. He also points out the difference between strategy and tactics: marketing strategy is the best assumption how company can act with most profitable ways in the markets, and tactical plan shows each segments' detailed marketing actions and their timing intended to reach the strategy's goals.

2.2.5 Dodson's four-step process for digital marketing

Ian Dodson is a co-founder and director of the Digital Marketing Institute and has had a long career of teaching digital marketing to companies and students. In his newest book, The Art of Digital Marketing, Dodson (2016, p. 331) introduces a four-step strategy and planning process for digital marketing. It is based on a popular strategy model: plan–do–act–check (PDAC). Dodson's
strategy and planning process for digital marketing has four steps: approach, audience, activities and analysis. **Approach** means looking at the framework and principles: what is to be gained with the campaign? **Audience** means knowing the right audience and communicating with them in the right way. In addition, situation analysis and information gathering are part of this step. **Activities** represent objectives, tools, action plan and budget. **Analysis** concludes with the measurements, analysis and principles of iteration, working together for continuous improvement.

![Strategy and Planning Process](image)

**Figure 5.** The strategy and planning process by Ian Dodson (2016, p. 332)

The first stage of Dodson’s strategy and planning process is **approach**. It is about setting the framework and principles in the place, as they will be the foundation for the future marketing and campaigns. The framework requires internal analysis about the time, money, capabilities and people involved in the digital marketing. The principles of 3i (initiate, integrate and iterate) should be taken into consideration for the whole planning process; also, the overall customer knowledge is an important element. The crucial point of the first stage is the situation analysis, which includes the knowledge of where the company is now, how to stand out from the competitors, how successful previous efforts have been and knowing the strengths and weaknesses. In addition, customers, the company’s sector in the industry and the industry’s trends should be thought over. For visualization of this information, Dodson (2016, p. 337) suggests using simple charts as a tool while writing down the current states from different angles in order to reveal the whole situation in one glance.

The second stage in Dodson’s (2016, pp. 338–344) strategy and planning process is **audience**. It includes finding out the real audience, customers, and splitting them into categories by knowing their value for business and knowing how accessible they are for marketing. Having actual data about the customers and how people interact with the company online is crucial for creating a truthful audience analysis. The knowledge of the audience is important, because the marketing messages and content available need to be targeted for the right audience groups – untargeted content is not as efficient as targeted content.

Dodson’s (2016, p. 345) third stage of the process is **activities**, which starts from planning how to stand out from the competitors and create a value
proposition that separates the company from others. The most important part is to set objectives for marketing, so the actions made during it can be measured and evaluated regarding the objectives. Another thing to consider in this third stage is content: what kind of content is needed in order to reach the objectives and get attention from the audience?

The fourth and final stage of Dodson’s (2016, p. 352) planning circle is the analysis, which is the never-ending aspect of digital marketing planning. It is carried out to reach the maximum results; there has to be constant analysis going on about how the audience can be reached and communicated with better and which parts can be deleted or modified because they are not working as well as they should. For doing the analysis, there are lot of digital tools that can and should be used, such as Google Analytics, social media analytics, newsletter analytics; the bottom line is that everything that has been done needs to be analyzed with good care and facts, not with opinions. With factual analysis, it is possible to calculate the ROI (return on investment) from the actions made and compare it to the business objectives set for the campaign or for the larger operational plan.

As Dodson talks about a model for planning digital marketing, it seems that his model is also capable of wider marketing strategy planning, because it has similar elements to more formal models. With its straightforward way of showing the needed elements, it might be easier to put Dodson’s model into action than more complicated models. The good thing about this model is that the same model can be used for both strategy and campaign planning.

2.2.6 The strategy formulation process of Kotler et al.

Kotler et al. (2012, pp. 111–112) approach the marketing strategy process from a traditional point of view: strategy is formulated by starting from the business mission, going for external and internal analysis by using the SWOT method, then formulating the goals, strategy and programmes. After planning comes the implementation and lastly, the feedback and control. External and internal analyses are made in order to understand the market environment better. By using SWOT analysis, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats will be analyzed with good care. Goal formulation includes clear, measurable and specific goals. Strategy formulation means that the type of strategy needs to be selected; Kotler et al. (2012, p. 116) suggest Porter’s three generic strategies (overall cost leadership, differentiation and focus strategies) as good starting points for strategy formulation. Programme formulation and implementation take the process close to action: they specify what the actual plans are and how they will be taken into action. Feedback and control are important elements which make sure that the organization stays in step with the rapidly changing market environment (Kotler et al., 2012, pp. 111–119).
2.3 The key components of the marketing strategy frame

When the elements of the marketing strategy planning process mentioned by the selected marketing authors are put together in a table (Table 1) it can be seen that all the mentioned elements can be organized to three different levels: main level, elaborating level and detailing level.

The main level of the elements includes four key categories, which are selected because they are mentioned by all selected sources:
- organization
- environment
- goals
- evaluation.

The second, elaborating level of the elements deeper the information of the four key categories. In this level, there is clear variation between sources as the mentioned elements start to differ from source to source. Elaborating level is formed by elements mentioned by at least half of the sources; three sources from six. Apparently the context and different views of the sources creates variation, but there is still enough similarities to define the elaborating level. Only category of goals is lacking the elaborating level information, because there was not enough consensus between sources; half of the sources did not mentioned same elements regarding goals.

- organization:
  - inside knowledge
  - resources (people and money)
  - marketing process
  - ideology and mission
- environment:
  - market information
  - customer knowledge
  - segmentation
- goals:
- evaluation:
  - outcomes
  - methods.

The third, detailing level of the information includes the context and source-related elements, which are mentioned by one or two of sources. This level deepens the understanding of elaborating elements, but it is not mandatory; it rather provides guiding and detailing features which help to divide the information flow into more understandable forms and help provide signs with which the company can think about these things from different points of view.
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Table 1. A summary of the elements included in the marketing strategy process
The first category of the marketing strategy, organization, should tell more about the present moment and history of the organization. Its elaborating level gathers inside knowledge about the stage of the company, the resources (including both people and money), the marketing process, and the ideology and mission of the organization. The third, detailing level varies from source to source, but it deepens the knowledge from the second level – depending on the source; inside knowledge is deepened with information about strengths and weaknesses, organizational culture and the attitude towards chances and risks. Resources can be deepened by knowledge about competences and marketing process by data gathering and marketing intelligence. Also, past marketing actions can be analyzed, and the ideology and mission can be deepened with branding knowledge.

The second key category of the marketing strategy is the environment, which includes elements showing insights about the outside business environment of the organization. Its elaborating level comes together with market information, customer knowledge, competitor analyses and segmentation. Depending on the author, the third, detailing level splits the second level into more detailed, different parts: market information can be gathered by knowing the current market situation, and the opportunities and threats in it, and upcoming industry trends. Customer knowledge could include methods like customer categorization or customer relationships, and competitor analyses could be deepened with positioning. Segmentation can be deepened by creating segment-based SWOT analyses, value propositions and marketing content.

Marketing strategy’s third key category is the goals. Category differs a little bit from first two categories: all the sources are united in considering that the organization needs to define their goals, but there is no visible elaborating layer that unites at least half of the authors. In the detailing level, the authors have mentioned the goals of wanted development and product, marketing and financial goals, but these elements do not unite the authors. It can be asked if goals are so organization specific that they should be defined specifically for the organization, as it seems was the case with the selected six sources here.

The fourth and last key category of marketing strategy is the evaluation. It can be divided in two in its elaborating level: evaluation of the outcomes and methods. One author also suggests that one part of outcome evaluation should be ROI calculation.

In general, the table of the elements included in marketing strategy process shows that there are elements that are widely recognized by marketing sources but also a lot more detailed additions which are dependent on the author, business content and organization. It is safe to claim that there is not one formula for how to create a whole marketing strategy, which would fit all organizations and situations. Despite this, certain elements needed in marketing strategy can be formulated into a solid base for such a strategy. This view is supported also by Malcom McDonald (2007, p. 84), who says that the steps that a company should take in their planning process after a certain frame has been set in place depends on the nature and size of the company.
This is why the detailing third stage of the marketing strategy needs to be created for the particular case, taking context, need and the current situation into account. Because of that, the detailing third part will be removed from a created frame of a marketing strategy. When the third stage has been removed, the frame for the marketing strategy does not differ dramatically from the frames of any strategies. Business strategy, organization and the marketing context define the needed third-stage information, which will be looked at from the marketing perspective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The frame for the marketing strategy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Inside knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resources: people and money</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marketing process</td>
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<td>Ideology and mission</td>
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<td><strong>Environment</strong></td>
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<td>Market information</td>
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<td>Customer knowledge</td>
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<td>Competitor analyses</td>
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<td>Segmentation</td>
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<td><strong>Goals</strong></td>
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<td>Outcomes</td>
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<td>Methods</td>
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*Table 2. The frame for the marketing strategy*

### 2.3.1 Creating a tactical marketing plan that fits with the strategy

*The Business Dictionary* (n.d.) defines *marketing plan* as a set of planned marketing activities which are selected to fulfil the marketing objectives of certain target group within a selected timeframe. The plan has its foundation in marketing strategy and it involves the identification of the specific target group’s needs and description how the company is going to respond to those with a suitable level of return. In the plan, there should also be an analysis of the opportunities and trends in the markets and a detailed action programme, budget, sale forecast and financial statements are all needed.

Frederiksen, Doerr and Schultz (2013, p. 27) say that when starting to plan marketing and the company’s goals, overall revenue targets and long-term growth goals should be set. They look at the marketing planning process from the service business side and suggest that the planning process is a seven-step process; if followed, it should lead to approval of the plan from the management and to a plan that suits the organization. The steps are detailed below:

- Alignment of the goals; agreeing goals for growth which are line up with organizations strategy and goals
- Marketing and revenue audit; review to the present or last year’s revenue and marketing
Brainstorming; generating new ideas with people involved with marketing

Analysis and assumptions; Analysing the ideas towards goals and strategies with making assumptions how each idea will effect.

Preliminary plan; creating a preliminary plan which shows the important issues from goals to budget and assumed outcomes, but is still open for arguments and discussion.

Final plan and adoption; creating the final plan and confirming necessary commitments for budget, resources and people needed for the implementation.

Implementation; implementing the plan with care, but still being open to modify the plan if changes or new opportunities appear during the implementation (Frederiksen, Doerr & Schultz, 2013, pp. 27–34)

When new marketing opportunities are taken into action, there is always the need to integrate technologies, adapt strategies and fit new tasks to the marketing team’s schedule. With planned, mature methods, there is process for integrating new actions into current processes, finding suitable staffing and aligning the new action with strategy (Adobe 2015, p. 6).

According to previous knowledge, the tactical marketing plans should be added to the marketing strategy process after goal setting, but before evaluation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The frame for the marketing strategy</th>
<th>Marketing context</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
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<td>Inside knowledge</td>
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<td>Resources: people and money</td>
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<td>Marketing process</td>
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<td>Ideology &amp; mission</td>
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<td><strong>The tactical plan and its implementation</strong></td>
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<td>Evaluation</td>
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<td>Outcomes</td>
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<td>Methods</td>
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Table 3. Tactical planning added to the marketing strategy process, highlighted in green.

2.4 How digitalization affects marketing and marketing strategy

Digitalization is one of the most important megatrends, one which is affecting the world with accelerated speed. New, developing technologies are changing the way we work, live and communicate when the digitalization, robotization, virtualization, artificial intelligence, automatization and globalization of ICT services, and the production and development of crown platforms and block
chain technology are continuously developing and replacing the past methods with new ones. The importance of digitalization has also been compared to the industrial revolution as it will heavily affect the whole of society (Kiiski & Kataja 2016, p. 9).

As it is known that digitalization, as a global megatrend, is heavily affecting everything, it is logical to assume that it will have (and has already had) effects on business and marketing. According to Kotler et al. (2012, p. 130), digital technologies change the way in which marketers reach, engage and deliver value to customers. They go on to say that marketers need to be ready to plan, implement and measure digital possibilities that are suited to today’s customers. This more holistic view, where digital marketing is not seen just as a set of marketing tactics, is also supported by Kannan and Hongshuang (2017, p. 22), who say that the meaning of digital marketing has changed over the years from digital channels used for marketing to the overall process of using digital technologies in marketing. With a slightly wider view of the overall process of digitalization it has been said that “Digitalization is not about turning existing processes into digital versions, but rethinking current operations from new perspectives enabled by digital technology.” (Parviainen, Kääriäinen, Tihinen & Teppola, 2017, p. 74). When looking at these wider points of views, digital marketing should mean lot more than using digital marketing tactics or isolated digital processes. It should be a holistic digital process which operates with new principles of digital marketing, not just digitizing the old manual processes.

According to Parviainen, Kääriäinen, Tihinen and Teppola (2017, p. 66), the impact and goals of digitalization can generally be divided into three categories: internal efficiency, external opportunities and disruptive change.

**Figure 6. Digitalization’s impact according to Parviainen, Kääriäinen, Tihinen & Teppola (2017, p. 66)**

*Internal efficiency* includes possibilities to improve ways of working through digital opportunities by re-planning the internal processes. Digitalization can give a lot of benefits to internal processes, such as improved business efficiency, quality and consistence, by removing manual steps from the processes, gaining better accuracy, creating a real-time view of results and operations, and freeing time from routines that can be put into development. The second category, *external opportunities*, shows the new business opportunities, such as new services or customers that come with digitalization in existing fields. For example, digitalization can improve both the response times and whole client service or create completely new services and offerings. The third category, *disruptive change*, means completely new business roles opening because of digitalization. When the operational environment changes because of digitalization, the business should change and develop with it, not stay in the same place it was in the manual world. This more holistic view of digital transformation is usually used for business and whole companies, but it
also seems to be utilizable for more isolated functions inside the business, such as marketing. This is supported by a study made by Adobe (2015, p. 4) which suggests that the overall success of marketing is dependent on whether the long-term digital evolution is planned beforehand or if it has been more based on reacting to changes. There have even been signs in Adobe’s earlier studies that the implementation of new digital marketing tactics – such as optimization, automation, mobile analytics and personalization – have been important for companies’ success; it seems that the holistic approach to digital marketing produces better results than improving isolated tactics. The same study shows that companies who have put effort into comprehensive and constant improvements to their digital marketing programme or digital maturity have seen a better ROI through their tactics when compared to companies which have made more isolated changes to separate tactics. This view is also supported by the study made by Econsultancy and Adobe (2018, p. 9), which says that according to their respondents, in a business sense, the top-performing companies were twice as likely categorize themselves as a *digital-first organization*, which can be seen as bridge between fully digitalized marketing and top performance in business. The same kind of results are also seen in Boston Consulting Group’s (BCG’s) analyses of their digital marketing survey, where they report that companies that are more developed along their digital marketing maturity path than others have reported 30% cost savings and a revenue increase of 20% (Field, Patel & Leon 2018).

From these findings it can be said that reaching better business will be possible when the whole marketing strategy has been affected by digitalization, not only the tactical planning or separate parts of the strategy.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Inside knowledge</th>
<th>Resources: people and money</th>
<th>Marketing process</th>
<th>Ideology &amp; mission</th>
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<td>Environment</td>
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<td>Competitor analyses</td>
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<td>Goals</td>
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<td>Evaluation</td>
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Table 4. The elements of the marketing strategy frame that are affected by digitalization
2.5 Starting to create a marketing strategy with digital understanding

2.5.1 Revealing the existing stage of the organization

When starting the marketing strategy process, one tool with which to evaluate the existing state of marketing is performing a marketing audit. According to Blythe (2012, p. 235, 255) the marketing audit is an evaluation of the organization’s current state and its purpose is to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the organization so these can be improved in the future. The route cause for auditing the marketing is to get knowledge of where the company is now, because planning the route to fulfilling the marketing targets cannot happen without this knowledge.

A view of the timing and role of the marketing audit varies by the sources: if following the marketing strategy process of Kotler (2003) and Blythe (2012, p. 235), the marketing audit is done after objectives or goals for marketing have been set whereas McDonald (2007, p. 86) sees the role of the marketing audit is to give a solid base for marketing strategy planning and not just to audit the process. In McDonald’s process, the marketing audit comes before creating a marketing strategy and it concentrates on systematically studying the chances in both the internal and external environments that can have an effect on the company’s business. McDonald thinks that marketing audit should usually be done annually at a certain point in the planning process: it can be a yearly process which is used to review changes that influence marketing activities.

McDonald (2007, p. 82, pp. 85–86) suggests that the best way to do the audit is to split it into two parts, external and internal parts, and both need to be observed from the relevant information connected to the company’s performance. After audit has been completed, the results should be written down in a regular format, for example, in a SWOT analysis format. A SWOT analysis can sum up an audit by revealing the internal strengths and weaknesses, and also external opportunities and threats. Each major product or service should have its own analysis, which can be added to its marketing plans. SWOT analyses should present the key points in the form that they are recorded in and they should be interesting, brief and include relevant and important data for the subject. After the marketing audit and it is time to create a plausible assumption about the future development in order that everyone shares the same prospect for the next financial period. With these assumptions, marketing objectives and strategies can be formulated.

2.5.1.1. Evaluating the existing stage of digital marketing maturity

When adding digitalization to the marketing auditing process, one way to do that is to evaluate the existing stage of digital marketing maturity in order to be able to improve it. According to Adobe (2015, p. 5), an evaluation of digital marketing maturity can be done by looking at four categories: structure, people, processes and technology.
Structure is about having the best possible inner structure for reflecting the markets. People describes the area of developing, recruiting and retaining people. Processes is focussed on how the tasks are done and technology looks at what platforms, systems and tools are available. The most profitable results should follow if these four parts are balanced together to enable digital growth as then each part can help to understand the markets, adapt to new conditions and create value in new ways.

Based on the findings of Adobe (2015, p. 5), the usual situation is that the organization is not on the same level in all the categories. Then it needs to develop itself in the weaker areas but still focus on maintaining good results in the strong areas. To gain optimized results from improvements, small steps should be taken on all fronts. Optimization is continuous improvement which involves the whole organization, and it is more a mind-set towards ongoing improvement of the digital experience in order to achieve the organization’s business goals rather than isolated actions. There have been studies on if an organization usually uses data for identifying areas for improvement in their digital property if they have a culture of optimization, testing the ways to make those improvements, and regular and repetitive changes based on that testing. When this process is aligned with an organization’s business goals, the organization should see better business results and generate better ROI. When several units of an organization do testing together, the average increase in conversions is 14%. For achieving an optimization culture, continuous and repetitive work should be done across all the company’s digital property with all the units involved in the processes. An important part is the cultural change of the organization, because there is strong need for a new mind-set, new processes and, usually, for new roles. Next to cultural change there is usually a need for a digital service toolset or help with the process. Usually when plans for digital maturity start, there is discussion about investments and resources, adding new systems and capabilities to existing ones. If the planning is missing, there are typically investments in new technology, which are not aligned with other functions of the company. The ideal approach would be to not only add new features and services to the digital marketing toolbox but also to use all of them effectively and efficiently (Adobe, 2015, p. 6).

2.5.2 Exploring the external environment for marketing

As could be seen from the frame for the marketing strategy (Table 2), the external environment analyses for marketing strategy should include at least four elaborating elements: market information, customer knowledge, competitor analyses and segmentation.

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<th>Environment</th>
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<td>Competitor analyses</td>
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Table 5. The environmental aspects of the marketing strategy framework
Gathering the information about markets can include things like analyzing the current markets, opportunities and threats in regard to the organization in those markets and taking a look to the trends of the industry. Customer knowledge should deepen the understanding about the real customers: who they are, where they are, what they do and what they expect. Competitor analyses should reveal information about the competitors and their positioning. Segmentation divides the customers into their own smaller segments, where customers share some commonality together. Future actions will be targeted at certain customer segments, which enables a more precise approach to each segment (see Table 1).

As digitalization heavily affects society, it is safe to say that the effects of digitalization have to be taken into consideration in all of the elements that are included in external environment analyses. Digitalization also gives tools for creating new kinds of customer experience and mining huge amounts of data about customers’ behaviour and competitors’ actions.

2.5.3 Setting goals for marketing

The third key category of marketing strategy is setting the goals for marketing. Tikkanen (2005, pp. 176–177) sees that the goals of the marketing strategy should be either quantitative or qualitative and formed straight from the organization’s business strategy and business goals. If they fulfil these two conditions, they can be added to marketing strategy. Paul Fifield (2007, p. 119) defines Tikkanen’s viewpoint by saying that marketing objectives (marketing goals) differ from business objectives as business objectives form the overall goal of the organization whereas marketing objectives translate the business goal into a form which can be implemented in the organization and which shows the business goal from the point of view of services, products and markets. This actually does not differ from Tikkanen’s (2005, pp. 176–177) point of view as he points out that even the marketing goals should be formulated straight from the business goals; it is important to realize and recognize the different levels of the goals and the different goals of the levels. Fifield (2007, pp. 120–121) continues with the same idea and sees that marketing objectives are aimed to create behaviour that will lead to achieving the business goals of the organization. When Blythe (2012, p. 255) describes marketing objectives as a road map for the company that indicates how to reach their business goals, it seems to be safe to make the conclusion that marketing goals should be formulated from the organization’s business goals.

Marketing goals should be planned for the set period of time. Fifield (2007, p. 119) sees that departing from the planning period of three to five years favoured by business goals, marketing goals should be planned for the period of 1.5–2 years. The planning period can be longer if it is reasonable for the industry, but usually it should not be shorter. Whereas McDonald (2007, p. 82, pp. 85–86) says it should be done for the same planning horizon as that of the company’s financial strategy, such as for the next three years. From the opinions of different marketing authors it can be seen that the timeframe of
the marketing goals should be approximately 2–3 years or should follow the financial strategy. It should be neither too short nor too long – a few years is enough.

The amount of marketing goals varies from few to many. Fifield (2007, pp. 120–121) sees that less is more and thinks that a suitable amount of marketing objectives is from four to six whereas Dodson (2016, p. 348) prefers a higher number of goals and suggests that there should be objectives for different purposes – such as objectives for business, the audience, the product, the brand and for marketing – and that they should vary from increasing sales in a month to building brand awareness. Tikkanen (2005, pp. 176–177) has the same idea as Dodson as he divides marketing goals into five levels: an individual level, a relationship level, a customer segment level, a customer level and a business model level. Dividing the goals into levels seems to be popular, and it creates a bigger number of marketing goals compared to Fifield’s preference for less goals, which can increase the clarity and simplify the goals. Both viewpoints have their pros and cons, but maybe the best sides from both can be put together to create a small number of important main marketing goals and then continuing to set small goals for different levels of the marketing strategy.

Good, functional and realistic goals can be formulated with many methods, but following the suggestions of both Blythe (2012, p.255) and Dodson (2016, p. 348) we selected the SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound) criteria of Doran and Drucker to use in our method. SMART criteria suggest that goals should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound (SMART).

![Figure 7. The SMART criteria of Doran and Drucker (Dodson 2016, p. 348)](image)

As a conclusion about setting goals for marketing, it can be said that marketing goals should be formulated from the organization’s business goals for a 2–3 year time period. Marketing goals should be divided into the main marketing goals and more specific goals for the different levels. Functional goals can be created by using SMART criteria, so those will be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound.
2.5.4 Evaluation

The fourth step of the marketing strategy process is the evaluation. In the marketing strategy frame (Table 2) it can be seen that the evaluation part can be divided into two parts: the evaluation of outcomes and the evaluation of methods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 6. The evaluation aspect of the marketing strategy framework

Overall, the evaluation of marketing requires a set of predetermined meters and goals. According to Tikkanen and Frösen (2011, p. 91, 101), plenty of effort has been spent on finding uniform meters with which to measure the impressiveness of marketing actions. Nowadays academics are thinking that because the results of marketing are generated by different reasons in different fields of business, it is impossible to create standardized meters which would cover all the organizations despite their differences. Because of this context for the engagement of working marketing meters, each organization needs to find their own meters of marketing. Tikkanen and Frösen (2011, p. 112) continue to say that even though the marketing meters need to be unique for each organization, there are still some common principles for evaluating the results of marketing. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the results of the marketing, it is important to understand where the financial business results come together and what are the indicators affecting to the results. Also, to gain a comprehensive understanding, besides financial meters, there also have to be non-financial meters that focus on customers and competition (Tikkanen & Frösen, 2011, p. 112).

When evaluating outcomes, Blythe (2012, pp. 251–253), for example, concentrates on the financial meters and divides the marketing performance analysis into two basic groups: sales analysis and marketing cost analysis. Sales analysis is done to show the income caused by the company’s actions, so it can be done with methods like comparing the forecasted and actual sales of the company, competitors and the industry; analyzing the cash volume and unit sales; and studying sales from the aspects of geographical area, the product set and customer type. Marketing cost analysis tries to find out how the costs of a company’s actions relate to set marketing objectives by dividing those costs into three categories. The categories are direct costs that can be connected directly to activities, traceable common costs that can be linked to products or services and non-traceable common costs that cannot be related to any specific product, service or activity. Both techniques need lot of data to succeed and both cause problems concerning how the data is handled and separated for different actions. Blythe’s point of view merges with the wider perspective that marketing results should be measured with ROI (ROI methodology), so it can be seen which actions/investments have returned the wanted outcome (in other words, the goals set beforehand).
Evaluating the methods returns us to the point of view of the whole strategy process; which steps, analyses and actions have been successful and what steps need to be improved (and if so, at what level and intensity)?
3  THE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT: CREATING A FRAME FOR A MARKETING STRATEGY

The development project of this thesis concentrates on adapting the theoretical knowledge gained in the last section into a marketing strategy frame tailored to the needs of HAMK. The created frame should support their upcoming creation of a marketing strategy and ensure that digital development is in it. As the frame should be used for the whole marketing strategy of the organization, not just for student recruitment, the frame contains features detailed for an HEI, but it is not detailed for student recruitment. The development project aims to help HAMK to plan their marketing strategy so that marketing actions planned and executed by the different departments and employees will support the institution’s business strategy and will be aligned with all of the important policies of HAMK.

To be able to create the needed frame, the first thing was to take a look at the present stage of marketing in HAMK. Then the theoretical model was looked at through HAMK’s needs and the first version of HAMK’s marketing strategy frame was created. The first version was sent for evaluation in HAMK and suggested changes were made to create the final version, which will be given to HAMK for their future usage.

1. The first suggestion for HAMK’s marketing strategy frame was based on the theoretical background and current knowledge about HAMK’s marketing.
2. The suggestion for HAMK’s marketing strategy frame was delivered to HAMK’s strategic communications and HAMK’s marketing board for their comments and opinions in order to improve it.
3. The suggestion was modified based on the comments gathered from HAMK and a final version of the frame was created.

3.1 The present state of marketing in HAMK

In this chapter, we are going to take a look at how the marketing is organized in HAMK, the current situation of marketing and the role of digitalization in it, and the development wanted by the marketing function. The picture of the current situation is based on the information gathered from HAMK’s management, the SCD and from meetings with the people who are planning the marketing tactics of the different services of HAMK and implementing marketing by themselves.

HAMK is a multidisciplinary HEI situated in the Häme area in Finland. It has over 7000 students in over 31 degree programmes and over 600 staff members located on seven campuses in different cities in the area. HAMK also serves the needs of business, industry and public sector in the area, in Finland and in the global markets (HAMK n.d.a).

The marketing function in HAMK has been organized in a non-centralized form where marketing-related activities and responsibilities are divided into three
different levels. The first level is the administration, the SCD, which leads the communications and marketing in the guidance of HAMK’s top management. The SCD is responsible for leading and developing the marketing processes in the whole organization. It leads the marketing board of HAMK, where representatives of the organization discuss marketing-related subjects which affect the whole organization and make decisions concerning the development of marketing. The SCD creates the instructions and policies for HAMK’s marketing, runs the needed marketing platforms and consults others on marketing-related subjects. It also develops the HAMK brand and implements the marketing campaigns closest to it, for example, stakeholder campaigns to raise endowments and student recruitment campaigns in Finland and abroad (Lassila-Merisalo, Linko & Kosunen 2018).

The second level of HAMK’s marketing functions is the marketing of HAMK’s five main service groups: applicants, students, business services, research and stakeholders. Each service category has multiple sub-categories inside it. Marketing in each of the five service categories has been organized in different ways. When speaking of the marketing of applicants or research on a more detailed level than a brand level, marketing is coordinated by HAMK’s education units, schools, which focus on their own education field and the business segments in it: bioeconomy, business, technology and wellbeing. Each school has named a few marketing representatives who are responsible for their key customer segments or functions, but their responsibilities and time resources differs between the schools and between the main service categories. Inside marketing, targeting students is handled by each degree programme with the help of the administrational unit Student Services. Stakeholder marketing is in the hands of the SCD, deans and managers (Lassila-Merisalo, Linko & Kosunen 2018).

When talking about the service categories of HEI marketing, applicants are the biggest service group and most of the marketing resources are directed towards them. Still, there are other service categories which have to be taken into consideration. These other service categories come straight from the Finnish law for universities of applied sciences, where is said that Finnish universities of applied sciences should give higher education that aims to professional expert tasks, support professional growth of the individuals and practice applied research and development work that considers and supports world of work and regional growth (Ammattikorkeakoululaki 351/2003, § 4). In HAMK, the five main service groups are: applicants, students, business services, research and stakeholders. The idea behind the main service groups comes from the law, but those categories have also been identified during recent years by management, the SCD and employees working in these service areas. The selected categories have affected, for example, website development and the organization of the products offered in each category. Each service category has multiple customer segments and micro-segments inside. Overall, even though the customer segments have been recognized on a practical level by the individuals working with the segments, there are no written documents nor is there any common understanding about the customer segments of HAMK’s service categories at the moment (HAMK marketing board 2018).
The third level of HAMK’s marketing is largely marketing targeted at smaller customer segments and micro-segments inside of HAMK’s main service categories and education units, research units, business services, projects and administration. Most of the everyday marketing, such as the marketing of isolated services and events, is planned and implemented by tens of different employees responsible of these functions or products (Lassila-Merisalo, Linko & Kosunen 2018).

At the moment, there is high diversity regarding how marketing is planned and executed at the different levels of the organization. There are common rules, instructions, policies and advice for execution that come from the SCD, such as a visual brand guide and a guide for email marketing, but none for planning. At the HAMK level, there is no knowledge about how the marketing of the organization works as a whole or about what kind of results there are on the organization level. There is no marketing strategy for the organization, but critical customer segments have their detailed tactical marketing plans planned for the upcoming year. Also, each service category has a lot of knowledge about the effectiveness of their marketing, and most of them have really good results compared to their goals. When looking at the micro-categories and customer segments within them, it is common that the marketing is not planned beforehand, implementation is anything from home-spun to top of the class and the results are not be evaluated or reported at all. The level of all marketing varies strongly because of the divergence in the marketing competence of the responsible people. There is a variety of marketing competence ranging from a really experienced and educated level, through more practical knowledge gathered from their experiences in the field to people who do not have any marketing competence or experience at all. At the moment, there is no common organizational policy regarding how the marketing should be evaluated, reported and developed (Lassila-Merisalo, Linko & Kosunen 2018; HAMK marketing board 2018).

Last year HAMK top management and its communications manager set a goal to develop HAMK’s marketing process to ensure that it will support the growth goals of the upcoming business strategy, which will be published in 2019. The development goal was set because it was a question of if the present level of marketing is able to reach the business goals set for the future. The first step of the development was to take a look at the existing stage of marketing. It was clear that even though there was fruitful marketing and advertising for the different customer segments of HAMK, at the same time there was a lack of strategic planning towards the marketing of the whole organisation. This had led to the situation where marketers and managers were not sure about the goals or directions of marketing. This was revealed in discussion with HAMK’s marketing board about their marketing needs and their hopes for what they would gain from the marketing (HAMK marketing board 2018). Findings from the marketing board supported the existing thoughts about the need for strategic planning in the whole marketing function of HAMK and led to the decision to start to create a marketing strategy for the organization. The wanted outcomes of the marketing strategy are to create goals for marketing,
clarify the marketing process and create a consensus and co-operation between the HAMK brand and individual marketing segments (Lassila-Merisalo 2018).

3.1.1 Digitalization in HAMK’s marketing

Digitalization is one of HAMK’s strategic goals for the year 2020. In its present strategy, HAMK defines the goals regarding digitalization as follows: “User-friendly and rapidly deployable digital services can be used regardless of time or place. Digitalisation enhances competitiveness, boosts and renews activities and serves the needs of business and industry and internationalisation.” (HAMK n.p.b.). As the set strategic goal of digitalization concerns the whole organization, it should also be extended to concern the marketing function of HAMK. As the goal represents a wider point-of-view of digitalization than just digitalizing isolated functions and tactics, it should also guide HAMK’s digital marketing mind-set towards digital marketing. This was also the argument earlier, because studies showed that a holistic approach to digital marketing and the ability to plan the digital evolution beforehand are keys to success. At the moment, the current thought about the digital marketing methods of HAMK in the SCD is that digitalization has had a large effect on HAMKs marketing, but mostly by changing the marketing channels of different tactical marketing plans into digital form and using digital marketing tools in the marketing communication mixes. HAMK has always been open and positively disposed to digital marketing options and has usually adopted new possibilities into their marketing tactics quite soon. For example, digital content marketing was successfully added to the marketing mix a couple of years ago with good results. In addition, optimization, analyzation and other data-related marketing possibilities have been taken into use. Still, the more mature digital marketing methods, such as long-term planning for digitalization, goal setting and fully digital processes, and a skill renewal plan has not been added to HAMK’s marketing processes (HAMK marketing board 2018).

3.2 The marketing strategy frame tailored for the needs of HAMK

Based on the knowledge gained from the theoretical background, the starting point of HAMK’s marketing strategy frame should look like the basic frame of the marketing strategy (Table 4). The included elements of marketing strategy (the first and second levels) are the same elements that should be included in every marketing strategy. As seen before (in Table 4), all the elements of marketing strategy are affected by digitalization, and its three impacts (internal efficiency, external opportunities and disruptive change) should be taken into consideration when making the marketing strategy.
To reach the wanted outcome, creating a detailed frame for HAMK’s marketing strategy which will support their upcoming creation of a marketing strategy and ensure the digital development in it, the work should start by adding more information to the basic frame (as learnt in Section 2.3, p. 18). When adding two levels – third and fourth levels – the levels should go deeper into the information and guide the process towards the wanted level of needed detail. The meaning of the third level is to specify the wanted outcomes of the second, elaborating level. The fourth level directs thinking in a digital direction and supports people who do not have experience of marketing strategy planning by giving them ideas about what information is needed.

The information in the third stage has been chosen from the views of the different authors in Chapter 2 (see Table 1) based on the relevance to HEIs and emphasizing the need for digitalization. Because of this emphasis, most of the third stage information has been chosen from the authors Gibbs and Maringe (2008) and Dodson (2016), but the views of some other authors have also been included. The fourth-stage information was written with the help of the authors’ views on planning the marketing (Chapter 2) and knowledge of HAMK’s marketing; it is also meant to help with the process and guide thinking towards digitalization.
To gain relevant information about insights into the organization (HAMK), the second level includes all the elements mentioned in the frame of the marketing strategy (see Table 2): inside knowledge, resources (people and money), marketing processes, and the ideology and mission. The chosen specifications (the third level) for inside knowledge are the organization’s strengths and weaknesses as these two are mentioned by four sources (Table 2) as wanted inside knowledge about the organization. Also, when speaking about resources, four sources see that there should be information about people and money. Gibbs and Maringe (2018) and Dodson (2016) also mention the competence of the involved people; so, these three elements have been involved. Dodson (2016, pp. 336–338) talks about people’s competence in using different digital marketing channels and tools, so after consideration, tools have been added to HAMK’s resources as, when thinking about available resources, it is important to know which tools can be used for marketing. The next element, marketing processes, first includes the identified processes, which is something mentioned by four of the sources (Table 2). It also includes data-gathering and marketing intelligence, which are mentioned by Gibbs and Maringe (2008) and Dodson (2016). They also highlight the importance of understanding past actions: what has worked or not and why and how it can be improved? So, analyzing past marketing actions is the third specification of the elements. The last element group, ideology and mission, divided the sources regarding the more specific content: it is about brand and values, but no specific definitions were given by the selected authors. The brand and values have been chosen to specify the ideology and mission element as those two definitions are used in HAMK’s strategic communications and HAMK’s business strategy. Also Gibbs and Maringe (2008, p. xiii) says that an HEI’s reputation is one of the main reasons to choose a specific HEI, so including the brand is important.

More detailed information about the second category, environment, can also include lot of data and four subcategories (see Table 1). The subcategories include information about markets, customer, competitors and segments (see Table 2). The chosen specifications (in the third stage) for market information are the current market situation, opportunities, threats and industry trends. Opportunities is a topic mentioned by three of the selected authors (Table 1) and selected because of consensus. The current market situation and industry trends are only mentioned specifically by Dodson (2016), but the subjects seem to be relevant for gaining more knowledge about an organization’s position in the markets and future possibilities, so the subjects are worth adding to the third stage. Positioning has also been mentioned by three of the authors (see Table 1) in the competitor subcategory, but market information has been included in this view. HAMK has a tradition of tracking and measuring the current market situation and industry trends, so the subjects fit HAMK’s environmental analyses well. The last specification, threats, was chosen because it is included in the familiar SWOT analysis, which is mentioned by Kotler et al. (2012) – it is familiar to most people and allows the possibility to create a complete SWOT analysis if HAMK’s marketers want to do so. The second subcategory, customer knowledge, includes two specifications: customer categories and communication channels. The customer categories
are mentioned by Dodson (2016) and included in the frame because HAMK’s services are divided into five main categories, so it would be beneficial to see if the main customer categories actually fit the service categories and change the view from being on HAMK’s services to being on their customers. Communication channels have not been mentioned by the authors, but the subject has been included here because it is one of the elements of customer journey mapping which some of HAMK’s marketers are using in their analyses (HAMK marketing board 2018). The third subcategory, competitors, did not have common specifications from the selected authors (see Table 1) as positioning was moved to the market information subcategory earlier. Because of that, the specifications chosen for HAMK are “competitors in the field” (the industry) and “competitors outside of the field” (the market) in order to keep in mind the two types of competitors who should be analyzed and taken into consideration. The idea of competitors inside the specific industry who are selling similar products and competitors inside the market who are selling something else that will satisfy customer need is one that comes from, among others, Kotler et al. (2012, p. 333) and should be seen in HAMK’s marketing strategy frame so the marketers will not forget to think about competitors that are off the radar. The last subcategory, segmentation, was mentioned by four of the authors (see Table 1) and three of them also mentioned segment-based value propositions. Dodson (2016) also mentions segment-based marketing content, which suits HAMK’s marketing principles well, because HAMK emphasises content marketing when it is reasonable to think about segment-based marketing content. These three specifications were chosen to be a part of the segmentation subcategory.

The third category, goals, is an important part, mentioned by five of the authors. Dodson (2016) and Gibbs and Maringe (2008) make general goal setting more complex by adding development goals. Dodson (2016) and McDonald (2007) also mention marketing and financial goals. These three specified goal settings were chosen for HAMK’s marketing strategy to demonstrate that there are different goals which should be set and measured in the results from different perspectives.

The tactical plan and its implementation have been set between goals and evaluation (see Table 3) in order to show the location and attachment point of tactical planning and implementation in the marketing strategy process as it can be unclear for some marketers in HAMK. The first row of tactical marketing and implementation refers to choosing the main service category, which will guide the use of the strategic analysis and goals set for the category. The next step is to identify the service or function, the specific customer segments targeted, the actions included in the tactical plan, the budget and the time frame.

The final category is the evaluation which is suitable for evaluating the marketing strategy and also the implementation and the results of the tactical plans. Three authors see that evaluation can be specified to be the evaluation of outcomes gained and methods used (see Table 1). Also Dodson (2016) specifies outcomes according to their ROI. Outcomes and methods were
chosen for HAMK’s marketing strategy frame while ROI calculations are added to the goals category in order to specify financial goals in greater detail.

The final element of HAMK’s marketing strategy frame is the level of operations. As marketing is done on three different levels of organization in HAMK, the assumption is that these levels should also be visible in the marketing strategy frame. This should help employees to see at which level they need to plan and act when they are using the marketing strategy frame for their planning process. The chosen levels are the HAMK level (marked as an orange column in Table 8), the main service categories (the green column) and segment-specific category (the blue column) (columns 2–4, Table 8).
### The suggestion for HAMK’s marketing strategy’s content

#### Organization

**Inside knowledge**

- Strengths: For the customer / of the organization
- Weaknesses: For the customer / of the organization

#### Resources

**People**
- Marketing / digital marketing competence
- Time for marketing / learning

**Budget**
- For campaigns and digital marketing
- Development and tools

**Tools**
- Webpages
- Digital services
- Social media
- Software
- Others

#### Marketing process

- **Identified marketing processes**
  - What?
  - Where?
  - When?
  - Who?
  - Why?
- **Analyzed results from the past**
  - Successful and failed actions
  - Development plans
- **Current data gathering**
  - Web analytics
  - What data is needed?

#### Ideology & mission

- **Brand**
  - Brand choices
  - The message and look
  - Brand research results
- **Values**
  - Strategic choices
  - Other values

#### Environment

- **Market information**
  - The current market situation
  - What is the current situation? Where can one find the relevant data?
  - What is the estimated situation for the next year?
  - Opportunities
  - Are there quick opportunities requiring a small amount of work?
  - Are the opportunities achievable with time and more work?
  - Threats
  - Quick threats
  - Future threats
  - Industry trends
  - In Finland and abroad
  - In education and digitalization

#### Customer knowledge

- **Customer categories**
  - Who are the customers and what kind of categories do they fit into?
  - Where customers in different categories be reached?
- **Communication channels**
  - How and where should customer categories be communicated with?
  - What digital tools should be used for that?
  - What are the relevant key messages for each category?

#### Competitor analyse

- **Competitors in the field**
  - (the industry)
  - Who are the main competitors, where do they operate and how do they communicate with customers?
  - How do we differ from our competitors? Specify product, communication, quality.
- **Competitors outside the field**
  - (the markets)
  - Who else do we compete with outside of our field?
  - How do we differ from our competitors?

#### Segmentation

- **Segmentation**
  - What kind of segments and sub-segments customers should be divided?
  - Why these segments and sub-segments have been chosen?
- **Segment-based value proposition**
  - What do we offer to our segments?
  - What kind of value does this provide?
- **Segment-based marketing content**
  - What kind of content do we need for our segments?
  - Where will the content be published and how will it be communicated?

#### Goals

- **Development goals**
  - Wanted development
  - How can it be measured?
- **Marketing goals**
  - Key indicator points (KPIs) – what needs to happen so that marketing succeeds
  - How will these KPI’s be measured?
- **Financial goals**
  - Revenue and return on investment (ROI)
  - How to calculate the ROI?

#### Main service category: Applicants, Students, Services, Research & Stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific Service</th>
<th>Customer segments</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Time frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chosen function</td>
<td>Chosen segments</td>
<td>Marketing actions</td>
<td>€</td>
<td>Dates/weeks/month/year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Evaluation

- **Outcomes**
  - Reaching the goals
    - How have the goals been reached?
    - How to improve actions in the future?
- **Methods**
  - Evaluating the methods and process
    - What has and hasn’t been working
    - How to develop methods?

Table 9. The suggestion for the detailed HAMK marketing strategy frame
3.3 Testing the first version of the frame

The test round of the marketing strategy frame was an important part of the development process. The suggestion (Table 8) to do this was based on marketing strategy theory and the gathered knowledge about HAMK’s marketing and its intentions to develop marketing processes. The next step was that it was commented on and modified by the people who would use it in their work. The possibility to see the marketing strategy frame before it is revealed should have made the final version of the frame better by having revealed the possible flaws and given marketers the chance to influence the outcome. This is important, because according Frederiksen, Doerr and Schultz (2013, p. 39), the strategy should not been created by top management and then handed over to others to deliver, instead it should involve as many people as possible in order to gain a common motivation towards achieving it. This principle will come true through the process of making the marketing strategy as it will be made with all the marketers and managers involved, but it is also important to also involve them in the frame-making process.

The first version of the frame (the picture in Table 8) was delivered to the HAMK’s SCD, and selected marketers and managers in the beginning of October 2018. The first test group was selected to be narrow and motivated regarding the subject in order to gain as straightforward feedback as possible. It was also because, if there are major flaws in the frame, the first problems can be fixed before it will be spread widely in the organization. As it is important to involve as many people as possible, the second version of the frame was planned to delivered bigger test group, which contains marketers and managers who should use the frame in the future.

After the frame was shared with the first test group, it gained no feedback or comments during October and November 2018. As this is not a typical outcome in the organization, the test group had agreed to comment on it and the subject should have been interesting and relevant to the commenters’ work, there had to be some other reason for the lack of comments. The first assumption was that the shared picture (Table 8) was not in the right form in order to be commented on by the test group in their hectic work schedule. This assumption is based on the formal experience and comments when the test group first time saw the picture: most of them said that they needed to take their time and look deeper into the frame, because it was too complex to be commented on straightaway. When the target is to create a frame that is easy to use in practice, it should be simple enough for people to have some opinion of it when they see it.

The results of the first test round were clear: the frame in the form shown in Table 8 is not suitable for HAMK’s usage. The test needed to be repeated by creating a new form for the content so that it was easier to comment on the content itself.
3.4 The second test version of the frame

The aim for the second version of the marketing strategy frame was to make it easier to read and understand than the first version. The first change was to change the language: in a working environment where Finnish is the main language, it should be tested with material written in Finnish as it is easier to comment on than English material. The second change is the form: moving from table form to presentation form, wherein information will be divided into smaller scenes and shown with a different view. This hopefully led to a clearer and more understandable outcome which people could quickly understand and comment upon. The second test version of the frame can be seen in the appendix (Appendix 1).

The second test version of the frame was sent to same test group used for the first test version and HAMK’s marketing board on 25.11.2018. The decision was made because the time for the thesis project is running out. The frame for the marketing strategy should be ready for usage by the end of the year 2018, so the first comments on its content need to be collected quickly.

This time the test version gained four comments:

- **Comment 1**, 26.11.2018 HAMK marketing board, manager-level, written comment: “Pohja on sinänsä hyvä ja huomioi tärkeitä asioita. Erityisesti mitaaminen ja tulosten seuranta ovat oleellisia asioita. Yleiseltä tasolla markkinointisuunnitelman tulee olla ‘sopivan’ yksinkertainen, jotta sitä tulee hyödynnettyä.” Translation of the comment: “The frame itself is good and notes important issues. Measuring and following the results are especially relevant matters. On a common level, the marketing plan should be simple enough that people will use it in their work.”

- **Comment 2**, 27.11.2018, Strategic Communications team member, marketing level, spoken comment: “The frame looks good and simple enough, but I would like to hear more about how to define the KPIs and calculate ROI? I think that is key to successful marketing measurements.”

- **Comment 3**, 3.12.2018, Strategic Communications team member, coordinator level, written comment: “markkinointi ei ole yhtään mun juttu, eli kyllä tosta ainakin mulle olisi hyötyä, jos joutuisin markkinointia pohtimaan”. Translation of the comment: “Marketing is not one of my strong areas, so if I needed to think about marketing, that (frame) would benefit me.”

- **Comment 4**, 3.12.2018, Strategic Communications team member, marketing level, written comment: “Tämä on erittäin hyödyllinen. Tällä saa suunnitelman tehtyä ottamalla huomioon kaikki osa-alueet.” Translation of the comment: “This is really useful. You can make a plan with this by considering all the necessary areas.”
Comments 1 and 2 supported the decision to change the first version (see Table 8) into a simpler version (see Attachment 1) as both commenters mentioned the importance of a simplified frame. They both also mentioned measurements, which indicates that it is a relevant issue in HAMK at the moment. When Commenter 2 mentions that there should be more information about how to set functional KPIs and calculate the relevant ROI, it is good to note that the frame introduced here is just a base for the strategic marketing planning of organization, not an actual plan or instructions for how to realize it. This leads to an obvious need to deepen the knowledge about how to do the steps mentioned in the frame and share good practices with all the employees involved in marketing.

Comments 1 and 4 noted that it was a good thing that the frame shows the needed aspects of marketing planning. Also, Comment 3 gives signs in the same direction: people who are not experts in marketing could check the needed areas from the frame.

Even though the collected comments do not represent all the persons involved in HAMK’s marketing, together these comments give positive signs about the need for a written marketing strategy frame in HAMK. The collected comments were neutral or positive in their tone and the commenters saw relevance between the frame and HAMK’s marketing. This level of feedback is enough to convince us to continue to move the work on the marketing strategy frame forward. When feedback and the will of HAMK’s management are put together, it seems to be clear that the frame for marketing strategy should published for the marketers and managers and put into operation as a tool for planning marketing in HAMK.

3.5 The results of the project and continuation

As the project’s goal was to create a marketing strategy frame for HAMK, it is safe to say that the goal has been reached. The second version of the marketing strategy frame (see Attachment 1) can be adopted in the marketing processes of HAMK as a starting point for their upcoming marketing strategy work. When the work truly starts in HAMK, the frame can and should be updated internally in HAMK based on the feedback it will gather when adopted into usage. The continuous improvement is important after the release, so the marketing work will follow the organization’s PDAC-cycled working model.

Also Frederiksen, Doerr and Schultz (2013, p. 39) say that during the marketing strategy process, an organization should communicate with the people regarding the tactical expertise on the different sides of the strategy. In addition, there should be a good and motivating environment for the execution of the strategy. Creating goals and following the results in a supportive environment with good feedback helps all the layers of the organization to work for the strategy. To start something new and bold in marketing, there is usually a need for organizational and behavioural change; if there is no courage
to implement new things, there is a chance that everything will be done in the same way each year without any actual change.

To make sure that the upcoming marketing strategy work will be successful, there are steps that need to be taken in HAMK’s marketing process:

- When the new strategy of HAMK is published, the SCD should be ready to start creating the HAMK-level marketing strategy together with top management and HAMK’s marketing board. Marketing strategy should continue HAMK’s new strategy and open it up to the marketing perspective.
- When the HAMK level of the marketing strategy has been defined, all the main service categories should focus HAMK-level information and detail it to fit each service category. After the strategy has been deepened to that level, a specific customer-segment level can be defined in each service category.
- To be able to ensure the quality of the planning in each level of marketing strategy, the SCD should define the information needed for the planning process when doing the marketing strategy at the HAMK level. They should also provide necessary instructions and guidelines for managers and marketers working with each level of HAMK’s marketing strategy. There should also be training possibilities for people who need to have more knowledge about marketing in order to be able to work inside HAMK’s criteria if there is such need.
- To ensure that marketers and managers know all the good practices they should have an easy channel through which to ask for help when they need it; it would be good to open an easy communication channel with which the people involved can discuss marketing strategy, tactics and share knowledge.

Overall, adopting the marketing strategy frame to HAMK’s upcoming marketing strategy creation should give the necessary tools for their work. If the frame is to become part of HAMK’s marketing process, it should be improved with every step when the understanding of strategic marketing planning grows in the organization. Being able to help create this kind of development would be the best outcome of this thesis.
4 CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Key findings

Marketing strategy and strategic marketing planning are subjects which have been discussed widely and there are a lot of researched knowledge and opinions about how to do both of those. As McDonald (2007, p. 84) reminds us, even though the steps of the strategic marketing planning process are commonly valid, each organization has to create their own steps which will fit their business. This is why no-one can tell exactly what kind of strategy a marketing strategy should be, but there are principles that will help you to start your own marketing strategy frame that is suitable for the organization in question.

The basic frame of the marketing strategy contains knowledge about the organization (internal knowledge), the environment (external knowledge), the goals and evaluation. Information about the organization, environmental goals and evaluation should be deepened with knowledge about inside knowledge, resources, marketing process, the ideology and mission, market information, customers, competitors, segmentation, specific goals, outcomes and methods. Tactical planning and its implementation are placed between goals and evaluation. All the information should be seen in the marketing context and it should be understand that digitalization has an effect on all planning work and marketing. All the elements of digitalization (internal efficiency, external opportunities and disruptive change) should be taken into use in marketing strategy work, so it will affect to the whole marketing strategy in deeper ways than just isolated tactics, campaigns or ads. In this way, digitalization should have more positive effects on the organization’s business results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The starting point for the marketing strategy</th>
<th>Affected by digitalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inside knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources: people and money</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology &amp; mission</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitor analyses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segmentation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goals</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tactical plan and its implementation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10. The starting point of the marketing strategy
Based on these findings, a more detailed marketing strategy frame was made for HAMK. The knowledge inside it was deepened into four layers, chosen according to their relevance to the organization. Relevancy was considered by the organization’s HEI nature, its will to increase digitalization, and their marketing process and expectations. As the organization has a three-layered structure in their marketing, information about the active layers in each category was added to the frame. The comments gathered before and during the process show that people involved would like to have some tool to ensure that they are doing the right things and do not forget anything important. Also, a need to be able to see the big picture behind one’s work in marketing was highlighted. As a conclusion regarding the practical development work, the marketing strategy frame made for HAMK seems to fulfil the assignment’s ambition. It is based on marketing strategy theory, completed by the information fitting the organization’s nature and will, and the outcome has been tested so we know that the form of the frame is suitable for the organization.

4.2 Future development

The results and relevance of this thesis can be measured and reviewed after the frame has been taken into usage and the first cycle of strategic marketing planning has been done. This uncertainty is unavoidable and it is the wanted and only capable outcome of the project. Because the frame has been developed based on the existing theory about what content there should be in marketing strategy, taking it into practice will reveal how it should be modified in order to fulfil the needs of HAMK. If this feedback is gathered, the frame will be modified and if the organization continues with a more strategic approach to planning its marketing, positive outcomes should be seen in the future. The way to failure lies within the same frame which should help the process. McDonald (2007, p. 84) says that, generally, marketing planning fails if there has been too much weight on the process and too much paperwork instead of generating a reasonable amount of relevant information to back up the decisions. This why it is important to find a balance between a more strategic approach to marketing planning and going too deep into the paperwork and making it too bureaucratic, thereby losing sight of what is relevant.

It would be good if the organization could do a general marketing audit and evaluate their stage of digital marketing maturity before they start the marketing strategy project. With these evaluations it will be possible to repeat those in the future and compare whether the situation has improved in the wanted direction. When the marketing strategy process of HAMK starts, the spotlight will not be and should not be on the frame. The frame is a useful background tool which enables concentrating on the relevant information needed. It can and will be changed to be more suitable for the situation in order to meet the organization’s needs better. The real deal is the co-operation between the marketers and managers in achieving a common understanding about the marketing environment of the organization and working together to gather relevant information and making more strategic decisions about
marketing. As said earlier, not just any strategy should be given by for employees to perform, all marketers should be involved in planning their piece of the marketing strategy.

4.3 The author’s comments

When the thesis process started, it was not clear where it would lead. I wanted to study a subject that was not too familiar to me and educate myself in areas I would need in my work in the future. Digitalization and digital marketing have always interested me, so I started to work by studying data-driven marketing, artificial intelligence in marketing and other “hot topics” in the field. Soon I realized that no matter what the subject was, I kept bumping to the phrase that digital marketing reformations should be based on the existing marketing strategy. At the same time I changed my job inside HAMK and ended up being responsible for marketing which demands developing the marketing processes in the whole organization. This put me to thinking about how to move towards a more strategic marketing planning process and the communications manager and I discussed about how there should be a marketing strategy which continues and completes HAMK’s business strategy. But what should the marketing strategy contain? As I started to dig into the question, it soon transformed into the key research question of my thesis. When I added my other interest, digitalization in marketing, to the question, the form of my thesis started to build up.

Maintaining an objective vision of the subject and organization during the thesis writing work was quite a challenge. As I work in HAMK’s SCD in the role of being responsible of marketing, the content of this thesis followed me to work and the work followed me home to the thesis writing. As a result, I can be sure that all the information inside the thesis is really relevant to HAMK as I know the subject inside out. But it has also taken away the element of surprise: if this thesis was made by someone who was not responsible for HAMK’s marketing, maybe there could have been some unexpected findings coming from outside the HEI’s world. When asked employer feedback from the thesis and its process, HAMK’s comments were positive. They think that the frame for HAMK’s marketing strategy will help to develop marketing in HAMK and supports the decision making in marketing.

Finally, I am really satisfied with the outcomes of this thesis. I am confident that with the frame built in this thesis I can continue to develop a more strategic approach to planning marketing and help myself and others to do so by using the created marketing strategy frame. I am aware that this is a starting point of a long development project and not the final result, but the future work can now start from a studied point of view and not from a hunch – and that is the whole point of this thesis.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX 1
The second version of HAMK’s marketing strategy frame

Markkinointisuunnitelman pohja, Hämmeen ammattikorkeakoulu
Testiversio/Ehdotus 25.11.
Taru Kosunen, Strateginen Viestintä

1. Sisäinen organisaatio

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HAMK-taso</th>
<th>Palvelukategoriat: Hakija, Opiskelija, Työelämä, Tutkimus &amp; Sidosryhmät</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visio ja missio</td>
<td>Sisäinen tieto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Brändi</td>
<td>• Vahvuudet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Brändinavainmat</td>
<td>• Asukkaille näkyvät ja sokeat?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Brändinvaikutus</td>
<td>• Digitaalisat vahvuudet?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Arvot</td>
<td>• Heikkoudet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strategiset vaikutukset</td>
<td>• Asukkaille näkyvät ja sokeat?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Muut arvot</td>
<td>• Digitaalisat heikkoudet?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kun mietit vastauksen kaikkiin kohteisiin (1.-4.), markkinointisuunnitelmaasi on valmis!
2. Ulkoinen toimintaympäristö

**Markkinoinformation:***
- Markkinatieline
- Tämänhetkinen markkinointi
- Ajantasainen data

**Mahdollisuudet:***
- Neuvonta
- Mahdollisuudet
- Pitkän ajan
- Mahdollisuudet

**Uhat:***
- Uhanjärjestely
- Tulevia uutisia

**Törmäytten kehitys:***
- Suorassa ja ohjelmassa
- Suoratasoilla ja
digitalisaation valuksis

**Asiakastuntemus:***
- Asiakaskategorioiden
  - Kuka akkumuttaa onnet ja
  - muiden kategorioiden
  - Neidit kannattaa päästää?

- Kommunikointi
  - Miten asiakaskategorioiden
  - Käyttävät kommunikaatio?

- Uhan
  - Miten uhan
  - asiakaskategorioiden
  - Käyttävä

**Kilpailijat:***
- Päätäkilpailijat
  - Omalla toimialalla
  - Kuka he ovat, miten
  - He toimivat
  - Mitä lienee
  - ongelmia?

- Kilpailijat
  - Muita
  - toimialoista
  - mitä

**Tietysti asiakasyrhmälle suunnattu***
- Asiakassegmentti/ryhmät:
  - Määritä segmentti
  - Säännöt
  - Segmentointimoottori
  - Segmentointimerkinnät

3. Tavoitteet

**Kehitys-tavoitteet:***
- Haluttu kehitys
- Kehityksen mittaus

**Markkinointi-tavoitteet:***
- Key indicator points (KPI’s)
- Kuinka KPI’tä mitataan?

**Taloudelliset tavoitteet:***
- Myyntitulot, kate, Return-of-the-investment (ROI)
- Kuinka ROI mitataan?
X: Taktinen suunnittelu ja toteutus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HAMK-taso</th>
<th>Palvelukategori: Hakija, Opiskelija, Työelämä, Tutkimus &amp; Sidosryhmät</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tiettyle asiakasyrhmälle suunnattu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Yhteenveto**

- Palvelukategoria:
- Asiakasyrhmä:
- Budjetti:
- Aikajärjestely:

**Tarkempi markkinointisuunnitelma**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Markkinointitoimi</th>
<th>Hinta</th>
<th>Toteuttaja</th>
<th>Kesto</th>
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<td>Henkilo X</td>
<td>1.-30.1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esimerkkitoin 2</td>
<td>xx €</td>
<td>Henkilo Y</td>
<td>15.-20.1.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Tulosten arviointi

**HAMK-taso**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Palvelukategori: Hakija, Opiskelija, Työelämä, Tutkimus &amp; Sidosryhmät</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tiettyle asiakasyrhmälle suunnattu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tulokset:**

- Saavutetut tulokset
  - Kunnes hyvät tehtävät on saavutettu?
  - Kunnea tähän voidaan panea kehityskului?

**Metodit:**

- Metodien ja prosessien arviointi
  - Mitä on tehty ja mitä ei?
  - Miten tuleeko voidaan parantaa tulevanlaajenemisellä?