

HOW TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN STUDENTS AND COMPANIES BY BUILDING A WEB SERVICE

Case: Oppari.com

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Abstract <p>The idea of the thesis is to give an insight on how to create a web service business from a marketing and research point of view. Oppari.com, which is still in a development stage, was used as a case study. Oppari.com was studied from the beginning of its operations, and a forecast for its future possibilities was also perceived. The attempt of this service is also to strengthen the communication link between students and companies, therefore offering students many more opportunities.</p> <p>The main aspect of this thesis is to realize what cautions Oppari.com should be aware of while building its web service. The thesis analyzes the service and investigates what strategies Oppari.com could implement, hence why the marketing strategy is very detailed. The other important aspect of this thesis is to examine the target market expectations, in order to alter the services to better suite the potential users.</p> <p>As a conclusion, it is crucial to note the importance of marketing and research. With the aide of this research, Oppari.com has the potential to become a web service that will provide quality services such as thesis topics, project studies, and practical training opportunities. Although the strategies are likely to change over the years, a well thought-out strategy and plan will still be valuable as a guideline for the business.</p>		
Keywords Marketing, research, web service, Oppari.com, practical training, thesis topic, project studies.		
Miscellaneous		

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recently, the demand to get more for less has been constantly increasing. This does not only retain to getting more for cheaper, but also outstretches to demands to do less for more. For example, the need for actually physically going grocery shopping has been made unnecessary. Now for a fee, you can call a service that will deliver the groceries to your front door. Even this service has evolved from having to hassle with calling, to an easy online application that only needs to be filled. Words of the wise also state that “Customers do not buy attributes, they buy benefits” (Kotler, Wong, Saunders & Armstrong 2005, 559). Looking from a similar perspective, we can only assume that this trend will increase and evolve.

Anyhow, the statement mentioned above is only partially related to why students have difficulties with finding a good and interesting topic to write a thesis on, finding interesting practical training placements, or overall, experience of working for real companies.

The reason for the research was to confirm whether there is a want for a service (Oppari.com) that provides students with a website with thesis topics, practical training placements and possible project assignments for companies. The actual reason for this is not to make students lazier than before, but to grant them more time for their studies, and provide them with a wider range of options that will also make the work interesting to students sustaining their motivation. This thesis research was assigned by Oppari.com

This survey was conducted with the assistance of a questionnaire, marketing strategies and publications.

1.1 Aims and Objectives

A service (Oppari.com) that provides students and companies a one stop website to search and leave thesis topics, practical training placements, and project work is being developed. The purpose of this research is to investigate the demand for this service and also predict the success and usability of this service.

2 INTRODUCTION TO OPPARI.COM

Oppari.com was developed to help increase interaction between students and companies. Oppari.com focuses on helping students gain experience for what comes after graduation - working life. In this new competitive era, students are expected to have characteristics that make them more qualified than other applicants for the same job. An example is work experience. Decent jobs today often require work experience, and this is hard to achieve for a recent graduate. This is the major issue Oppari.com is being developed to help with.

Oppari.com is also useful for companies as they are introduced to more experienced employees, and will also save the company resources used to accustom recent employees to the job. Companies can also benefit by having a first-hand view of students that are yet to graduate, and also give companies the possibility to recruit at an early stage before competition sets in for the best available candidates.

Companies will also get exposure which will help their business activities.

Oppari.com will be a website designed to provide services for students and companies for free. Services include providing thesis topics, project work, and practical training opportunities for students.

2.1 About Oppari.com

New product development is an act of innovation which entails the process of identifying, creating and delivering new product-values or benefits that were not offered before in the marketplace (Kotler Et al 2005, 582).

The idea for Oppari.com came late 2008. The idea was a rather simple idea, but surprisingly there weren't any services exactly like it. One of the purposes is to enhance the information flow between companies and students.

Currently, students and companies interact between each other but the interaction is limited to the requirement of school studies. These interactions are usually in the form of work placements and thesis researches for companies.

Working with companies is more challenging, intense, and fulfilling. This is why Oppari.com aims to take the interaction between companies and students to another level.

Although Oppari.com's services include providing students with practical training placements and thesis research, the actually intention is to enable students to do more. A question that might arise is why students would want to do more. The main reason behind the service is to create more value for students. For example, all things being equal, a group of candidates are applying for the same company job, but one of the candidates has thoroughly researched the background of the company and has done a project for the company. Obviously this candidate has the upper hand.

The example above describes Oppari.com's main concept. By doing more and building value, students will have greater competitive advantage.

In an environment that keeps on getting competitively tougher, extra effort is required.

A huge factor companies base their selections on nowadays is experience, and rightly so. Nowadays, education doesn't tell about your personality, and in frequent cases the job trains you for the job. All this lowers the emphasis of school. Work experience also enables companies to ask certain questions about previous jobs that will reveal your work ethics. Surely, companies can decide to hire recent graduates with no experience, but this will be a risk, and investment when compared to an applicant that already has experience. Basically, the only way to get hired over an experienced applicant will be from bad recommendations from the experienced applicant's previous jobs.

However, most students might not feel compelled to do extra-curricular studies without short-term incentives. This is where companies are expected to reward students for work well done, for example, with monetary reward. As mentioned earlier that more emphasis is on experience than studies, there is also possibility for schools to give credits for extra study related work done for companies. After all, real life experience is more valuable than theoretical studies.

In addition to thesis studies and practical training placements, Oppari.com will also introduce the concept of project work. When compared to thesis research, project work is short and perhaps not as in-depth as thesis research. Some departments have already implemented project work for actual companies, and it has proven to create value learning-wise.

Not only students benefit from the services of Oppari.com. Companies get to participate in the development of students. Firstly, companies can find this as an investment opportunity. By providing students with company related work, the student gets accustomed to the company. After graduation, the company would have candidates that are already familiar with the company,

which enables the company to divert the resources used to otherwise train recent graduates into other business ventures.

Companies can also take advantage of using students for research purposes. Costly researches can be done by groups of students at a lower price than using professional research companies. Students also have the opportunity for guidance from lecturers, which will certify the quality of the work done. Another great advantage in using students is the possibility to do different market researches. Assuming a company wants to expand its business to another city and needs to undertake a market research, the company could use students that are studying in that specific city.

2.2 More detailed service information

Oppari.com plans to begin with three foundational services. However, Oppari.com is going to constantly develop, and new ideas are going to be sought after in the attempt to provide a more dynamic interaction between students and companies. The three foundational services include:

Thesis Topics

A thesis is treatise advancing a new point of view resulting from research; usually a requirement for an advanced academic degree (Princeton, 2009).

Thesis Topics is an important service Oppari.com will provide. Students in Finland are required to convey a thesis research before they are eligible to graduate. The normal procedure to obtain a thesis topic is by contacting companies directly, or through lecturers, and finally, creating independent thesis topics. Students usually create their own thesis topics when they do not receive any requests from companies, and the case is rarely so that no company in the nation has any need for research. Therefore, Oppari.com will

be a hub for students to go to, so that they can effortlessly find thesis topics from real companies. The simplification that Oppari.com will provide is already a huge step forward in improving the communication between students and companies.

Project Work

A project work is a supplementary, long-term educational assignment necessitating personal initiative, undertaken by an individual student or a group of students. In this case, between companies and students (Dictionary.com, 2009).

Project work is an activity that has slowly started to become integrated into the educational system in Finland. Recently, companies have started sponsoring courses in universities, usually just to build a positive image among potential employees, but also for students to undertake a project in return.

Oppari.com aims to take project studies to another level, to increase the request for project work from companies, and also to fundamentally lobbying for a greater proportion of project work in universities. This should also inspire students to take the initiative in working with companies.

Practical Training Placement

A practical training is any official or formal program to provide practical experience for beginners in an occupation or profession (Dictionary.com, 2009).

There are a few well known web portals that act as a hub for vacant work placements. In this case, Oppari.com will try to co-operate with already established web portals that offer work placements. After all, the goal is to

provide students with work placements. However, Oppari.com will also seek work placements by proactively networking with companies around the nation.

2.3 Company Profile

The services mentioned above are familiar to most people, and there are also companies that provide these services. However, Oppari.com's advantage will be integrating all these different services into one source of information.

Since Oppari.com is a new service that is still in development stage, the service hasn't yet made any formal agreements with companies or institutions. However, the Oppari.com plans to work closely with majority of universities and companies around Finland when the service launches off.

2.4 Why Oppari.com services

The motivation for Oppari.com came from the lack of the service, and also the potential it has. When companies search for students to either do a thesis research, project work, or are hiring for practical training placements, the information is usually sent directly to university representatives and the information usually stays internal. Students in the particular university might not be interested in the offer, but perhaps students from other universities are. This will make the companies disappointed and hesitant to use student work force again because of previous experience.

Another reason Oppari.com was created is to help companies find assistance and also encourage them to create more work for students.

Oppari.com's target is to create a portal that will contain requests from companies searching for students to assist them, and make it public for all universities around Finland. This will create more choices for both companies and students.

3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of Oppari.com is to build a service that links companies and students. The initial method chosen for this is to create a web portal that contains different work students can do for companies. To be successful, Oppari.com will need to obtain a majority of target users. To accomplish this, the quality of the service has to be good.

Therefore this research's purpose is to reveal the requirements needed to accomplish this, focusing on how Oppari.com can penetrate the market, create awareness, gain a majority of users, and also sustain loyal users. But our main question is whether the service in question will be in demand.

4 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Although Oppari.com could be a pioneer, this does not automatically guarantee success. Focusing on market penetration, awareness, market share and loyalty, understanding branding and market strategies will prove helpful to this research.

Branding is what will create awareness and loyalty, and market strategy is to obtain and sustain the user base.

4.1 Brand

Any brand is a set of perceptions and images that represent a company, product or service. While many people refer to a brand as a logo, tag line or audio jingle, a brand is actually much larger. A brand is the essence or promise of what will be delivered or experienced (Persuasive brands, 2009).

Professor David Jobber is a renowned professor who is internationally recognized. He is specialized in industrial marketing, and having worked with a handful of truly global companies, he has identified seven main factors in building successful brands which is illustrated in his book called Principles and Practice of Marketing. He explains that the importance of strong brands means that brand building is an essential marketing activity. Successful brand building can reap benefits in terms of premium prices, achieving distribution more readily, and sustaining high and stable sales and profits through brand loyalty.

Professor David Jobber further explains that strong brands, typically category leaders, are important to both companies and consumers. Companies benefit because strong brands add value to companies, positively affect consumer perceptions of brands, act as a barrier to competition, improve profits and provide a base for brand extensions consumers. He then adds that consumers gain because strong brands act as a form of quality certification and create trust.

4.2 Marketing strategy

Marketing strategy is a process that can allow an organization to concentrate

its limited resources on the greatest opportunities to increase sales and achieve a sustainable competitive advantage. A marketing strategy should be centered around the key concept that customer satisfaction is the main goal.

The sole purpose of marketing is to create profit for a business. Usually marketing is a slow process and the results of it show in the long-term. Marketing consists of more than sales and advertising. It also includes recruiting new clients and also maintaining a satisfactory relationship with the older clients.

One of the most well-known marketing specialists is Philip Kotler, and he defines marketing as a social process where individuals and groups satisfy their needs by exchanging products and creating value.

The importance of marketing was noticed not too long ago when products were being mass produced and customers awareness about quality and brands were still at a low. In order to win loyal customers, businesses had to start focusing on marketing their products.

To implement and carefully analyze the direction of Oppari.com, three marketing tools were used in this research:

4.2.1 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis

A SWOT analysis is a strategic planning method used to evaluate strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats involved in a project or business venture. It involves specifying the objective of the business venture or project and identifying the internal and external factors favorable and unfavorable to achieving that objective. Alfred Humphrey is said to have developed this tool.

4.2.2 Product Life Cycle

Product Life Cycle is a useful tool for conceptualizing the changes that may take place during the time that a product is on the market. It is quite flexible and can be applied to both brands and product lines (Jobber 2007).

The classic product life cycle curve has four stages: introduction, growth, maturity, and decline. Recently, specialists have noticed that there is still a crucial stage missing called Development. In this research, the new version of product life cycle is used.

4.2.3 Marketing Mix

Marketing Mix consists of four major elements: product, price, promotion and place. These '4-Ps' are the four key decision areas that marketers must manage so that they satisfy or exceed customer needs better than the competition. In other words, decisions regarding the marketing mix form major aspect of marketing concept implementation (Jobber 2007).

It is also "a set of controllable tactical marketing tools that the firm blends to produce the response it wants in the target market" (Kotler Et al 2005, 34). In this research, both product life cycle and marketing mix have been combined into one tool. This is to enable the use of 4-Ps in every stage of the product life cycle. This will grant a better analysis for Oppari.com.

It is important to understand the market and how it will react to this kind of service, and also find out what the market expects from this service.

The target market has been identified as university students and companies around Finland.

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 Literature Review

An in-depth analysis of existing documentations was undertaken to help guide the research to the wanted direction, and also to help understand the outcome of the research. The strategies used in this research have been evaluated according to its viability, cost effectiveness, simplicity, and usability. The publications used in this research are available in libraries.

Documents are evaluated in the areas of:

- Marketing through branding
- Value creation
- Marketing in the Digital age
- Introduction of a new service
- Marketing sustainability

5.1.1 Primary Research

The beginning of the primary research is to realize the objectives of the research, and then create a questionnaire. After a suitable questionnaire has been created, the target sample has to be identified. In this case, students that have already completed their thesis and practical training seem to be the ideal target sample. The questionnaire will be answered through direct interviews,

and telephonic interviews. When completed and analyzed, the questionnaire is expected to yield information about:

- User demands
- User expectations
- Feedback from students that have already completed their thesis in order to get an understanding of what the upcoming students will expect

The data obtained from survey methods can increase the researcher's ability to make inference about the target population as a whole (Hair, Bush & Ortinau 2006, 222)

5.1.2 Secondary research

Information will be sourced from related internet sites, books and other academic publications. The purpose of these sources is to provide information about:

- Differences in marketing strategies and promotional approaches
- Current situation, future predictions and expectations

5.2 Conclusions and Recommendations

On the basis of the information gathered by following the above steps, conclusions and suggestions have been gathered. The data will provide insight about consumer wants and expectations, and how to drive the service into a high traffic, and sustainable business in the long-term.

Marketing research is the function that links an organization to its market through the gathering of information. This information allows for the identification and definition of market-driven opportunities and problems (Hair Et al 2006, 4).

6 RESULTS

6.1 Branding

“Companies must carefully manage their brands. First, the brand's positioning must be continuously communicated to consumers” (Kotler et al 2005, 567).

A brand is what differentiates a business from competitors and also generates customer loyalty. Small and medium companies can create effective brands by examining how the business works, and how customer reacts.

What differentiates the brand is what we surround the core product with. The core product, or in this case core service, can be duplicated by anyone. The core service needs to be surrounded by complementary services that prove genuine interest for user satisfaction.

These external factors around the core service include:

- Service
- Brand name and image
- Delivery
- Guarantees
- Quality and design
- Packaging

“The brand's position will not take hold fully unless everyone in the company lives the brand. Therefore the company needs to train its people to be customer centered” (Kotler Et al 2005, 567).

The list above, including the core service is what creates brand potential. In this case, brand potential means the determined awareness the brand has the possibility to generate. Some indeed are at the tops of people’s minds, while others are latent, concealed in certain underlying signs of the brand.

Oppari.com’s core service is to help companies inform students about thesis topics, practical training placements, and project works. As complementary services, Oppari.com wants to focus on speed and efficiency. The aim is to attract users by creating a convenient and easy web environment for both students and companies.

6.1.1 Building brand

David Jobber created a simple and widely used approach on aspects to consider while building a brand.



FIGURE 1. Brand building framework (Jobber 2007)

Quality

Quality is required to create a good brand. In creating quality, the core benefits must be well thought out and delivered.

Oppari.com will emphasize the benefits of using the offered services and the development of quality and trust will be an on-going process. This will help create brand equity.

Positioning

Strong brands have clear and unique positions in the target market. This can be achieved through image, service standards, and guarantees. Kotler Et al (2005, 567) also states that “when positioning a brand, the marketer should establish a mission for the brand and a vision of what the brand must be and do.”

Oppari.com will have a simple and familiar user interface which will enable using the service easy. Since Oppari.com is an intermediary service, the service standard will focus on speed and efficiency. The aim is to make the information flow instantaneous, but the guarantee of the information will depend on the companies and students using the services. Since Oppari.com is still at development stage, it will try to create a way to secure and guarantee the source of information for the future.

Repositioning

Brands are forced to change their market position to reflect the changes in consumer's tastes. This usually occurs when the market matures or starts to decline.

Since Oppari.com is still at development stage, its main focus is not yet repositioning. Oppari.com's target market is new and our services are new. Oppari.com has time to focus on other sectors, but repositioning ideas are being developed while building other crucial aspects of Oppari.com's services.

Communication

After brand positioning, it is also essential to build a clearly defined position in the minds of the target audience. "Brands are not only maintained by advertising but by brand experience also" (Kotler Et al 2005, 567).

Here, Oppari.com will take advantage of promotional mixes that are available, such as co-operation with universities to promote our services to students, and aggressive marketing to companies detailing how our services can help their own business.

First-mover advantage

First-mover advantage means to create the first successful brand in a market to create a clear positioning in the minds of target customers before competition.

Oppari.com will need to make a huge and clear impact when promoting its services. The aim is to try and entwine the brand name Oppari.com with the services provided, so that people will immediately think of Oppari.com when associated with any of the services it offers. This will help get an edge over competition.

Long-term perspective

Long-term perspective is another important factor in brand building. It means the need to invest in the brand.

Oppari.com will focus on building customer awareness, and communicating the brands message. This will help build a customer loyalty base. This will be achieved by constantly marketing the brand to potential users, and also arranging promotional events around the country.

Internal marketing

It is important that the whole business understands the brand value and positioning.

Since Oppari.com is a service business, this makes internal marketing more important. Oppari.com has to provide services professionally, which means that Oppari.com personnel have to be well trained and customer-service oriented. Oppari.com will also develop concepts that will help enhance the services provided. "The proper focus of marketing planning is that of extending loyal customer lifetime value, with brand management serving as an essential marketing tool" (Kotler Et al 2005, 558).

7 MARKETING STRATEGIES

7.1 S.W.O.T analysis

It is important to understand the strengths and weaknesses of Oppari.com so that the appropriate marketing strategies can be implemented. Therefore a SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunities, threats)-analysis is used.

TABLE 1. S.W.O.T - analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Free services - Useful services - Easier communication between students and companies - Can be used for research by companies - Grants students valuable experience by working with companies - Possibility for students to earn money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Minimal start-up resources
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Large user-base can be put to other use - The established network with companies can lead to other business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Similar services - Take-over attempt - Service is not used

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
segments - Possibility of advertisements by companies	

From the SWOT-analysis above, we can see that Oppari.com has far more strengths and opportunities than weaknesses and threats. Most of Oppari.com's weaknesses and threats can be solved with careful planning, marketing, and resource employment (both from the financial and HR point of views). "Finally, the company needs to periodically audit their brand's strengths and weaknesses (Kotler Et al 2005, 568).

7.2 Product Life Cycle and Marketing Mix

Product life cycle can be defined as the course of a product's sales and profits over time.

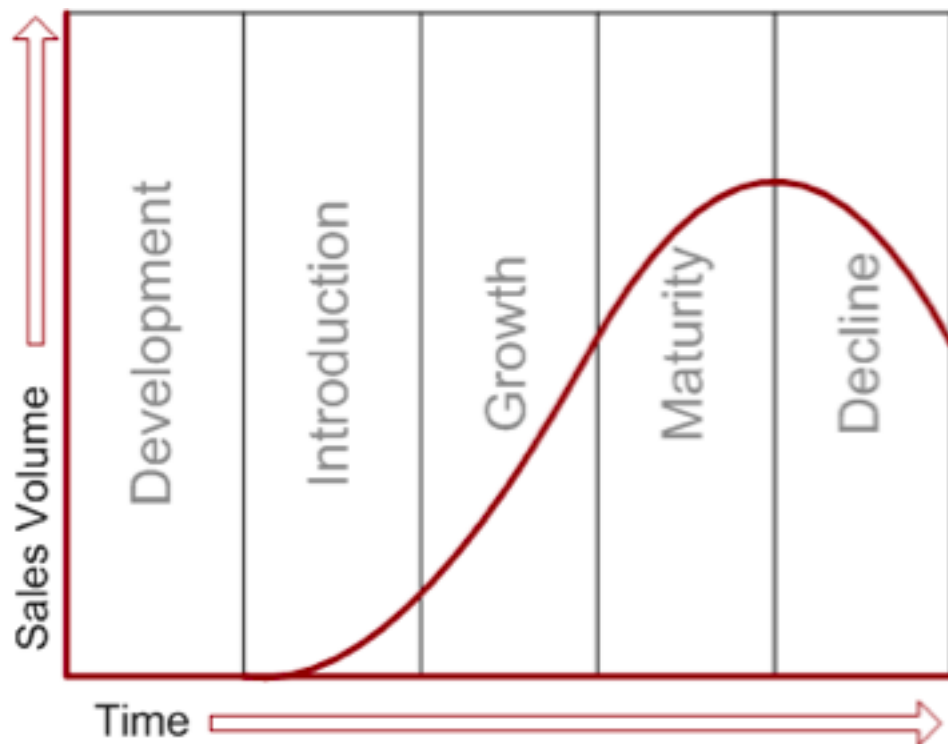


FIGURE 2. Product Life Cycle (Blurtit.com 2009)

It is also essential to analyze the marketing mix according to progress along the time scale of the product life cycle to help create the best strategy, and to analyze the market and demand for this service. The marketing mix is made up of four categories, also called The 4 P's of marketing.

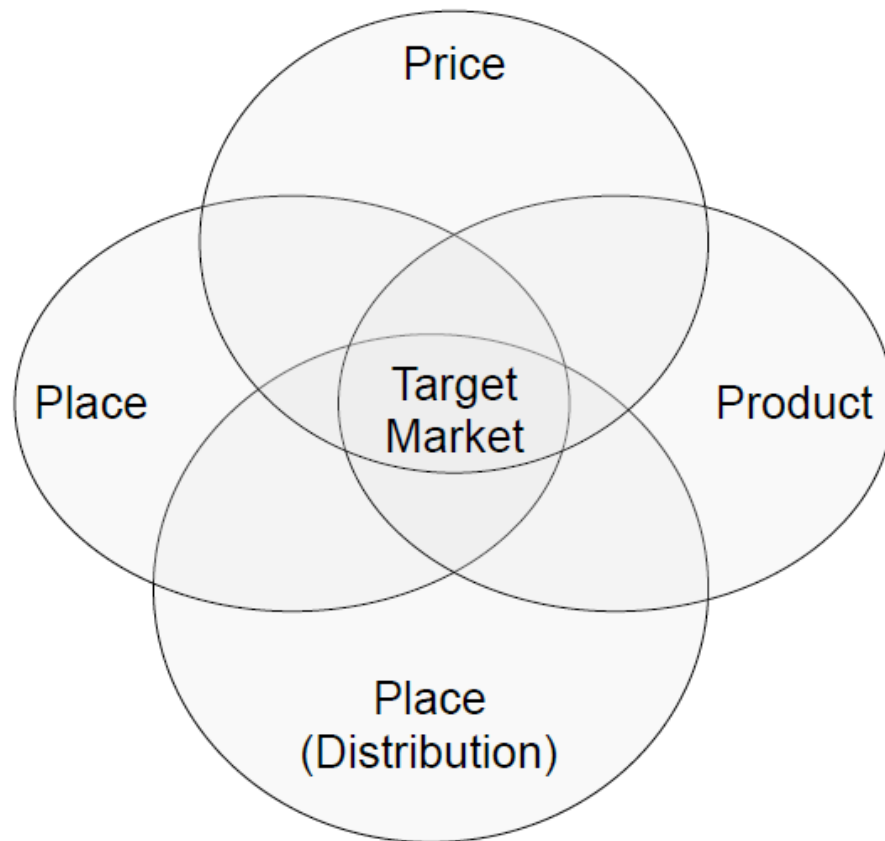


FIGURE 3: Marketing Mix. Modeled from Netmba.com 2009

7.2.1 Development

This is the incubation stage of the product, or in this case service. Sales are usually non-existent, and the preparation to introduce the service is being made.

7.2.2 Introduction

While the service is being introduced, the sales volume is not expected to take off instantaneously. The target market will start becoming aware of the benefits of the services. The costs in the introduction stage are typically the highest because much is being spent to advertise the services, and distribution

costs. The introduction stage generally does not bring profit.

The main objective in the introduction stage is to create a market. Depending on products and services, different companies alter their marketing mix the way it benefits the company most. "A company, especially a market pioneer, must choose a launch strategy consistent with its intended product positioning" (Kotler Et al 2005, 606).

Product

Oppari.com will start with core services which are to gather thesis topics, project works and practical training placements from companies for student use.

Price

Oppari.com will be a free service as it tries to build a user base.

Place (Distribution)

Oppari.com will start on a selective scale for testing purposes before launching a nation-wide implementation.

Promotion

The purpose of promotion is to create brand awareness in an attempt to get students and companies to try the service and also link the service to Oppari.com's brand name. Since Oppari.com is not receiving any revenue at this moment, only cheap marketing methods will be used, such as email, phone and word of mouth.

7.2.3 Growth

This is the stage where a company starts to gain profit. Customers increase as the target market becomes more aware of the services. Once the service proves to be successful, this will alert the remaining target market, and they will also implement the use of Oppari.com's services into their routine.

Kotler Et al (2005, 607) also alerts that “the firm will face a trade-off between high market share and high current profit. By spending a lot of money on product improvement, promotion and distribution, the company can capture a dominant position. In doing so, however, it gives up maximum current profit, which it hopes to make up in the next stage.

At this stage, Oppari.com will aim to gain preference while increasing user base. The marketing mix will be altered as follows:

Product

Develop the first service model. Create new concepts and services that will bring value to the service.

Price

The service will remain free, but according to the demands from companies, additional services could be implemented for a minor fee.

When Oppari.com has a significant user base, the possibility to advertise for a fee will be promoted.

Place (Distribution)

The service is launched nation-wide at this stage, but information received

from companies for students will be treated more sensitively. Since Oppari.com has gained a noticeable user base, there are bound to be unwanted information trying to flow into the service. To maintain quality, unrelated information must be filtered away.

Promotion

Any revenue gained will be re-invested into promoting the brand further. Since the service has been launched nation-wide, the cost of advertising will increase. The method of advertising at this stage depends on the amount of revenue.

7.2.4 Maturity

This stage is what all companies aim for as it is the most profitable. The growth of the customer base slows down due to the target market share nearing its limit. This is also the most profitable stage because the brand awareness is strong, and advertising costs can be reduced.

The aim of this stage is to maintain market share, and “most successful ones stay alive through continually evolving to meet changing consumer needs” (Kotler Et al 2005, 607). Therefore, in an effort for Oppari.com to maintain its status, marketing mix will be modified as such:

Product

Features, modifications, and services are created around the core services in an attempt to differentiate Oppari.com from possible competitors.

Price

The main source of income will be from advertising. If Oppari.com can

maintain a dominant position, there will be no need to alter the price of advertising because advertisements will still reach a larger audience through Oppari.com.

Place (Distribution)

Oppari.com will have the opportunity to be more international. The key players in other countries can be used to create more options for students. Oppari.com will focus on students studying in Finland, but will also provide experience options from other countries.

Promotion

The brand will have a strong hold on the target market's mind at this stage, which means that the cost of advertising can be lowered.

7.2.5 Decline

Growth will cease and start to decline for a number of reasons. For Oppari.com the only foreseen reason would be competition. Kotler Et al (2005, 609) also states that "sales can decline for many reasons, including technological advances, shifts in consumer tastes and increased competition". In an attempt to delay this stage, Oppari.com will alter its marketing mix accordingly:

Product

Oppari.com will need to invest in the development of services and also be up to date with new technologies that can be beneficial.

Price

There is no reason to lower the price of advertising. Additional service costs could be lowered or totally removed, otherwise all costs will remain unchanged.

Place (Distribution)

Oppari.com will try to negotiate exclusive deals with companies in an attempt to block competition. The service will also continue to develop international ties and try to bring much more variety to students across Finland.

Promotion

Promotional costs are kept to the minimum and re-directed to research and development.

8 SURVEY

8.1 About the survey research

For the survey research, a quantitative questionnaire was used to get a view of how users most likely will react to the service. During the creation of the questionnaire, there were a lot of aspects to consider. The target audience for the survey was unclear, and careful consideration had to be taken to select the audience that would benefit this research the most.

The criteria for our target audience are as follows:

- Thesis already done or thesis started

- Practical training done or started

The reason for choosing this audience is to help collect past data and perceptions, which will help predict how upcoming students will likely behave.

The questionnaire was designed in a way that the data collected will tell about target audience thoughts on the thesis research and practical training they have done or are doing, and if they would have done anything another way, and also find out how useful a service such as Oppari.com would have been to them.

The main goals of quantitative research are to provide specific facts decision makers can use to (1) make accurate predictions about relationships between market factors and behaviors, (2) gain meaningful insights into those relationships, (3) validate the existing relationships, and (4) test various hypotheses (Hair Et al 2006, 172)

8.2 Results

The results from this quantitative questionnaire are based on 38 person's answers.

The first table below shows where the interviewed target audience received their thesis topic from:

TABLE 2. Where the thesis topics were acquired from

From where did you find your Thesis topic?	N	%
Company	10	26.32%
Through School	14	36.84%
Independent Research	14	36.84%
Total	38	100%

Another question in the questionnaire was designed to find out whether the people who answered were interested in receiving monetary reward for their thesis research. Below is the result from this question:

TABLE 3. Thesis preference

Would you prefer payment in return for your thesis research?	N	%
Yes	38	100%
No	0	0%
Total	38	100%

The reason for this obvious question was to confirm the hypothesis that incentives do matter.

This question also tells us more. Since every person answered positively to the question in the above table, we can assume that all students will preferably do a thesis for a company. This assumption was made by realizing that mostly only companies pay out monetary rewards for thesis undertaken on their behalf, and independent research does not usually get any monetary payment.

However, the questionnaire also specifically asked if the interviewees that did an independent research would have preferably done their thesis for a company. The result is as follows:

TABLE 4. Thesis for company or independent

If you did an independent research, Would you have rather done the thesis for a company?	N	%
Yes	9	64.3%
No	5	35.7%
Total	14	100%

As you can see from the above table, the result contradicts with the previous table where all the interviewed target audience rather receive payment for their thesis research. This can only mean that the independent research that was preferable to some was important, and forfeited the possibility to do a thesis research for a company in order to also receive monetary payment. But 64.3% of the students that did an independent research would have preferred to do a thesis research for a company.

The obvious explanation for this would be because they did not find a suitable topic of interest, which concludes to also say that they did not have enough options to select from. However, there are many companies searching for students to do a thesis research for them, but for some reason the communication channels between the companies and students are not strong enough.

The final stage for the thesis part was to measure how satisfied the students

are with their thesis topic. The students that did the research for companies and the ones that did it independently are separated. A simple measurement of 1 to 5 (Not satisfied to Very satisfied) was used to answer this question.

TABLE 5. How satisfied were you with your thesis topic? (independent)

How Satisfied were you with your thesis topic? (Independent)	N	%
(Not Satisfied) 1	0	0.0%
2	2	14.3%
3	4	28.6%
4	4	28.6%
(Very Satisfied) 5	4	28.6%
Total	14	100%

TABLE 6. How satisfied were you with your thesis topic? (company)

How Satisfied were you with your thesis topic? (For Company)	N	%
(Not Satisfied) 1	0	0.0%
2	0	0.0%
3	11	46.0%
4	12	50.0%
(Very Satisfied) 5	1	4.0%
Total	24	100%

The above tables show how the students have answered this question. As you can see, the amount of students that did their thesis research for companies are almost twice as much as the ones that did an independent thesis research. Therefore, it is rather difficult to see relevance of these tables. However, calculating the mean shows the average of these two groups and therefore distinctively helps to clarify which group has a higher satisfactory rate.

TABLE 7. Independent research group vs. Company research group mean

	Mean
Independent Research Group	3.71
Company Research Group	3.58

As the above table shows, the average of the students that did an independent research is only slightly more satisfactory than the students that did their research for a company.

The second part of the questionnaire was designed to investigate student opinions about their practical training placements. The first task was to find out how hard it was to find their practical training placements.

TABLE 8. How hard was it to find a practical training placement?

How hard was it to find a Practical Training placement?	N	%	
(Very Easy)	1	3	7.9%
	2	14	36.8%
	3	13	34.2%
	4	3	7.9%
(Very Hard)	5	5	13.2%
Total	38	100%	

The above table illustrates how hard it was to find a Practical Training placement by the interviewed students.

TABLE 9. Are you satisfied with your practical training

Are you satisfied with your Practical Training?	N	%	
(Not Satisfied)	1	2	5.3%
	2	2	5.3%
	3	14	36.8%
	4	16	42.1%
(Very Satisfied)	5	4	10.5%
Total	38	100%	

And this table above shows the satisfaction level of the students that answered the questionnaire.

The results the questionnaire generated from the Practical Training Placement part were rather interesting. Apparently the practical training that the students have undertaken, received more positive feedback than negative. The

mean for how hard it was to find a practical training placement on a 1 to 5 (Very easy to Very hard) scale, scored 2.82. This is shy away from the middle point of 3, but never the less in favor of the practical training placements. The satisfaction rate also used the same measurement (Not satisfied – Very satisfied) as the previous, and scored a mean of 3.47. This is also in favor of the practical training placements.

However, only 63.16% of the students thought they had enough practical training options to pick from. Although 63.16% is above average, this seems to be the root for the satisfactory rate of practical training placements. If the students have more options to pick from, they will also be more satisfied.

To end the questionnaire, I ultimately asked if a service that made it easier for students to locate practical training placements, thesis topics, and project works would be considered useful. My initial hypothesis was that this would clearly be something of use to all the students, but only 73.68% answered positively to this question.

9 CONCLUSION

The aim of this survey was to analyze student behavior and also create a marketing strategy for Oppari.com by using commonly known tools such as branding, product life cycle, and marketing mix. By completing this survey and using these tools (branding, product life cycle, and marketing mix), Oppari.com gained a prediction of the target market behavior and a theoretical analysis of events that might occur and of how to possibly overcome the negative effects.

Although the amount of interviewed students was rather low, the research was still able to provide valuable information that did not follow the initial

hypothesis. This survey goes on to show that no matter how certain an idea might be, research to confirm this will certainly provide more information and also help to mold the idea to better suit the target market. This survey showed that more than half of the students that did an independent research would rather do it for a company. This might be due to the monetary reward, or the ease of directional guidance from both school and company.

We can only assume the students that did independent researches were doing something worthwhile for themselves. However, we can also assume that if the correct research topic would have been offered by a company, the amount of students that would still do independent researches would be smaller than it is in this research. Anyhow, this is one of the aspects that Oppari.com is trying to decrease. Oppari.com's aim is to become the internet hub for all thesis topics, practical training placements, and project assignments provided by actual companies. This not only provides them with more options, but also gives them with more experience of working life after graduation. The student's value will be higher, and they will also be more competitive when entering the labor market.

The research undertaken to create a theoretical framework of what would be the best ways to build the brand Oppari.com was also crucial for the sake of competition. Oppari.com neither uses technology that is exclusive nor services that cannot be duplicated. This is why branding matters. By creating a good brand that people remember, the competitors will have more difficulties with trying to penetrate Oppari.com's market share. If Oppari.com can successfully implement the seven stages of building a brand listed by David Jobbers, Oppari.com will be able to maintain its dominant position.

Using a fusion of product life cycle and marketing mix proved very beneficial. In theory, it helped to identify different scenarios through product life cycle. Then marketing mix was used for every scenario to formulate a strategy according to the time line. Although these tools are theoretical, they will still

set a guideline for Oppari.com.

In conclusion, Oppari.com has a good potential to be successful if the plans will be correctly implemented. There are no foreseen reasons why the target market should not start to use this innovative and free service.

Oppari.com's toughest challenge will be to persuade the users to start using something new and divert from their traditional methods. This is a challenge Oppari.com believes it will overcome with the good quality of service and active marketing.

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