



A Strategic Marketing Plan

Case: Mobile Application for Dog Owners

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ABSTRACT

Tampereen ammattikorkeakoulu
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INNANMAA, KIIA
A Strategic Marketing Plan
Case: Mobile Application for Dog Owners

Bachelor's thesis 48 pages, appendices 1 pages
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The objective of this bachelor's thesis was to create an implementable, strategic marketing plan for the client and the client's mobile application. The mobile application is based on user-generated data and in the past few years it has not worked as intended due to the lack of a vast and active userbase. The client needs this to change and asked the author to create a marketing plan with the main purpose of growing the userbase of the application.

A strategic marketing plan is the foundation for all marketing activities. Strategic marketing plans are less detailed than tactical marketing plans but cover a longer time period. Usually strategic marketing plans cover a time period of 3 to 5 years, whereas tactical marketing plan are only focused on one year or less. (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 24, 30.) In this case, the strategic marketing plan covers three years: 2021-2023.

The theoretical framework of this thesis explains the terms and definitions that are relevant in this case. In addition, frameworks and tools utilized in the process of creating the marketing plan are described in the theoretical section of the thesis.

In order to respect the confidentiality of the client, some details are excluded from the empirical section of this thesis, but the essential elements of the marketing plan are explained. The result of this thesis is a thorough, strategic marketing plan that will help the client build the community of users for the application. This strategic marketing plan will be used as a foundation for tactical marketing plans created later.

Key words: marketing, marketing plan, strategy

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tampereen ammattikorkeakoulu
Yrittäjyyden ja tiimijohtamisen tutkinto-ohjelma

INNANMAA, KIIA
Strateginen markkinointisuunnitelma
Case: Mobiilisovellus koiranomistajille

Opinnäytetyö 48 sivua, joista liitteitä 1 sivua
Lokakuu 2020

Tämän opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli luoda toteutettavissa oleva, strateginen markkinointisuunnitelma asiakkaalle ja asiakkaan mobiilisovellukselle. Asiakkaan mobiilisovellus perustuu käyttäjien luomaan dataan ja viimeisimpien vuosien aikana se ei ole toiminut, kuten on tarkoitettu, koska aktiivinen käyttäjäkunta ei ole ollut riittävän laaja. Asiakkaan täytyy saada tilanteeseen muutos ja siksi asiakas pyysi kirjoittajaa luomaan markkinointisuunnitelman, jonka päätavoite on kasvattaa sovelluksen käyttäjäkuntaa.

Strateginen markkinointisuunnitelma on perusta kaikille markkinoinnin toimenpiteille. Strategiset markkinointisuunnitelmat eivät ole yhtä yksityiskohtaisia, kuin taktiset markkinointisuunnitelmat ovat, mutta kattavat pidemmän ajanjakson. Useimmiten strategiset markkinointisuunnitelmat kattavat 3-5 vuotta, kun taas taktiset markkinointisuunnitelmat keskittyvät vain yhteen vuoteen tai lyhyempään ajanjaksoon. (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 24, 30.) Tässä tapauksessa strateginen markkinointisuunnitelma kattaa kolme vuotta: 2021-2023.

Tämän opinnäytetyön teoriaosuus selittää termit ja määritelmät, jotka ovat tässä tapauksessa relevantteja. Lisäksi työkalut ja prosessit, joita markkinointisuunnitelman luomiseen on käytetty, kuvaillaan opinnäytetyön teoreettisessa osuudessa.

Kunnioittaakseen asiakkaan yksityisyyttä, kirjoittaja on jättänyt joitain yksityiskoh-
tia pois opinnäytetyön empiirisestä osuudesta, mutta markkinointisuunnitelman
olennaiset elementit on sisällytetty opinnäytetyöhön. Opinnäytetyön lopputulok-
sena on perusteellinen, strateginen markkinointisuunnitelma, joka auttaa asia-
kasta rakentamaan sovelluksen käyttäjien yhteisöä. Tämä strateginen markki-
nointisuunnitelma tulee olemaan perustana taktisille markkinointisuunnitelmille,
jotka luodaan myöhemmin.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis documents the process of creating an implementable, strategic marketing plan to help the client's employees with marketing a mobile application to gain more active users. The marketing plan is created to be used as a guideline and framework by employees, who are responsible for the marketing of the application.

The marketing plan in this case is strategic, rather than tactical. Malcom McDonald and Hugh Wilson (2011) define the difference between these two: a strategic marketing plan is usually created for a few years and it isn't as detailed or concrete as a tactical marketing plan, created typically only for one year or less, would be (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 30).

Bryce McDuffee (2018) notes that a strategic marketing plan is a base for the tactical plan, and therefore needs to be created first (McDuffee 2018). As the client in this case didn't yet have a strategic marketing plan to base the tactical plan on, creating the strategic marketing plan was set as the objective of this thesis.

1.1 Client

The client of this thesis is a Finnish pharmaceutical company. The marketing plan will be created for a mobile application owned by this company. Names of both the company and the mobile application will not be disclosed in this thesis due to confidentiality reasons. Moving forward in this thesis the pharmaceutical company will be referenced as the company or the client and the mobile application will be referenced as the mobile application or the application.

The mobile application has been created for dog owners. It is based on user-generated content and build on the maps provided by Google. Users of the app can make notes on the map, signifying different things for other dog owners using the app. These notes include things like "poison", "glass shards", "dog-friendly

park” or “dog-friendly café”. Other users can then see the notes and use the information when choosing for example routes for walks with their dogs.

The application is free for all users. It doesn't feature advertisements and is not monetized in any way. As the application is not part of the client's core business, it has not been the in the focus for the past couple of years.

1.2 Objectives and definition of the thesis

When the application was first launched in Finland in 2016, it got a great reception. It was downloaded from the application stores by thousands of dog owners and it attracted the media. Nevertheless, after a few years, its numbers of active users have gone down. Being an application that heavily relies on user generated content, it's not as useful and doesn't work as intended without a proper quantity of users.

Therefore, creating and implementing a strategic marketing plan is essential for this application at this stage. The objectives of the marketing plan are to raise awareness of the application, to get the target demographic to download the application and to get the target demographic to use the application regularly.

The marketing plan has been worked on and created during 2020 and is intended to be implemented from January 2021 to December 2023.

1.3 Data collection

This thesis utilizes mostly secondary data (already existing information) and only a few pieces of information have been directly collected for this thesis. This applies both in quantitative and qualitative methods. The data sources for this thesis are literature, online resources, the client and application stores.

1.4 Thesis structure

The structure of this thesis is clear. After this introduction, the author introduces the theoretical framework the strategic marketing plan is based on. These theories include definitions of critical terms and methods used in the creation process of the marketing plan.

In the next section of the thesis the author explains the end product, which is the strategic marketing plan. Some details are left out due to confidentiality reasons.

In the fourth section the author summarizes the process and discusses the theories in relation to the case. Lastly, the author comments on the process of creating the thesis and the strategic marketing plan and summarizes the client's comments about the marketing plan.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section of the thesis, critical terms will be explained in detail and a theoretical framework for the creation process of the strategic marketing plan for the mobile application will be build.

2.1 Marketing

Marketing is a complicated term with everchanging definitions. Marketing today is vastly different from marketing 10, 20 or 30 years ago.

The American Marketing Association reviews it's definition of the term, modifies it if necessary, and reapproves it every three years. The American Marketing Association's latest approved definition is the following: "Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners and society at large." (The American Marketing Association 2017.)

Another definition to the term marketing is offered by Bittu Kumar in Marketing for Beginners. Kumar explains marketing as "the process of developing and communicating value to your prospects and customers." (Kumar 2012, 9). According to Kumar, marketing is everything from communicating with customers to pricing strategies and from the marketing materials to all the planning and measuring of your investments. (Kumar 2012, 9.)

Philip Kotler, Kevin Lane Keller, Mairead Brady, Malcom Goodman and Torben Hansen (2012, 7) describe marketing as recognizing and fulfilling customers' needs. They also acknowledge the fact that definition for this term is largely debated, because it has to be applicable in so many different contexts. (Kotler et al. 2012, 7.)

2.2 Marketing Plans

McDonald and Wilson (2011, 24) explain marketing planning as setting objectives for marketing and developing plans for achieving those objectives (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 24). Kotler et al. (2012, 522) describe marketing planning similarly: as a sequence of activities that result in the setting of objectives and the planning of how to achieve those objectives. (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 24; Kotler et al. 2012, 522.)

Bittu Kumar (2012) describes marketing plans as roadmaps. According to him, marketing plans outline the company's or the product's marketing from strategies and tactics to costs and estimated outcomes. (Kumar 2012, 36.)

McDonald and Wilson (2011, 24) note, that marketing planning is crucial in our progressively complex world. They also further explain, that today, strategic marketing planning as the base of marketing planning is more important, whereas in the past, tactical plans might have been sufficient. (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 24, 30.)

Studies have shown that marketing planning activities can have a serious impact on the profitability of the company. For example, marketing planning can help organizations to systematically recognize opportunities and threats, improve internal communications, allocate resources optimally and be prepared to face change. Having these multiple benefits, the main reason for which strategic marketing plans are made, considers competitive advantage; how to create, build, defend and maintain it. (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 33.)

2.2.1 Strategic and Tactical Marketing Plans

There are two different types of marketing plans and McDonald and Wilson (2011, 30) note that it's important to differentiate between the two types: strategic and tactical. A strategic marketing plan covers a longer period of time, usually three to five years, whereas the tactical marketing plan is more detailed, more action-

oriented and made for a shorter time period, typically for one year or less. (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 30.)

McDuffee (2018) from Manufacturing Marketing Group expands this idea: he says that strategic marketing plans hold substantial long-term objectives. Once this strategy has been set, a tactical marketing plan creates a more detailed road map of actions to reach these objectives. (McDuffee 2018.)

2.3 A strategic Marketing Plan

A strategic marketing plan is essential for each company, each brand and each product. A thorough marketing plan will help the company to achieve its objectives. (Kotler & Armstrong 2014, 78.)

Thorough, strategic marketing plans often include elements like a review of the current situation, mission statement, financial goals or budgets, positioning strategies, market research, offering overview, target demographic segmentation, marketing objectives and marketing strategies (marketing mix). (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 24, 523; Kotler & Armstrong 2014, 79; Weller 2017.)

When creating a strategic marketing plan, a framework makes the process less complicated. McDonald and Wilson introduce a 10-step process of creating strategic marketing plans and PR Smith has developed the SOSTAC® process for strategic marketing planning. (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 41; PR Smith n.d.)

2.3.1 10-step process of strategic marketing planning

McDonald and Wilson describe 10 steps of strategic marketing planning in four phases of the process (figure 1). They emphasize the long-term benefits of a formalized planning process. These benefits include stronger profitability and decreasing the amount of operational difficulties. (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 40.)

The first phase is called “Goal Setting” (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 41). It includes steps called “Mission” and “Corporate objectives” (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 41). (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 41.)

The second phase is called “Situation Review” (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 41) and includes the following three steps: “Marketing audit”, “Market overview” and “SWOT analyses” (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 41). (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 41.)

The third phase, “Strategy Formulation” (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 41), also includes three steps. They are called “Assumptions”, “Marketing objectives and strategies” and “Estimated expected results and identify alternative plans and mixes” (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 41). (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 41.)

Lastly, the fourth phase, called “Resource Allocation and Monitoring” (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 41), includes the last two steps: “Budget” and “First year detailed implementation programme” (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 41). (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 41.)



FIGURE 1. The 10-step process to creating a strategic marketing plan (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 41, modified)

The first step in the goal setting phase is the mission statement. This is where everything begins. Mission statements are not easy, as they should not be generic, but unique to the company and capable of impacting behavior within different levels of the organization. (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 41.)

According to McDonald & Wilson, a mission statement should include the organization's role or contribution, definition of the business (in terms of benefits the organization produces instead of the product or service the organization produces), unique capabilities or competitive advantage and manifestations for the future. It is essential, that this statement is unique and could not be used for all companies or an industry. (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 41-42.)

The second step is setting corporate objectives. Corporate objectives are simply, what the business wants to achieve. It defines a desired outcome, most often defined in terms of profit. The corporate objective needs to be set first, and strategies to achieve the objective underneath it. (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 41-42; 208-209.)

The third step begins the second phase and this step is the marketing audit. Before doing any further planning, a marketing plan needs some information it is based on. A marketing audit needs to take into account the two different types of variables, that could affect performance of the company. (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 41-43.)

The first type of variables are the external variables, which the company cannot directly control, such as economic factors. The second type of variables are the internal variables, which the company can affect directly, such as the company's resources. This audit needs to be used as a database for decision making in the next steps of constructing a strategic marketing plan. (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 41-43.)

The next step is to do a market overview. A market overview should include explicit definition of the market and how it works. The market should be defined in terms of the needs the company aims to meet rather than in terms of the product

or service it provides. A market overview also includes segmentation of customers. The customers that experience the exact same or around the same needs are grouped together as a segment. (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 41; 43-44.)

The fifth step are SWOT analyses. The marketing audit and market overview provide crucial information, that needs to be put in an understandable and usable format. SWOT analyses are the answer. SWOT analyses should be concise and only hold essential information. (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 41; 44-45.)

SWOT analyses are discussed in further detail later in this thesis.

Next, the sixth step is the first step in the third phase, bringing the process to planning. This step is forming assumptions. The assumptions are setting the environment for the planning, as hypotheses of what is coming and what needs to be taken into consideration when making the strategic marketing plan. Assumptions are not necessary in all cases, but if there are any assumptions, they need to be clearly stated. (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 41; 45-46.)

The seventh step is setting marketing objectives and strategies. Marketing objectives are objectives that help the company to achieve the corporate objectives set earlier in the process. These objectives should be measurable instead of directional. Marketing objectives can be set at different levels, but they are always and only considering markets and products. (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 41; 46; 208-209.)

Marketing strategies on the other hand are the means of achieving the marketing goals. Marketing strategies are about the marketing mix. (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 41; 46.)

The marketing mix is discussed in further detail later in this thesis.

The eighth step is the estimation of predicted outcomes and the identification of alternative plans. At this stage of the planning process, the feasibility of the previously set objectives and strategies is tested. If necessary, alternative plans are also considered. (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 41;46-47.)

The ninth step, which is also introducing the fourth and last phase, is budgeting. At this step, the costs of the previously set strategies should be evaluated approximately and the budget should be formulated based on that. Traditionally, strategic marketing plans have a budget for the entire time period it is created for, and then a more detailed budget for the next year. (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 41;47.)

Lastly, the tenth step is to create a specific implementation program for the first year. This is a tactical marketing plan, and during the creation process of this, previously set marketing strategies would be divided into smaller and more specific subobjectives. (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 41; 48.)

2.3.2 SOSTAC®

The SOSTAC® framework (figure 2) is a simple method for creating marketing plans. It was developed by PR Smith in the 1990s. The acronym stands for the six steps the framework includes: Situation, Objectives, Strategy, Tactics, Action and Control. (Chaffey 2020.)

A situation review is where everything begins. In this section, we ask “where are we now?”. (Chaffey 2020.) This step of the process includes analyses of the current situation with the help of for example the SWOT analysis system. It also includes analyses of customers and competitors. It’s important to analyze both internal and external environments. (Chaffey 2020.)

When it comes to objectives, we ask “where do we want to be?”. (Chaffey 2020.) This step of the process can include different objectives, goals and visions for the company. (Chaffey 2020.)

The strategy section offers us a place to ask, “how do we get there?”. (Chaffey 2020.) This step of the process explains how to accomplish the objectives that were just set. (Chaffey 2020.)

The next step, tactics, is just a deeper look into the question “how do we get there?”. (Chaffey 2020.) This section includes more specific details about the marketing mix and communications. (Chaffey 2020.)

Action is quite closely tied to tactics. It takes the tactics into even more detailed action plans. And lastly, control is the step of making sure the objectives are achieved and how they are measured. (Chaffey 2020.)

It’s also important to note that the six different steps are connected to each other and may overlap. The process isn’t necessarily perfectly linear. (Chaffey 2020.)

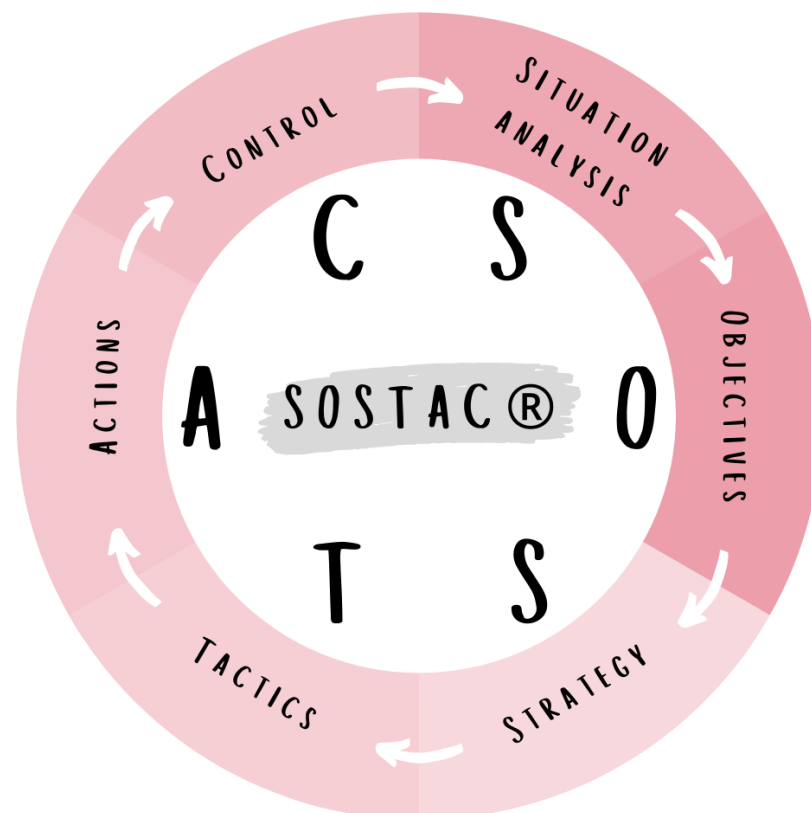


FIGURE 2. The SOSTAC® framework (Chaffey 2020, modified)

2.3.3 Mission Statement

While describing their 10-step process for creating marketing plans, McDonald and Wilson explain, that a mission statement should include the organization’s

role or contribution and a definition of the impact the organization has. (McDonald & Wilson 2011, 41, 60, 529.)

Simon Sinek proposes a similar approach. He introduces a simple template (figure 3) to help people assemble their mission statements. Sinek claims, that the statement template works for everyone personally and every organization as a whole. His approach is to summarize the mission statement into one sentence, that begins with the contribution the individual or the organization makes and ends with the impact it has. (Sinek et al. 2017, 25-27,48-49.)

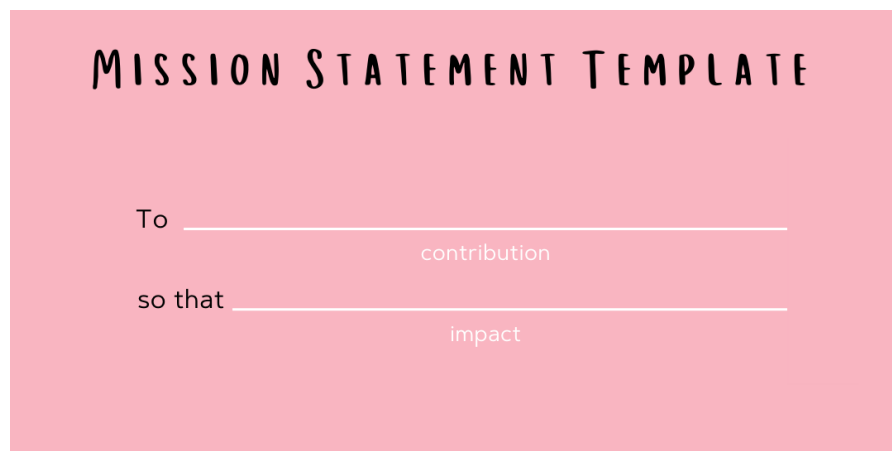


FIGURE 3. Mission Statement Template (Sinek et al. 2017, 48, modified)

2.3.4 Marketing Mix

Marketing Mix as a term is defined as a company's series of tactics or marketing decisions to advertise and sell its offerings (Singh 2012, 1; The Economic Times n.d.). The original Marketing Mix dates back to the 1960s and is often also referred to as the 4Ps of Marketing. The original 4Ps are Product, Price, Place and Promotion. Later, the 4Ps have been expanded to the 7Ps. The 7Ps are Product, Price, Place, Promotion, Process, Physical evidence and People. (Kotler et al. 2012, 31, 452, 973; Kotler & Armstrong 2014, 73; Rafiq & Ahmed, 1995.)

While the 4Ps and 7Ps are both widely recognized, today also additional 8Ps, 9Ps, 10Ps, 11Ps or even more are mentioned in different sources, related especially to the service industry. Anam Ahmed at Chron adds the eight P as Philosophy, while Lizz Corrigan at Lucidchart lists Performance as the eight P. Then

again, Knoji suggests, that the eight P is Productivity and quality. Kim Kachadoorian at The Ann Arbor News introduces 9Ps and adds Purpose, Philosophy and Packaging into the mix, while excluding Physical Evidence. David Fradin at Spice Catalyst adds Persona, Promise, Packaging and Philosophy to the list of the 7Ps. (Ahmed 2020; Corrigan n.d.; Knoji 2018; Kachadoorian 2011; Fradin 2017.)

As the information on the additional Ps after the broadened 7Ps is vague and varies in different sources, this thesis will only take a closer look at the 7Ps, as highlighted in figure 4.

The 4 Original Ps	The 3 additional Ps (7P)
<p>PRODUCT</p> <p>PRICE</p> <p>PROMOTION</p> <p>PLACE</p>	<p>PROCESS</p> <p>PEOPLE</p> <p>PHYSICAL</p> <p>EVIDENCE</p>

FIGURE 4. Marketing Mix – Original 4Ps and additional 3 Ps (Kotler et al. 2012, 31, 452, 973; Kotler & Armstrong 2014, 73; Rafiq & Ahmed, 1995)

Product can refer to actual tangible products as well as services. This category takes into account for example design, style, brand name, features, packaging, sizes, tangible clues, warranties and returns. (Kotler et al. 2012, 31; Rafiq & Ahmed, 1995.)

Price refers to list prices as well as discounted prices, differentiation, credit terms and payment periods. (Kotler et al. 2012, 31; Rafiq & Ahmed, 1995.)

Place considers for example distribution channels, locations, accessibility, inventories, transporting and distribution coverage. (Kotler et al. 2012, 31; Rafiq & Ahmed, 1995.)

Promotion refers to for example direct marketing, advertising, sales promotions, personal selling and public relations. (Kotler et al. 2012, 31; Rafiq & Ahmed, 1995.)

Process includes process design, policies, service blueprints, flow of activities, customer involvement and self-service technologies. (Kotler et al. 2012, 31; Rafiq & Ahmed, 1995.)

Physical evidence takes the service environment and all five physical senses, sound, sight, smell, taste and touch, into account. It considers for example colors, furnishings, noise levels and tangible clues. (Kotler et al. 2012, 31; Rafiq & Ahmed, 1995.)

People or Participants, as Mohammed Rafiq and Pervaiz K. Ahmed refer to it, then refers to staff (for example their training, commitment, attitudes and appearance) and customers. It could also include for example co-creation. (Kotler et al. 2012, 31; Rafiq & Ahmed, 1995.)

2.3.5 SWOT

A SWOT analysis is a general assessment of a company, used in the process of analyzing the current situation of the company. It includes the company's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Strengths and Weaknesses are internal factors and Opportunities and Threats are external factors. Traditionally a SWOT analysis is presented as a two by two matrix, as shown in figure 5. (Kotler et al. 2012, 111-112; Shewan 2020.)

	Helpful / Positive	Harmful / Negative
Internal	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
External	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS

FIGURE 5. A SWOT analysis (Kotler et al. 2012, 111-112; Shewan 2020, modified)

2.3.6 PESTEL

A PESTEL analysis (figure 6) is a different way of assessing a company. It focuses on the external environment. The acronym stands for six different factors, that need to be taken into account, when doing an external environment analysis: Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental and Legal. (The Oxford College of Marketing 2016.)

Political factors refer to policies and rules, that may impact the company. Some policies may be specific to some industries. (The Oxford College of Marketing 2016.)

Economic factors include external financial factors, for example interest rates, costs of different resources and exchange rates of foreign currency. Economic factors have a direct impact on the profitability of the company. (The Oxford College of Marketing 2016.)

Social factors relate to the social environment, for example lifestyle and cultural trends. Recognizing emerging trends can help the company to better comprehend its customers. (The Oxford College of Marketing 2016.)

Technological factors take into account new development and innovations, which could influence the company or the entire industry. This doesn't exclusively mean digital changes, but also new practices for example for logistics. (The Oxford College of Marketing 2016.)

Environmental factors take a more ecological aspect on things. Sustainability is every day more and more important, and these factors consider for example climate, carbon footprint and recycling. (The Oxford College of Marketing 2016.)

Lastly, legal factors are quite simply the laws, that affect the company. A company must be aware of what is legal and what is not. Any changes in legislation must also be taken into account. These include for example employment, consumer and safety related laws and legislations. (The Oxford College of Marketing 2016.)

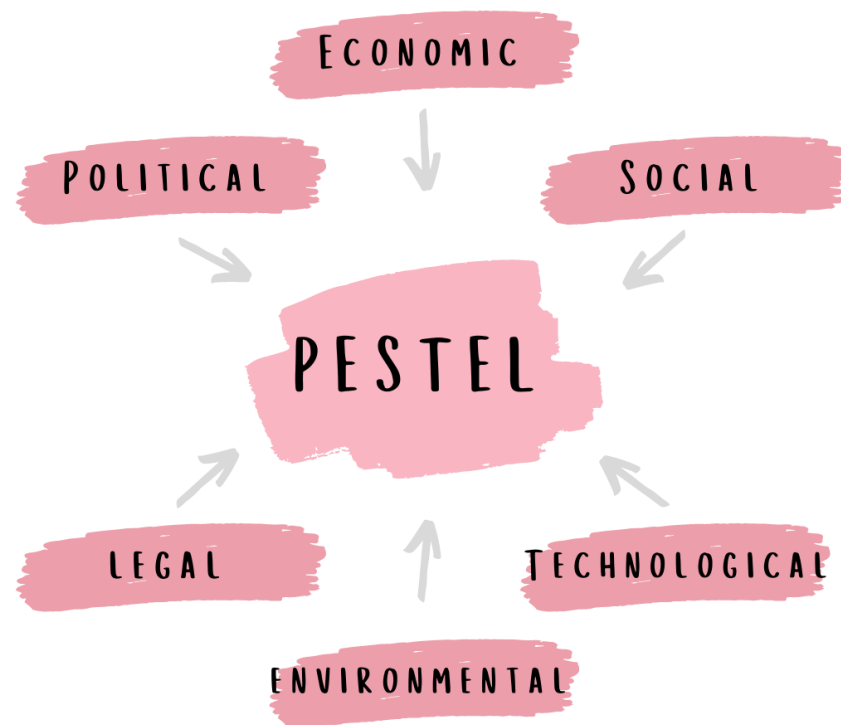


FIGURE 6. PESTEL analysis deconstructed (The Oxford College of Marketing 2016, modified)

3 CASE: A MOBILE APPLICATION FOR DOG OWNERS

This section of the thesis will go over the strategic marketing plan created for the mobile application based on the theory introduced previously.

There are two different types of marketing plans. In this case, the client didn't yet have a strategic marketing plan, so it needed to be prioritized as this thesis was written.

Even though a tactical marketing plan sounded appealing both to the author and the client, as it would go into greater detail in concrete steps and plans that could be implemented almost immediately, the client and the author agreed that a strategic marketing plan needs to be constructed first, and the tactical plan can only be created later, using the strategic plan as a base.

This strategic marketing plan was created utilizing the SOSTAC® framework and some elements of the 10-step method McDonald and Wilson introduced in their work Marketing Plans. The core elements of the two approaches were quite similar.

The PESTEL analysis method was used to audit the external factors affecting the client's mobile application as well as the SWOT analysis to audit the internal factors affecting the client's mobile application. The results of the PESTEL analysis were incorporated in the SWOT analysis.

It was decided, together with the client, that any financial goals or budgets would be excluded from the construction of the marketing plan. Other key elements of a thorough, strategic marketing plans were included. The structure of the marketing plan is the following:

1. Situation
 - a. Mission statement
 - b. Offering overview
 - c. YTD 2020
 - d. Target group

- e. PESTEL
 - f. SWOT
 - g. Market research
 - h. Competitors
2. Objectives
 - a. Vision
 - b. Marketing objectives
 3. Strategy
 - a. Marketing mix
 4. Tactics
 - a. Social media tactics
 - b. Brand book
 5. Actions
 - a. To do list
 6. Control

3.1 Situation

Based on the SOSTAC® framework, the first section of the marketing plan is the situation analysis. This section starts with looking internal elements, like the mobile application's mission statement, its offering overview and its target group. The author also included a YTD 2020 look at the current statistics of the application.

Next, the situation analysis advances into external elements. This is done by utilizing the PESTEL analysis method. The internal and external elements are combined in a SWOT analysis afterwards. Market research and competitors are also crucial elements at this stage of the marketing plan.

The situation analysis is the largest and most detailed section of this marketing plan. A clear and comprehensive depiction of the current situation is essential, before any actual planning can be done.

3.1.1 Mission Statement

The client's mobile application did not previously have a clear mission statement. The client knew why the application had been originally created, but they hadn't formatted it into an actual mission statement, so formatting one was a crucial part of the strategic marketing plan.

The mission statement was created utilizing Simon Sinek's mission statement template (Sinek et al. 2017, 25-27); "To (contribution, so that (impact))". The mission of the client's mobile application is to share information and connect dog owners, so that their dogs can have happy, healthy and long lives!

3.1.2 Offering overview

In this case, the offering overview is a look at the client's application and its main features. These are the signifiers for danger (e.g. poison or glass shards), signifiers for dog friendly places to visit (e.g. dog parks or dog friendly hotels), a signifier controlled by the client and an activity log for the users of the app.

3.1.3 YTD 2020

An important part of the situation analysis is taking a look at the data collected from the users of the app, from the beginning of the year 2020 to current date (YTD). The author went through data about the unique users of the application, new users and activity of the users. This data will not be disclosed here due to confidentiality reasons.

3.1.4 Target group

The client asked the author to define the target group of the application's users. The target group was defined by looking at the data and demographics of the current users of the application and by looking at data of dog owners in Finland.

The main target group is young women (from 25 to 34 years old), who own dogs. Most often these young women are also mothers and have children that are between the ages 7-17 years old. The target group was discussed together with the client and moving forward, it will be the main target group the client focuses on.

3.1.5 PESTEL

The PESTEL analysis is presented here, in table 1, in an abbreviated manner. Some details are excluded due to confidentiality reasons.

Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GDPR • Covid-19 limitations • EU decrees
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs of developing and maintaining the application can vary (outsourced) • Covid-19 economic factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Risks of unemployment
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of families with children is declining and more couples opt to not have children (Statistics Finland 2019) • There are over 1,5 million dog owners in Finland (Koiramme 2017) • The number of dogs in Finland is growing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In 2000 there was 500 000 dogs ○ In 2017 there was 800 000 dogs (Koiramme 2017; Toikka 2017) • A billion euros are spent on dogs in a year (Toikka 2017) • 1,6 million Finns (ca. 29%) always choose local/domestic products and services (Suomalaisen Työn Liitto 2018; Statistics Finland 2020)

Technological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phones and their operating systems develop all the time • The target group is on social media (DNA 2020), so the application needs to be present there as well
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate sustainability responsibility is more and more valued by consumers, so even mobile applications need to communicate about it transparently (The Oxford College of Marketing 2016)
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GDPR and other data regulations / data related laws • Finnish law

TABLE 1. A PESTEL analysis of the external factors affecting the client's mobile application

3.1.6 SWOT

The results of the PESTEL analysis were combined with the SWOT analysis. The information in SWOT analysis is brief and the PESTEL analysis is more detailed when it comes to the external factors.

The SWOT analysis is presented here, in table 2, in an abbreviated manner. Some details are excluded due to confidentiality reasons.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • App is simple to use (once one learns it) and doesn't have too many complicated features • App is useful when travelling • App works quickly and doesn't take much time to load • The client is a trusted and valued company in Finland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No introduction; it takes a minute to figure out all of the features • Information needs to be carefully checked internally before it's published • The app requires a vast user base to work efficiently • Not in the focus at the company • Doesn't directly generate income currently
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No direct competitors • The number of dogs in Finland is growing (Koiramme 2017; Toikka 2017) • Over 1000 € per dog spent yearly (Toikka 2017) • Travelling within Finland has been increasing because of Covid-19 • Coupons, articles etc. could provide ad space that can be sold, and income can be generated this way • Dog / dog owner influencers • Sustainability responsibility needs to be communicated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GDPR • Covid-19 • Phones and operating systems change • Activity on social media is "required"

TABLE 2. A SWOT analysis of the internal and external factors affecting the client's mobile application

3.1.7 Market research

The market research takes a deeper look at the different external factors that were already mentioned in the PESTEL and SWOT analyses. The author focused on data and research about dog owners in Finland, dog business in Finland and mobile application business worldwide and in Finland.

As already mentioned in the PESTEL and SWOT analyses, there are circa 1,5 million dog owners in Finland. Finnish women are a bit more likely to have dogs than men. In a study done by the Finnish Kennel Club in 2014, 49,9% of over 30-year-old dog owners were men and 50,1% were women. The same study also states that those who had had a dog were 55,5% women and 44,5% men. (Kennelliitto 2014.)

The study was done for people that were 30 or older, so only a small portion of the sampling is in the target group of the client's mobile application. Based on this study, younger people are more likely to have dogs. 30- to 44-year-olds were most likely (40,4%) to have dogs compared to other ages. (Kennelliitto 2014.)

In addition, a Finnish dog owner is most likely in a relationship: 81,1% of dog owners are in a relationship. Most dog owners (84,3%) were also living in a family of 2 or more people. These families were of course partly couples and partly families with children that were 7 years old or younger (14,1%), children between the ages of 7 to 17 (36,5%) or children between the ages of 18 to 24 (15,7%). (Kennelliitto 2014.)

Then again, the number of dogs in Finland has been growing and is likely still growing. In 2000, there were 500 000 dogs in Finland and in 2017, there were already 800 000 dogs in Finland. Koiramme.fi -magazine evaluates, that there will be over a million dogs in Finland latest by 2027. Before families used to only have one dog, but more and more often there are two or even more dogs in one family. (Koiramme 2017; Toikka 2017.)

A billion euros are spent on dogs yearly in Finland. On average, this is over a 1000€ per dog each year. This money is spent on dog taxes, veterinary and other

pet services, pet supplies and medications, food and the acquisition costs of the dog. (Toikka 2017; Statistics Finland 2020.)

Also, there are over 70 registered hobbies for dogs and many different services from dog swimming, massages, insurances and osteopathy are provided for dogs. It has become trendy to invest in your pet. A dog is more and more a family member rather than just a pet. (Toikka 2017.)

The mobile application industry is relatively new and data about it in the context of Finland can be tricky to find. Therefore, the author decided to look also into the industry in a worldwide context.

Annual downloads of mobile apps worldwide have increased by 45% between the years 2016 to 2019, and this doesn't include re-installs or updates. In 2019, people spent 35% more time on their phones than they did the past 2 years, averaging at 3 hours and 40 minutes. Mobile phones are becoming a bigger part of our lives year by year. (App Annie 2020.)

Most likely the average time spent on mobile phones for Finns is similar to the global data. Juha Riippi, the business director of Vincit, evaluates that Finns spend 3,5 hours daily on the mobile devices. Riippi also claims that first impressions are created within the first seven seconds after the user first launches the application, so first impressions matter. He also points out, that user-generated reviews affect the list rankings and the number of downloads. (Riippi 2020.)

According to Statistics Finland, 80% of Finns use the internet on their mobile phones. 98% of the client's mobile application's target group uses the internet on their mobile phones. In addition, Dentsu Data Services note that 51% of Finns use map services on their mobile phones weekly. (Statistics Finland 2019; Dentsu Data Services 2018.)

3.1.8 Competitors

In Finland, there are not a lot of mobile applications built especially for dog owners. None of these are direct competitors of the mobile application of the client, as their main purpose is different.

Apps like Oma Evidensia and Eläinsairaala Mobiili are designed for the customers of these veterinary hospitals. They hold basic and medical information about the pets and allow you to schedule veterinary appointments for your pet.

Agria Lemmikki and LähiTapiola's LemmikkiHelppi are similar apps provided by insurance companies. LemmikkiHelppi allows you to ask questions related to your pet's health from a veterinarian and they will let you know, if you need to take your pet to a veterinary hospital. Agria Lemmikki contains pet related news and tips. Both apps hold your pet's insurance information, and both will help you find the nearest veterinary clinics and show you the opening hours of those.

The Finnish Kennel Club also provides an app for its members. The app is called Omakoira and it holds your member card for the club and basic information about your dog.

Also, the pet supplies store Musti Ja Mirri has an app for its regular customers. The app has the customer's bonus card and allows you to shop their products through the application.

In addition to apps, TassuApu (www.tassuapu.fi) offers service to pet owners online. It works in the browser both on mobile devices and on a computer. It features a pain meter system and trackers for for example the pet's health, workouts, weight, meals and more. This service is paid by a monthly subscription. (TassuApu n.d.)

The information about these applications was retrieved from Google Play Store in September 2020.

3.2 Objectives

Based on the market research and the evaluation of the application's current situation and the mission statement created earlier, the author advanced to setting objectives for the mobile application. The objectives include a clear vision for the application and two primary marketing objectives supporting the vision and helping in turning it into reality.

3.2.1 Vision

The vision of the client's mobile application is to be one of the most used applications designed for dog owners in Finland, having over 10 000 active daily users before the end of 2023.

The vision extends to the same time period as the strategic marketing plan does. The goal of having over 10 000 active daily users was based on the number of downloads the competitors apps have and the scale of the application's target group. Growing a vast userbase is also necessary for the application to work as intended.

3.2.2 Marketing objectives

The author set two primary marketing objectives to support turning the vision into reality. The first one is obviously getting more users for the application and the second one is collaborating with other companies. These objectives are not measurable, so they were further divided into smaller steps and more easily measurable goals. The details of the more measurable goals will not be disclosed due to confidentiality reasons.

3.3 Strategy

Strategy is the section of the marketing plan that explores into how the previously set objectives can be met. The author chose to base the entire strategy on the 7 categories of the marketing mix 7P system. Each of the 7 Ps offer a different viewpoint to the strategy.

3.3.1 Marketing mix

Marketing mix or in this case the 7P system takes a look at the strategy from the viewpoint of Product, Promotion, Price, Place, Process, People and Physical evidence.

The author focused on only the factors that apply in the case of the client's mobile application, as for example the Product section takes into account packaging, but that is not applicable in this case, so it is excluded.

Product

In this case, the first element that the Product section takes into account is branding. Branding cornerstones are explained in table 3.

Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helpful info for choosing walk routes • Helpful info for travelling (within Finland) • Connecting the family around the furry family member
Promise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mobile application is a service for dog owners aiming to support their efforts in offering their dogs the best lives possible.
Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy dogs • Safe walks • Long lives
Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make walks safer • To connect dog owners • To connect families • To make the world a better place for dogs • To be a trusted companion

TABLE 3. Branding cornerstones of the mobile application

The second element is design. The design of the application currently is simple, easy on the eye and provides a straightforward user experience. The logo of the application is also great and shouldn't be changed. However, the application could use some rebranding, since it still looks as it looked like in 2016, when it was first released. The rebranding is explained further in the tactics section of the marketing plan.

Next, Product also applies to features. The existing main features were already explained in the offering overview. New features to develop and focus more on are a user's guide to the application on first launch, challenges for families, statistics and achievements with the activity log, coupons and articles in app and also saved favorite routes.

The last elements in the Product section are support and customer service. The application features a contact us -button and from. Resources need to be allocated in answering these messages in a timely manner. Customer support also needs to match the rebrand both with the visuals and the diction of the communication.

Promotion

The first elements that Promotion takes into account are marketing communications and advertising. As the client has requested, the author focused on social media marketing. Social media marketing is also the most cost-effective way of marketing, so all of the client's limited resources should be focused on it.

The application's target age group use Instagram and Facebook almost equally. 52% of 25- to 34-year-olds use Instagram feed daily and 35% of the same group use Instagram stories daily, while 59% of the same group use Facebook daily. Only 18% of the target age group uses Twitter daily and using it is more common amongst men than women. Also, YouTube is used a lot daily (52%), but it is significantly more common for men than women. Other platforms (e.g. TikTok, Pinterest) are not very commonly used daily. (DNA 2020.)

Based on this, the application's marketing should focus on Instagram and Facebook. Both platforms and all of their features should be used to their maximum

potential, including organic posts, paid ads, Facebook and Instagram stories, Facebook and Instagram lives, Instagram reels and Instagram's IGTV videos.

All accounts across all platforms and different countries that the application is used in should be brought up to date after being inactive due to lack of resources and should be consistent with the brand. This is essential in building clear brand image and trust amongst current and potential users.

Secondly, Promotion looks at influencer marketing. Influencers are able to influence potential users of the application to download it by recommending it on social media (Lexico n.d.). There are a lot of influencers who own a dog or even dogs that are influencers themselves. Globally, 44% of the most popular pet-related accounts are about canines (Digital Marketing Institute n.d.).

In addition to influencer marketing, other types of collaborations are included in this section as well. The client and its mobile application could collaborate with different companies that fit the brand. This could be done in several ways. The company that the client collaborates with could advertise the application on their social media accounts, web page, newsletter, at their physical location or in some other way. In return, the client could advertise the collaborating company on the applications web page, newsletter or in app.

Direct marketing is also an essential element of the Promotion section. Direct marketing is marketing based on direct communication to individuals (Investopedia 2020). In this case, direct marketing methods that should be used are notifications from the application and a newsletter.

Also, competitions and giveaways are included in the Promotion section. Competitions and giveaways are great ways to increase brand awareness, build a positive brand image and build community. The competitions and giveaways can happen via direct marketing, or on either the application's own or the influencers' social media accounts.

Promotion also takes into account branding, but it was addressed in the previous section.

Price

In this case, Price takes into consideration the collaborations mentioned previously and the free elements. The application is free to acquire for its users and there are no in app purchases or premium features. Prices of collaborations need to be considered by the client but were excluded from the strategic marketing plan by the client's request.

Place

The Place section takes into account the distribution channels and availability of the application. The distribution channels are application stores (AppStore for iOS phones and Google Play Store for Android phones). The application needs to be supported on all current phones and operating systems.

Process

Process in this case considers research and development of the application. Primarily, this needs to be done by staying on top of social media (marketing) trends and staying on top of which platforms the application's target group uses. In addition, a crucial part of research and development is asking for feedback from the users of the application or potential users via the application itself, the application's social media channels or its newsletter.

People

The People section takes into account individuals on marketing activities and customer support as well as the users of the application. For the previously set objectives to be met, more people resources need to be allocated for marketing activities and customer support of the application.

When it comes to the users and the potential users, they need to be communicated with throughout the different stages of the customer path (figure 7). The communication methods vary between the different stages.

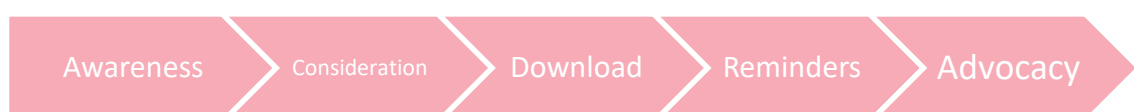


FIGURE 7. Customer path of the application

The first stage is awareness. In this stage, communication can be done with ads, social media posts and collaborations. The next stage is consideration and while the user or potential user is in this stage, communication can be done with social media posts, the application's web pages, reviews, the newsletter and collaborations.

The third stage is download. In the third stage, communication can be done with the web pages and the application stores. The next step is reminders. In this stage, communication can be done with social media posts, the newsletter, notifications from the app and achievements in the app. Lastly, the fifth step is advocacy and in this stage the customer communicates not only with the application, but about the application to others. The communication can happen on social media or in a more traditional word-of-mouth manner.

Physical evidence

Physical evidence is the last of the 7Ps. It considers branding and social media accounts, but they were already addressed in the previous sections. It also takes into account the experience of using the application's web page and the application itself.

The application's web page needs to be brought and kept up to date and it needs to match the branding of the application. Also, the information on the application needs to be kept up to date. These are essential for building trust with the user or potential user of the app.

3.4 Tactics

Tactics take us into greater detail. Traditionally this section of a strategic marketing plan would include a tactical marketing plan for the first year of the strategic marketing plan. In this case, it was decided that including also a tactical marketing plan would make this work too vast for a thesis. Therefore, the tactics section of this marketing plan takes a look at some of the social media tactics and rebranding of the application. A tactical marketing plan based on this strategic marketing plan is to be created later.

3.4.1 Social media tactics

The tactics include regular, weekly activity on all social media platforms, being consistent with the brand, using pictures from influencers and showing the mission (happy and safe walks) in the visuals. Also, stories should be utilized to highlight important markings in the app.

Further details about the application's social media tactics will not be disclosed due to confidentiality reasons.

3.4.2 Brand book

A brand book should be created to support brand consistency and application should be rebranded to match current trends. Further details about the application's branding or brand book will not be disclosed due to confidentiality reasons.

3.5 Actions

Actions take the tactics and turns them into even more detailed steps. In this case, the author decided to put together a to do list of actionable steps to be done to put the marketing plan into action.

Some of the items on the to do list are excluded here due to confidentiality reasons. Most of the to do list is below.

3.5.1 To do list

- Resource allocation
- Budgeting
- Brand book and rebranding
- 1st year tactical marketing plan
- Updating the web pages and the application
- Asking for feedback from users
- Setting up newsletter
- Contacting influencers

- Contacting companies for collaborations
- Monitoring the social media platforms that the target group uses
- Monitoring social media (marketing) trends

3.6 Control

Control is the final step of the SOSTAC® method. It defines how the strategic marketing plan and its implementation are measured and monitored. In this case, the two main marketing objectives need to be monitored closely.

In addition, as already mentioned, a more detailed tactical marketing plan should be created on a yearly basis, using this as the foundation. At the same time, the objectives and strategies set here can be re-evaluated.

Lastly, the application wouldn't exist without its users, so asking for feedback and acting accordingly is essential for this application.

4 DISCUSSION

In this section of the thesis, the case is discussed in relation to the theory and the author reflects on the entire process. The aim of the thesis was to study the theories of creating marketing plans and especially strategic marketing plans and then apply these theories into creating a strategic marketing plan for the client's mobile application.

To summarize the entire marketing plan, the current situation is clear; the mission is phrased, the target group is set, and the market research provides the author and the client important information moving forward. The objectives are measurable, achievable and relevant. The strategy is complete and carefully constructed from multiple viewpoints. Tactics have been set to implement the strategy and an explicit list of concrete actions is written. The plan also includes a mention about how it can be controlled and measured as and after it's implemented.

This thesis started out as just a marketing plan. The author pictured it as a tactical marketing plan, but after researching about the two different marketing plans (strategic and tactical) and discussing the differences between the two with the client, the author and the client decided that a strategic marketing plan was more important at this stage. Due to this, the focus and even the title of the thesis turned to a strategic marketing plan.

The author did have some previous experience of creating tactical marketing plans, but the strategic marketing plan was something new. This put the author into a position in which they had to study a lot and really learn the difference between the two marketing plans and how the strategic marketing plans are created in order to be able to create one for the client in this case.

The SOSTAC® framework

The SOSTAC® framework gave the marketing plan a clear structure and made the process of creating the marketing plan quite simple, almost linear. As Chaffey (2020) suggests, that the process isn't necessarily linear even when using this framework. The author started putting the marketing plan together in the order the SOSTAC® framework proposes, but as the author moved further on, some

parts later gave insight that could be and was applied in the previous sections as well.

The SOSTAC® framework includes all of the essential elements of a strategic marketing plan and a plan created with this process is clear to implement into action.

The 7Ps of the Marketing Mix

The marketing mix or as the author decided to use in this case, the 7P system provides clear viewpoints into the formulation of the strategy. Firstly, it offers the viewpoints of the original 4Ps of the Marketing mix; Product (in this case for example branding, design and features of the application), Promotion (in this case for example marketing communications, advertising and collaborations), Price (in this case the free elements and collaborations) and Place (in this case the distribution channels and availability of the application).

In addition, the 7P system offers the viewpoints of the additional 3Ps of the Marketing mix; Process (in this case research and development), People (in this case individuals on marketing activities and customer support in addition to the users of the application) and Physical evidence (in this case for example branding and the application's social media presence).

This approach allowed the author to look at the strategy from multiple different viewpoints, so nothing would be left out and all of the important factors would be taken into account when formulating the strategies for the client's mobile application.

Thesis Process

The process of making this thesis proceeded from researching and compiling theory to applying it into the strategic marketing plan. Because the author utilized the SOSTAC® framework, the creation of the marketing plan was also quite linear. The final product is a thorough strategic marketing plan with emphasis on a detailed situation analysis. A clear image of the current situation is the foundation for any planning; setting the objectives, creating strategies and tactics, formulating the actions and figuring out how everything is controlled.

The process was started with initial conversations with the client in November 2019 and the author planned to complete the entire process by the end of May 2020.

This didn't go as planned. The process was prolonged due to personal reasons. The actual writing process ended up beginning in August 2020 and the thesis was finished in October 2020. However, once the author was able to begin the process, the topic was interesting, and the author was excited to learn through the process of creating a strategic marketing plan. The author learned, that getting started is the hardest part, but once that obstacle has been passed, the entire process gets easier.

Although the client was pleased with the end product, there are some areas for improvement. First, if the author had begun the process earlier, the strategic marketing plan could be more detailed, including for example an entire brand book for the mobile application and the tactical marketing plan for the first year.

In addition, a survey for the users of the application could have been useful for this process. It would have helped with for example new features and design elements of the marketing plan.

The Client's Feedback

The client was pleased with the end product and thought that the strategic marketing plan the author had created was implementable. The client also appreciated that the author had understood the assignment well. The client felt that the strategic marketing plan was thorough and complete, offering new viewpoints and ideas that the client hadn't thought of.

In addition, one of the aspects that the client appreciated was the positive approach that the author had throughout the entire marketing plan from the big picture to the smaller details.

Areas for Development

Going forward, the client will need to make a tactical marketing plan for the first year of this strategic marketing plan. In addition, the client will need to create a

cohesive brand book to be used as a guide across all platforms of communicating with the users and potential users. This will support the process of building a trustworthy, cohesive brand image.

Lastly, the client should ask for feedback from the users of the application about any new features the client adds or plans to add as well as new design elements. This will help make sure that the client is taking the application to the right direction and that the users will enjoy the application in the future as well.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. A Strategic Marketing Plan for A Mobile Application.