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**International market (Nordic, Baltic) potential and  
effective marketing communication strategy for SHIFT  
Business Festival**

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## **Thesis abstract**

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The thesis aims to investigate the potentials in foreign market, especially in Nordic and Baltic region for SHIFT Business Festival and study the company's current situation on different dimensions based on the theory of international marketing and communication. At the same time, the thesis explores the method in building marketing communication strategy and attempt to find the most compatible method to the performance of SHIFT Business Festival. The main objectives of this thesis are to make conclusion upon whether or not the company has the opportunities to develop in the Nordic and Baltic region, as well as propose an example marketing communication strategy for SHIFT Business Festival.

The literature review mentions the academic terms and concepts that are related to the field of research, including: Marketing, marketing and communication strategy, internationalization. In each main section, there are several subsections to clarify the great topic and support the validity of the theory's framework.

The empirical research goes on studying two main parts: research environment (Finland-Turku, Nordic, Baltic region and Hofstede's dimension) and the current situation of SHIFT Business Festival in terms of marketing, sales and online marketing performances. The research environment section collects facts from secondary sources and study the environments to highlight the potentials and risk for the commissioner, then later it will be further supported by Hofstede's theory to elaborate details for the marketing communication strategy in the conclusion. Current situation will go through many fields of the company's performance, give evaluation and ideas for the later marketing communication strategy in the conclusion.

<sup>1</sup> Keywords: Marketing, internationalization, marketing communication strategy, potential market, cultural differences

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## Terms and Abbreviations

<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>PR</b>	Public Relations
<b>US</b>	United States
<b>JCI</b>	Junior Chamber International
<b>C-level</b>	Chief level
<b>Marcom</b>	Marketing communication
<b>ROI</b>	Returns on Investment
<b>OECD</b>	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>PISA</b>	Programme for International Student Assessment
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EFTA</b>	European Free Trade Association
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable development goals
<b>EFTA</b>	European Free Trade Association
<b>LIAA</b>	Agency of Latvia
<b>CTA</b>	Call-to-action
<b>AI</b>	Artificial Intelligence



# 1 INTRODUCTION

In this day and age, digital bloom and high technology ground-breaking plays a vital role in increasing the importance of internationalization more than ever. As a matter of fact, this term does not only apply to indicate the job of a nation or an economical organization in expanding the market but also can be used on an individual scale. One of the most visible examples is that people do not find it strange anymore for YouTube users to put closed captions on videos as a friendly call for foreigner viewers. Besides, learning a second language and adapting to a certain behavior difference in a multi-cultures work office have recently been acknowledged as some of the most necessary skills. Employers around the world are looking for these qualities in candidates but rarely make it clear on a job description. Probably because internationalization is rather a status quo in the modern world than an incomparable skill. Nowadays, to contain one in the local circle requires more attempt than reaching out to the world. As internationalization has become a natural progress, it is not an exception for a business to eventually enter the overseas market while it can. Not to mention, this work promises various benefits to those who dare to get it right. First of all, the prior advantages that every business constantly wants is increasing sales. Concerning the population in the global market, one business has some upside potentials to improve its overall revenue out there if it already had a stable position in the local market. Nevertheless, from foreign customers' points of view, local goods are unique, which makes it easier for sellers to simply adapt a more international service delivering ways and already exceed the current profit. Secondly, the market beyond the local border signs up an insurance for businesses to stay less vulnerable to periodic rise and fall in the current economy. Thirdly, the extent of the customer base comes with a great chance to find new product development. The world is changing, customer requirements are variegated every second, innovation in production and service is only the matter of sooner or later. At last, internationalization pleases the human resource with an army of new talents. People usually neglect this part of a business, regardless, updated and skillful employees are the key to success in the long run business.

However, not any business opening to this term satisfies with what it gains. To name a few, the backup step of the giant retailer – Walmart, in 2016 from Germany after failing to research cultural nuances, the loss of nearly 318 million US dollars for Best Buy in the attempt to enter the UK and launch 200 stores in 2010 – right at one of the most recent economical downhill, ... are some of the most significant fail (Hamza and Nizam, 2016). Both Walmart and Best Buy are the winners at its domestic market, thus, size does not matter much at the entry of

international fields. What matters here is the special know-how in possible market size, environment between the resident country and the targeted one, differences in customer behaviour and many other factors. Sometimes, the key is hidden behind the product itself. Sellers need to somehow adapt the product to what people are looking for in the new market. It is worth saying that most of these barriers are related to marketing. While marketing is the core of every business, it is not only functioned to create, communicate and deliver value to customers, but also the key to manage customer relationships. Before all of that, marketing helps to study the market, from customers to competitors, from possibilities to threats. This is called researching, and after this has been done marketers will be able to design a strategy. A marketing strategy's function is to direct the right path, set up goals and help manage every source to achieve the mission. Therefore, getting into internationalization is easy as long as there is a proper marketing strategy.

Based on the above-mentioned dimensions and focusing on the international marketing strategies, this paper aims to understand how to create a marketing communication strategy for an event.

### **1.1 The commissioner**

SHIFT Business Festival is a two-day festival annually held in Turku, Finland. The event is organized by SHIFT Event Oy, which is completely owned by non-profit organization SHIFT Ry. Activities of the SHIFT are supported by the city of Turku, the Federation of Finnish Enterprises and the large business community located here (SHIFT Business Festival ,2019).

Usually getting misunderstood as a conference, what SHIFT Business Festival aims to utilize is widely beyond just discussing and exchanging updated news in the industry. Running by local JCI members, start-ups, students and many more dynamic youths, SHIFT Business Festival was built to bring together ground-breaking technologies with leaders of traditional industries. At the venue, attendees are able to discuss with industry leaders and innovators, listen to speakers working in various fields and countries, get a glimpse of the future of intelligent tech and how to generate it into profit and sustainable change, network and enjoy different showcases as well as workshops.

SHIFT Business Festival attracts different groups of customers: Investors, partners, start-ups, C-level, students, journalists and media (SHIFT Business Festival, 2019).

Besides the main event in summer, throughout the year, SHIFT arranges different meetings, partner events, tailored business events for thought leaders etc. all in the same mission of shaping a better future through intelligent business.

First held on May 31st and June 1st, 2016, there have now been five SHIFT Business Festivals. While maintaining the same mission over years, the SHIFT always refreshes and comes up with outstanding programs, themes and unexpected ways to support different parties in the search for solutions via this event. Furthermore, the company has always highly appreciated the power of youths and open labour market, therefore, the event is run by an unexpected number of volunteers, whose experience, nationality, are varied.

SHIFT Business Festival is active in both domestic and foreign markets. The up-coming goal for the event is to become more international in the future (Toivonen, 2019)

## **1.2 Background**

The background to this thesis rooted in 2019 when the researcher finished the first internship with Cheapsleep Helsinki Hostel and got specifically interested in international marketing and communication (Marcom). Later, the researcher began another internship with SHIFT Event Oy in the Marcom team. Main job at the organization includes handling research to social media performance, customer segmentation, SHIFT related events and some other marketing tasks. The company provided the researcher with more precise information about marketing in the event industry. From which the researcher decided to focus on the company's marketing activities and contacted the sales and marketing manager at that time – Mrs. Sini Toivonen. The manager recognized implementation possibilities in the idea of conducting a marketing thesis based on the fact that SHIFT is trying to shape a strategy to improve the marketing activities in the international market.

## **1.3 Research problems**

The research problem circled around finding the potentials in the international market (mainly in Nordic and Baltic) and for SHIFT Business Festival. This is understood to be a vital part to begin with whenever a business enters a new market. In the search for positivity in Nordic and Baltic areas, there will be both internal and external issues. On the one hand, internal

opportunities generated from the company and the festival itself. In light of fact, rather than finding customers for a product, it is easier to create to serve a specified group of buyers. By studying existing sales and marketing performance, SHIFT Event Oy would be able to have a list of what should be preserved, and which needed to be improved in order to meet the needs of overseas customers. On the other hand, external issues are different factors belonging to the business environment, such as: general economical movement, relationship between host and target country, etc. By answering all questions regarding market potential, the thesis finally ends with a suggested marketing communication strategy for SHIFT to expand in the Nordic and Baltics market.

The thesis covers some sub-questions:

- What is international marketing and whether it has been done well at SHIFT Business Festival or not?
- What are the keys to design a great marketing communication strategy for a business-tech event?
- The differences in Baltic and Nordic customer behaviors toward Finnish business events?

#### **1.4 Research boundaries and obstacles**

The boundaries for this thesis topic would be:

- The overview of SHIFT Business Event Marketing works, its problems, potentials and risks in the long-term strategy.
- Basic introduction to international marketing communication strategy and business event industry.
- The possible target audience and the answer for whether Baltic and Nordic a potential market for the event or not.
- Study the case of SHIFT current situation and competitor to recommend marketing communication strategy for future SHIFT Business Festival

In addition, there are certain obstacles that may prevent the researcher to process the research:

- Restricted access to the source of necessary information
- The limited amount of time to carry out the research

As a part of risk management in the marketing communication strategy to SHIFT, any obstacle occurring during the research would be provided with detailed reasons and solutions. Further discussion on this issue can be found in the later part of the thesis.

## **1.5 Research methods**

In order to conduct the study in the most effective way, the researcher chooses to use a combination of three different research methods (mixed method): qualitative, quantitative and direct observation.

The thesis topic was chosen to study many sides of international marketing communication for SHIFT Business Festival. Each section requires a typical type of information, therefore, the researcher decided to use a mixed method. According to Chalhoub-Deville and Deville (2008), qualitative research has advantages in providing depth and detail answers. The method allows answerers to flexibly expand the topic and researcher to adapt the questions in real-time. This option is suitable for the researcher to collect actionable insight. Actionable insight is the analyzed data which can easily transform to future action and support decision makers (Tan and Chan 2015). To put simply, it is the key for a brand to solve questions around customer's purchase motivation, experiences on the product, which positives should be elevated and what negatives to address. In this thesis, the researcher will conduct a one-on-one interview with the marketing manager of SHIFT Business Festival to get a closer view on the event and its performance in both domestic and international markets. Another interview will be processed on site of the 2019 festival. Several attendees and speakers will describe their impression to the SHIFT, as well as providing their opinions about an ideal business-tech festival. Regardless, qualitative has a few backsets: lack of anonymity, geographical limitation, small sample size, in need for great interviewing skills (Isaacs, 2019). As a result, this method is only applied to a certain narrow section of the research, letting the other one take place in the uncovered parts.

Concerning quantitative method, this kind of research enables the conductor collecting a large number of samples in a shorter time without much cost consuming. Normally, this method is said to be less detailed and limit the discussion factor in the answer than the others, however in return, the interviewees remain anonymous. This is suitable for SHIFT to get answers from new audiences who are still hesitated to interact with a strange brand. To be more specific, a

survey will be sent out to different groups of foreigners: Visitors to websites without any ended action, potential customers from targeted countries, SHIFT's community international relatives.

## **2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 Marketing definition and core concepts**

#### **2.1.1 Definition of marketing**

According to research carried out by Mortimer et al. (2009), nowadays the most vital thing to do in business is marketing. Marketing could be the core of a business and varied widely in many forms throughout all business departments. In the same discussion about marketing and its role in the modern market, Ruth Mortimer and co-workers, state in the book “Marketing for dummies” that marketing is everywhere and someone would probably have done it daily even if their job title does not include anything related to marketing (Ruth Mortimer et al. 2009). In line with this, Kotler et al. (2011, 5) support the idea by declaring that there are a lot of people acknowledged well about marketing without official research on the concept since its existence could be found anywhere. In the traditional marketing world, marketing is presented in the variation of goods at the nearby supermarkets, in between anyone’s favorite television show, and other printed materials, such as magazines, newspapers. As the internet is growing sharply, there are more and more new forms of tools for marketers to use, such as websites, blogs, as well as social media.

To define the concept, Kotler et al. (2011, 5) determine that marketing is the process of supervising worthwhile relationships with purchasers. Additionally, the basic goals of marketing are to first draw customers’ attention to the product by highlighting the valuable benefits and then retaining the relation between seller and buyer by winning their satisfactions. Whereas Mortimer, Brooks, Smith and Hiam (2009, 1) refer to the definition of marketing as “attracting customers, getting them to buy, and making sure that they’re happy enough with their purchase that they come back for more”. In turn, Blythe (2012, 4) adds to this argument that the purpose of marketing is to secure the target customer from competitors.

#### **2.1.2 Marketing fail assumption and correction**

For a long time, marketing has been only seen as a supporting function for sales. People hold a myth up to the concept that in order to be a marketer, there are only two tasks: selling and advertising, and it aims to only make sales. However, in a concise manner, Kotler et al. (2012,

10) claim that marketing does play vital roles in business, and even though one of the roles is to ease the work of selling, what people have seen from marketing is only a drop in the bucket. In the new sense, marketing is not anymore being held back by the means of sale but serves a greater goal is to satisfy customers' needs. In other words, the work of a marketer is not limited in designing a commercial ad, dealing with media and publishing. A marketer works to understand the market, develop the product that fits with customers' needs, then efficiently allocate with precise promotion to buyers. The final objective for this work is to create a product that does not need much effort to be sold. As the management guru Peter Drucker has claimed, "the aim of marketing is to make selling unnecessary".

Unfortunately, despite the number of studies that have been dedicated to declaring the certified core value of marketing, the myth keeps spreading broadly. In the age of social media and online marketing, the marketer has been running after the superior tools provided by the internet world, making people in marketing more like a website developer, social media assistant or designer in the eye of non-professionals than a true marketer. To argue with this mistaken perspective, Godin (2018, 14) states that marketing is "about changing people for the better, creating work you can be proud of. And it's about being a driver of the market, not simply being market-driven". Accordingly, marketing is searching deeply in the dreams, desires, communities whom it wishes to benefit, recognizing the problems then providing the compatible value. It is not because people are anchoring for social media, website, and influencers campaign that marketer chooses to work with it. In fact, these are only tools supporting them in navigating problems and delivering solutions. In a TED Talk presented by Simon Sinek "How great leaders inspire action", the speaker supported the same idea by saying "People don't buy what you do; they buy why you do it" (Sinek, [Ref. 20 November 2020]). For simplicity, without other functions of marketing, a business with a marketer behaving like an advertiser or salesperson cannot target the right problem. Hence an obvious result that these marketers also cannot provide the answer that customers would demand to have. In conclusion, to nail marketing, people need to be aware that creating value is at the heart of this work.

### **2.1.3 Marketing process**

Based on a study by Kotler (2012, 11), the process of marketing includes five steps. From the first to the fourth step, marketers learn to understand the audiences (what are the frustrations? What are the hobbies? Where do this group of people count on to provide a solution when



there is a need? etc.), unify what has been collected to create values, set up the space to deliver it, and engage with customers. Meanwhile, the final step is where marketers receive back profits, sales, or long-term customer equity as the return value. Figure 1 illustrates this marketing framework.



Figure 1 Marketing framework (Kotler 2012, 11)

#### **2.1.4 Observing customers and markets**

As discussed above, the first step in marketing is to be aware of the marketplace and the customer. This is the base deciding the work's success. According to Mortimer et al. (2009, 11), learning customers is the most essential principle to do. The following section of the thesis will provide a closer look at this marketing work.

Kotler et al. (2011, 6) assume that customer and marketplace could be examined by different categories, as in the following diagram



Figure 2 Marketing concepts for customers and marketplace

Marketing activities are conditionally generated from the unsatisfied needs of customers. Needs is the state of mind that reflects the absence of physical objects or an unsettlement situation. It belongs to human nature. Kotler, Armstrong, and Parment (2012, 11) conclude “needs are states of felt deprivation”. These needs are pre-existed with human beings. Marketers are the ones helping people in the market meet the solution.

Being impacted by the surrounding society and individual characteristics, needs got transformed into another term, which is wants. The existence of wants is to specifically satisfy a certain need. For instance, food is a need, but a vegan will choose to have pumpkin soup rather than sausages stew. Therefore, it could be undeniable to say that marketer is able to influence a personal want by creating different choices.

Furtherly added by Godin (2018, 81)

Marketers make change. We change people from one emotional state to another. We take people on a journey: we help them become the person they’ve dreamed of becoming, a little bit at a time.

Considering the statement carried out by Godin, it is undeniable that even though the total population is more than seven billion, not to mention that each individual owns a unique personality, there are at least more than a dozen times, people express wants in the same way. Notwithstanding, the object ended in customers’ hands after browsing through the market varies differently. That concludes, by reaching deep into customer’s emotions, desires,

dreams, marketer have a higher chance to change what customer seeks, thus, win their competitor. The more understanding the company earns in terms of needs, wants, and demands, the better the marketing strategy building.

The later concept after 'wants' is 'demands', however, not every 'want' is transmitted in 'demand'. Demanding is only undertaken under one condition that a certain want for a product is satisfied by purchasing ability and readiness. The most common way for marketers to increase the demand for one product is by making it more visible, more attractive, easier to reach and there should be precise compatibility between delivered values and price.

These factors decided the next concept in marketing: offerings. This word refers to not only physical but also psychological satisfaction. It is the combination of the core product (for example core product of a fan is creating a flow of air), attached features (designs, colors, branding, etc.), and related services (guarantee, warrantee, delivery method, after-sale service, and many other types of intangible value). A rounded offering requires the producer to balance well between the core utility of the product itself and side benefits as well as the buying experience. Kotler et al. (2012, 12) suggested that sellers need to be aware of marketing myopia, which is the situation when too much attention paid to existing wants effaces customer needs. Falling in this circumstance, the company loses the chance to manage brand experience, which is the condition to nail customer memory on brand. Hence, further purchases in the future are blocked. It is not only now that marketing myopia became a phenomenon, in 2004, Levitt already raised an alarm towards the situation of company devoting too much time on product innovation and neglect the importance of customer understanding. The late Harvard Business School marketing professor also determined that changing from product orientation to consumer orientation is what executives should soon implement (Levitt, T. 2004, [ref. 3 December 2020]).

Offerings lead to another part of marketing which is customer value and satisfaction. Dated back to 2012, Brennan et al. (96), stated that customer value existed in the complicated relationship between benefits from products and customer's sacrifices for it in exchange. Monetary is the most common sacrifice that can be seen. Added by Kotler et al (2012, 12), it is said that people undertake purchasing based on what is seen as value and satisfaction that product promised to deliver. The product which gives most will be chosen. The level of satisfaction after experiencing the buying will decide if people will return to the same brand/retailer or switch to another choice available on market. As a result, marketers should

be cautious when setting up the expectations for customers. A low level of expectation weakens the customer's will to purchase, whereas when the expectation exceeds the amount of satisfaction the customer received, the company hurts the buyer's trust in the brand.

Exchange is an act of obtaining the desired product from someone by offering something in return (Kotler et al. 2012, 13). It is the precondition to undertake marketing because exchange occurs only when people require a need or want to be met through exchanging. In marketing, it is important to manage exchange relationships. Futrell et al. (2012, 34) have clearly pointed out that instead of starting a new relationship, it is more efficient to maintain the current one. Through delivering continuous value to existing customers, businesses will be able to save time and budget.

The marketing examination will not be completed without the last core concept – market.

Kotler et al (2012, 13) defined market is

The set of actual and potential buyers of a product. These buyers share a particular need or want that can be satisfied through exchange relationships.

Marketers manage the market by grouping people who share the same need/want that the company can satisfy into different segmentations. By which, a profitable customer relationship will be enhanced productively. Traditionally, the market was assumed to be the one-way affair where marketers conduct seven core activities: consumer research, product development, communication, marketing channels, pricing, and service. Over time, the accuracy of this assumption is not preserved completely. Based on the strong impact of technologies, consumers nowadays are equipped to turn the market into a two-way interactive place. Kotler (2012, 17) described this process by the following diagram.

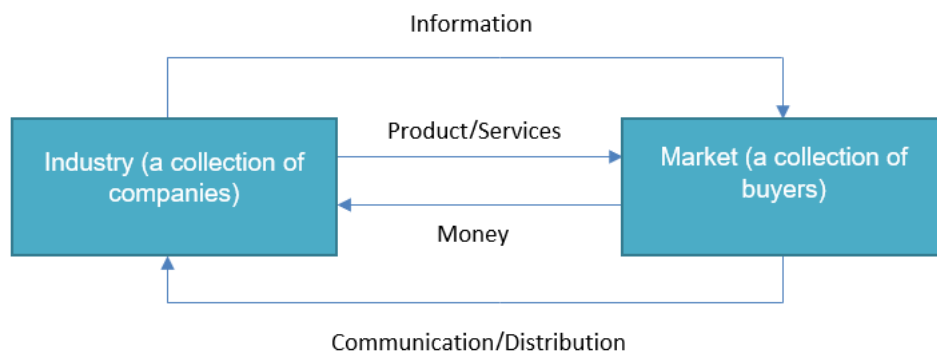


Figure 3 A simple marketing system (Kotler et al. 2012, 17)

The inner part of the figure shows regular transactions between buyer and seller. The industry provides product/service to market and receive back payment. Besides, the exchange expanded with another loop outside. This loop is the illustration for information flow. Marketer is not the only one conducting research, consumers simultaneously play the role of a researcher. Hence, while the market is opened for the industry to communicate and study, marketer uses feedback from consumers as development material, at the same time, the consumers collect needed information from the other party.

Additionally, the market involves not only the concept of buyer and seller but also competitor. Kotler et al. (2011, 8-9) proposed that marketing should be seen as serving customers and handling competition at the same time. Competition could be explained simply as offerings and substitutes from other brands that might replace the position of another brand in customer's mind. Therefore, strategic planning will not be completed with the lack of competitor analysis.

Besides, all parties involved in the market, including consumers, are impacted by major environmental forces, such as: economic, legal, demographic etc.

All in all, according to a research conducted by Kotler et al. (2012, 14), the modern marketing system could be explained by the following diagram.

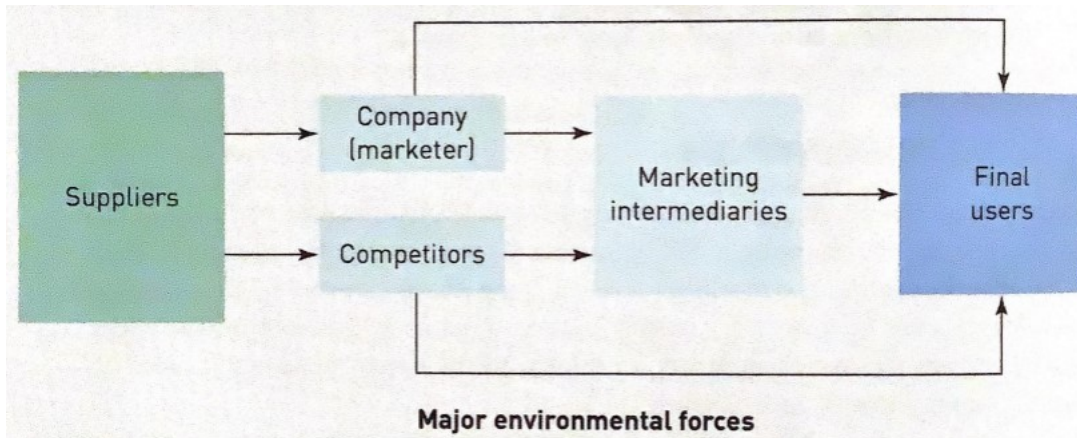


Figure 4 The modern marketing system (Kotler et al. 2012, 14)

## 2.2 Marketing strategy

### 2.2.1 Definition

Concerning the marketing strategy or strategic marketing, the Berlin School of Business and Innovation points out that even though the two terms share various similarities and were sometimes applied interchangeably, it is distinct from each other ([Ref. 20 November 2020]). On one hand, strategic marketing is a management-level method, through which different factors of an organizational performance and general goals will be put in place. The purpose of this marketing course is for a brand to be outstanding from other alternatives by expanding strengths, eliminating weakness and providing superior service and value to customers. On the other hand, the term marketing strategy indicates an implementation of a predefined strategy which does not involve higher management. It is in use for targeting right people and converting them into sales. The concept aims to enhance a specific product or service of a brand.

In this thesis, because the chosen scale for marketing strategy affected by international prospects, its definition will be treated as a merge from both precedent concepts, based on a definition provided by Varadarajan (2010)

At the broadest level, marketing strategy can be defined as an organization's integrated pattern of decisions that specify its crucial choices concerning products, markets, marketing activities and marketing resources in the creation, communication and/or delivery of products that offer value to customers in exchanges with the organization and thereby enables the organization to achieve specific objectives.

To simplify, marketing strategy is the winning destination where businesses want to reach in a certain time. By working on marketing strategy, a business will be able to design a marketing plan after considering all sorts of forces that may influence the performance, such as: customers, competitors, etc. Marketing plan is an integration of actions, through which business performs effectively to reach the set goal. When a plan does not support the targeted outcome, other tactics would be considered to take its place.

### **2.2.2 State the business and marketing goal**

Marketing strategy development first starts with identifying the business's overarching goal. This is the base that further set up marketing goals for the business. For example, business goals might be approaching a new customer segmentation, supplying more products to the international market, etc. From which, marketers will be able to demonstrate the compatible marketing goals, for instance: reach 500 new followers aged from 18 to 35 years old on Instagram by updating production content, increase website traffic by the end of the year by publishing English written blogs.

A recommended goal methodology to apply in marketing is SMART (Lawlor K., and Hornyak M.):

- (S)pecific – what exactly is the business attempting to get
- (M)easurable – tangible measures so later result could be easily measured
- (A)chievable – Objectives is suitable with capacity and budget of the business
- (R)elevant – Objectives should be worthwhile and leverage a particular aspect in business, as well as aligned to the general strategy of the business
- (T)imely – The time when the objectives should be achieved

What to keep in mind while undertaking the SMART model or any other kinds of goal setting methods is to be realistic and aligned with the current business mission.

### **2.2.3 Segmenting customers**

As stated by Scott D. (2011, 137), although the work of paying more attention to customers than to the company's product is problematic for many people, it turns out to be the best way

to secure the aimed outcomes. Because of that, most businesses are now customer driven. Each offering available in the market is devoted to satisfying buyers. The key to make that happen is to understand customers' needs and wants. However, numerous types of consumers generate uncountable numbers of different needs. As a matter of fact, one company prefers to serve correctly some segments but not all (Kotler et al, 2012, 56). Czinkota and Ronkainen (2011, 19) adopted the idea and added that it is better for marketer to separate customers in group based on demographic (age, nationality, etc.), psychographic (social class, personality, etc.), behavior (user rates, loyalty status, etc.), and geographic elements, then decide among those segmentations the ones that most likely buying from you. This process is called market segmentation. In which, each segment includes buyers reacting similarly to a given set of marketing efforts (Kotler et al. 2012, 57). People sometimes use market targeting, differentiation or positioning in place of market segmentation.

In another argument, Mortimer et al. (2009, 11) discussed that customers should be studied by the way a buying decision was made based on two different dimensions: rational/functional and irrational/emotional. From a functional dimension, a marketer is required to observe customer's thoughts on products. (Is the product positioned in their minds as good value? Do they understand how the customer works? ...). Emotional dimension should be examined from the feel of the customer towards products (Does the product creates a positive feeling to them? Will they express their enjoyment with the product to other people? ...).

After solving the two puzzles, marketer will be able to process approaching to targeted customers in three choices (Mortimer et al. 2009, 11):

- Informational approach: There is an army of people in the market that relies on numbers and productional facts in order to execute a purchase journey. The most appropriate approach to get this group of people's attentions is informational. If the brand can compare its value to the alternatives with hard evidence, customers with rational purchasing manner will be easily persuaded.
- Emotional approach: By contrast, this method works well with irrational buying manners. According to Damasio (1999), decision making process in many situations could be facilitated by emotions (intuitive) prospects. However, as Thagard stated in a research in 2008, the decision decided by feelings are most likely made immediately and in less important circumstances. Therefore, marketers should keep



in mind that customers should be taken into account while choosing the approach method.

- **Balanced mix:** This a balance between the two preceding strategies.

Another important definition should be included is the buyer persona. This concept is, sometimes, mistaken as a market segment. Approaching definition for buyer persona at a more marketing and PR focus, David, M.S (2011, 140) explain that

Successful online marketing and PR efforts work because they start by identifying one or more buyer personas to target, so you need to make buyer personas a part of your planning process. A buyer persona is essentially a representative of a type of buyer that you have identified as having a specific interest in your organization or product or having a market problem that your product or service solves.

Under the view of David M.S (2011, 141), marketer should include as much information as possible into the buyer persona. What are the media platforms the customers reach out for researching? What are the keywords that might influence the buying demand the most? Etc. Besides, buyer persona could be easily collected by interviewing people. In general, the market segment stressed more to target, whereas personas divide groups of the best buyer and consolidate it into one archetypal model.

#### **2.2.4 Core competences for a business**

Core competence studies two aspects in marketing: differentiation and positioning.

It is stated by Kotler et al. (2012, 57) that after defining customer segmentation, business must look into its characteristics which may distinguish the company from its competitors and see what position in the market the organization would nail. In the opinion of Mortimer (2009, 13), a business “can’t be all things to all customers”. When a brand is stubborn to take the ground of its competitors, it would never end up the winner. Each business has its own strengths leading to a certain suitable position in the market. Therefore, it is important for marketer to recognize the advantages and leverage it well to reach a consistent level in the market.

Furtherly explained by Brennan, Canning and McDowell (2011, 163), positioning means that the company’s product takes a place in consumers’ minds relative to the competitors’ offerings. Differentiation is the work of taking all organizational customer’s experience in consideration

and increasing more customer value by differentiating the company's market offering. In other words, differentiation is the initial step to support 'positioning'.

### 2.2.5 Marketing mix

The most common reminder has been stated in many researches about marketing is "marketing is from customer's point of view". It is obvious that sometimes, marketers' view is sometimes going far from what customers perceived. As a matter of fact, the necessity of getting to the same perception of customers has been declared more than ever. Mortimer (2009, 15) called this mission in marketing as "finding customer's touchpoint". To be more specific, touchpoint is the moment, channel, any exposed contacts that enable marketer to interact and construct a strong customer loyalty to the brand. As long as marketers carried out a list of touchpoints, building a tremendous marketing plan is not anymore, a hard task to do.

In the opinion of Mortimer (2009, 16), marketing mix can be defined as the most recommended structure helping marketers establish a touchpoint list.

According to Kotler et al. (2012, 58), marketing mix is a batch of tactical tools that can be controlled. By combining different elements in marketing, which is originally the 4Ps (Product, Price, Place, Promotion), the marketing mix aims to call for a number of desired responses in the segmented market. Moreover, Palmer (2004) support the idea of marketing mix is a useful instrument for businesses in promoting long-term strategies and short-term tactical course. Kotler et al. (2012, 58) added that marketing mix gathered all impacts a brand can deal with to advance the demand for its products. In this thesis, instead for traditional 4Ps in marketing, a course of 7Ps will be studied and applied.

The 7Ps involves:

- Product
- Price
- Place
- Promotion
- People
- Process

- Physical presence

Regarding the product, it is basically all tangible and intangible aspects of the product/service that would support the customer's motivation in making the buying decision. Price is not limited to the exchanged value for goods. In tactical marketing, price includes list price, discounts, allowances, payment period and credit terms (Kotler et al. 2012, 59). Place is the effort of marketers in making the product available to customers. Promotion is the activity a business would do to gain awareness of its offerings, including advertising, personal selling, sales promotions and public relations (PR). As has been discussed before, in an organization, marketing tasks are not limited to only marketer, hence, people refer to the human of a business: from sales forces, customer service team, to shipping, billing department. A total excellent experience with the company's product and service provided in every step is the key to engage with buyers and form a "word of mouth marketer" force. Process indicates the time the customer experiences the interaction with a business, which means the process begins even before the customer executes the payment. At last, physical presence, or physical evidence, refers to every visible image from the company that the customer can see while interacting, such as: staff's uniforms, store arrangement, company's premises, etc. Marketers also need to make sure that all factors from marketing mix are put together. Any missing element from the course, especially the original 4Ps, would not secure the highest customer's satisfaction (Blythe 2012, 12). Through the marketing mix, business could build up a course of detailed actions called marketing plan or action program. In which, marketer lists out answers for questions of who, when, where, how and how much budget?

In most cases, a certain tactic implemented following the model of 7Ps usually does not affect a single P but several dimensions of a business at a time. Consequently, the marketing mix will be reflected in this thesis based on the following table.

	Product	Price	Place	Promotion	People	Process	Physical presence
Product							
Price							
Place							
Promotion			(e.g: The tactic that influence both place and promotion)				
People							
Process							
Physical presence							

Table 1. Marketing mix in SHIFT Business Festival marketing communication strategy

### 2.2.6 Marketing implementing and revising

Now that marketing analysis and planning has been discussed, the next part in marketing strategy that should be mentioned is implementation and control. Implementation is the stage where organization acts according to the plans (Kotler et al. 2012, 60). In turn, controlling is about reviewing how effective the marketing is performing. Marketers can also use ROI or benchmarks to measure the outcomes of the marketing strategy. At this step, marketers can correct the non-working tactics and replace it with different methods.

### 2.2.7 SWOT and competition analysis

As claimed by Kotler (2012, 61), the company's overall analysis on existing situations is the top prior task to complete when it comes to marketing operation. A good instrument to do this is SWOT analysis. SWOT is (S)trengths, (W)eakness, (O)pportunities, and (T)hreats, in short. The analysis' purpose is to merge all elements contained in internal and external marketing environments in an overall evaluation. Through which, business is able to strengthen the core competences to approach open chances in the market, and aware the lack in business to avoid possible negative situations.

The detailed function of SWOT analysis is illustrated by the following table.

	<b>Helpful to achieve the objective</b>	<b>Harmful to achieve the objective</b>
<b>Internal origin (Attributes of the organization)</b>	Strengths, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Special design for color-blind person</li> <li>– Excellent customer service</li> <li>– ...</li> </ul>	Weakness, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Limited budget</li> <li>– Ineffective social media marketing plan</li> <li>– ...</li> </ul>
<b>External origin (Attributes of the environment)</b>	Opportunities, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– New technology</li> <li>– Using Web to study new market</li> <li>– ...</li> </ul>	Threats, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Downturn of economy</li> <li>– The raise of new competitor</li> <li>– ...</li> </ul>

Table 2 Using SWOT analysis to monitor the internal and external position of an organization (Kotler et al. 2012, 112)

Besides SWOT, marketers can make use of competition analysis in positioning a business. Competition analysis gives a general view on whose performances in the market may affect the product's demands from various dimensions (competitors' strengths, weakness, sweet spot, etc.). In which, the sweet spot is where your target customers' needs fit with a brand's offerings, especially, this is the ground that the rivals cannot reach.

Brett Pinegar illustrated the concept based on study of David J. Collins and Michael G Rukstad (2008, 89) by the following picture

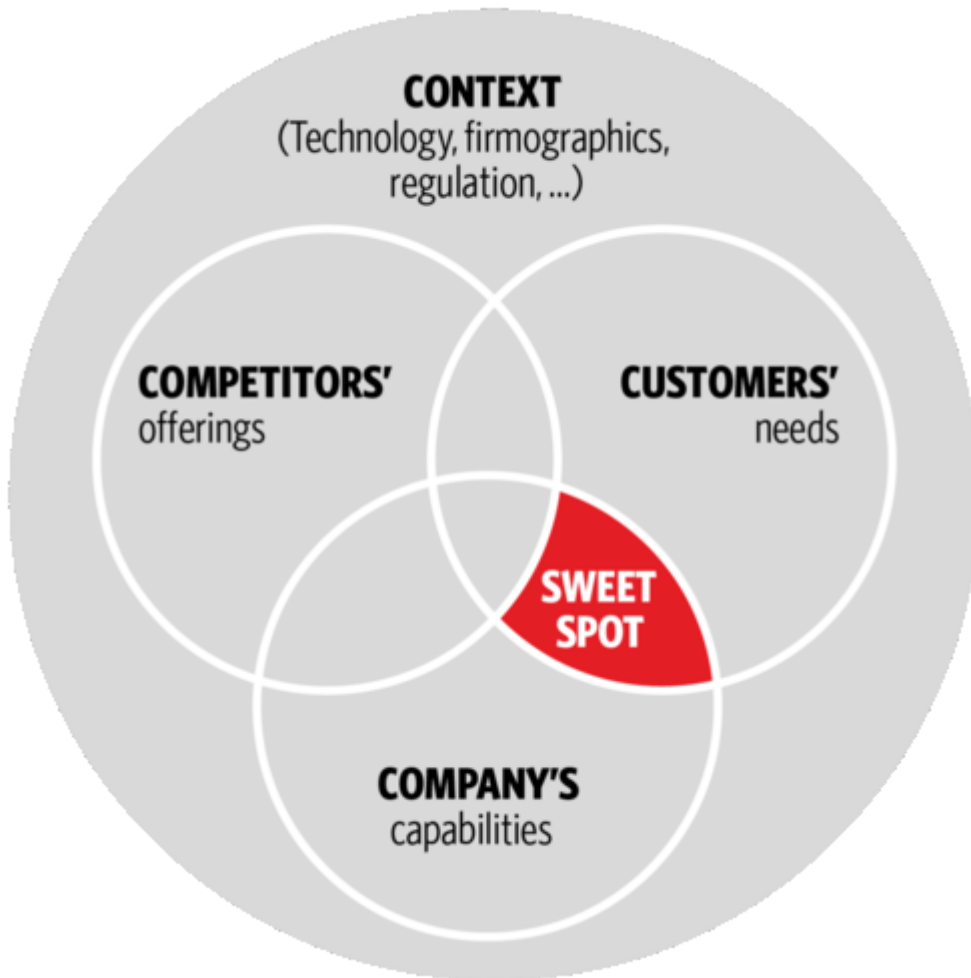


Figure 5 Strategic sweet spot (Brett Pinegar, according to David J. Collins and Michael G Rukstad 2008, 89)

In addition, in the CIMA Official Terminology Guide (2005), CIMA stated that competition analysis is the study for significant strengths and weakness of the acknowledged competitors. This analysis can be processed in a same way with the SWOT report, which has been described above. With the help of these two reports, a business is believed to innovate their capacities and be distinguish from the viral.

### 2.3 Challenges and motivation in internationalization

Although there is not any universal definition for internationalization, in the contemporary word of economics, it is when a business performs to be more involved in the international market. It describes the process of designing products to meet the needs of users in many countries or designing it in a flexible form, which can be modified easily later if needed. For example, this act in marketing is demonstrated by the way a firm set up its website in different languages.

### 2.3.1 Motivation to be internationalization

According to Grunig and Morschett (2012, 27), performing internationalization is a massive strategic shift in business which comes with various risks, thus, companies are called upon to take greater responsibilities to prove strong and valid reasons for this decision. Kananen (2011, 11) added that with some companies, to be international is an accident. For example: the company may enter the broader market because there are demands for the company's product from the foreign market. As a matter of fact, even though the business gets approached to the foreign market before acknowledging the actual concept, there is still a stimulus that motivates it which is the suitability in product to the oversea market. Therefore, with or without consent, in most cases, internationalization is only taken step when a company has a reason for it.

A statement made by Czinkota (2009, 217-218) shows that there are proactive and reactive motivations for a company to be international. In detail, proactive motivations are components coming from inside the company. By contrast, reactive ones are the possible issues in the international market that companies can adapt to, in an attempt to grow accordingly. Most major motivations are listed below.

<b>Proactive motivations</b>	<b>Reactive motivations</b>
Profit advantage	Competitive pressure
Unique product	Overproduction
Technological advantage	Declining domestic sales
Exclusive information	Excess capacity
Tax benefit	Saturated domestic markets
Economies of scale	Proximity to customers and parts

Table 3 Major motivations (Czinkota et al. 2009, 217)

### 2.3.2 Challenges in approaching international prospects

There has been much discussion regarding barriers that impede internationalization (Leonidou, 1995; Campbell 1994; Katsikeas and Morgan, 1994, Morgan 1997). The statement was later supported by Narayanan (2015). In detail, the researcher stated that hidden behind every market are unique characteristic, barriers and risks. These obstacles occur not only in the internationalization process of tangible exported product but also online. As claimed by Yamin and Sinkovics (2006), while entering the foreign markets, enterprises are sometimes required to overcome barriers concerning psychic distance, the psychic distance paradox and the

virtuality hindrance. In another research, Hollensen (2011) categorized international market's barriers and risks into three segmentation: general market risks, commercial risks, and political risks.

This thesis will study the barriers in internationalization from seven aspects:

- Financial resources: According to Dinçer H., Hacıoğlu U., and Beyaztaş F. (2015), the term can be defined as the three resources: Financial Institutions, Capital Markets, Owners Equity (Capital Stock) that enterprises use to finance investments, capital and current activities. Most of the time, the availability of resources in a company may not be compatible with what the international market requires.
- Defining suitable market: According to Kotler et al. (2012, 19), companies standing in front the gate of the global market must decide a wide range of questions related to management, entry level, market adapted product development, etc. but mostly to decide the destined market.
- Cultures and language differences
- Legislation
- Internal barrier
- Geographical difficulties

The differences/barriers in international marketing will be discussed further in chapter 3.2.

### **2.3.3 International marketing strategy as a tool for business in internationalization**

Application of marketing principles in a variety of markets. In comparison with domestic marketing, this concept is about marketing effectively both product and service in not only one country (Cateora and Graham 2007, 9). International marketing is basically the same as the resident marketing strategy except for the focus in marketing identification and considering decisions in the internal scale. Forbes states that a new market comes with customers, new staff and partners. There are a large number of differences that marketers need to handle. However, based on a research from Cateora et al. (2007, 9), although differences are found in the home and destination market, it is more in the environment where the marketing operations take place. Therefore, it is necessary for marketers to understand the new market and to operate a new marketing strategy.



International marketing strategy is the map guiding companies delivering profit to customers in both domestic and foreign markets.

## **2.4 Marketing communication strategies and promotion mix**

Under the umbrella of general marketing exists a large part for marketing communication or communication. The term refers to business' effort in spreading product information and engaging customers to process purchasing decisions (Fill 2006, 6). Marketing communication mix or promotion mix is a blend of different channels that supports the operation of marketing communication. Considering the concept profoundly, Kotler and Armstrong (2018, 424) stated that promotion mix contains five major tools: advertising, public relations, personal selling, sales promotion, and direct marketing.

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2018, 424), customers are still the center of business, a good seller-buyer relationship depends not only on product, pricing and accessibility level in the market but also on the way business uses communication to persuade and anchor customer's interest to the brand. Besides, the industry is being impacted by several changes in marketing strategies, digital technology and consumers' behavior, leading to a greater need for a combined media mix and various content approaches (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 425-427). As a result, marketers realized the needs for an integrated marketing communication (IMC) strategy more than ever.

## **2.5 Offline marketing definition and methods**

Quick internet coverage encourages the growth of digital marketing, which is being the most tremendous part in the industry. However, different advertisers have different approaches when it comes to marketing strategies, there are still marketers who remain loyal to offline methods.

Offline marketing contains all media channels, methods and strategies irrelevant to the use of the Internet. The most common offline media methods remain on television advertisement, billboard, audio pamphlets and any other sort of printed materials. Besides, 'word of mouth' also is counted as a traditional marketing approach. 'Word of mouth' is using customers', partners' trust on a brand to spread the reputation.

Although the marketing industry has been dominated by digital marketing for a long time, it is undeniable that offline marketing is still developing with several tremendous trends, such as: event marketing. According to Haar (2017) and McDermott (2017), event marketing continues to play a crucial role in marketing strategies.

The tactic includes:

- Attending exhibitions, trade shows, industrial events
- Press conferences
- Social and promotional events

### **2.5.1 Different advertising types and advertising development stages**

Advertising, according to the British Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA); presents the most persuasive message to the right prospects for the product or service at the lowest possible cost (Jefkins, 1992). Under the research scope from Kotler and Armstrong, it is “any paid form of nonpersonal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identical sponsor” (2018, 425).

Advertising is not a new phenomenon. Dated back to the opening of human history, the concept was soon applied by the Romans in announcing gladiator fights with painting walls (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 452). In modern life, with the function to spread the product information nearer to the targeted customers, advertisers are strong associations to the sales force in boosting revenue. Moreover, advertising is the key for business to be outstanding from the rivals. A significant example for this use of advertising is the “war” between Pepsi-cola and Coca-Cola. The two-company is not afraid to go far in publicizing to compete with the opponent. Another realistic role of advertising is to control perception from different parties in the market about a brand, so that it can in time affirm an information whether it is accurate or not (Akrani, 2010).

Concerning the variety in advertisement’s advantages, marketers take advantage of the promotion in numerous ways, aiming to different objectives. Kotler and Armstrong (2018, 453) state that advertising’s purpose can be categorized three: informative advertising, persuasive advertising and reminder advertising.

<b>Informative advertising</b>	
Communicating customer value	Suggesting new uses for a product
Building a brand and company image	Informing the market of a price change
Telling the market about a new product	Describing available services and support
Explaining how a product works	Correcting false impressions
<b>Persuasive Advertising</b>	
Building brand preference	Persuading customers to purchase now
Encouraging switching to a brand	Creating customer engagement
Changing customer perceptions of product value	Building brand community
<b>Reminder advertising</b>	
Maintaining customer relationships	Reminding consumers where to buy the product
Reminding consumers that the product may be needed in the near future	Keeping the brand in a customer's mind during off-seasons

Table 4 Possible Advertising Objectives (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 453)

When the goal for advertising is formed, business can move to the second step of creating an advertisement strategy, which is measuring budget. The size of budget spending in advertising is not always clear. Many forces from the product itself and outside environment may affect the decision of budgeting. Once a business has decided how much money will be invested in advertisement activities, the next stage comes requiring businesses to define advertising messages, select media and decide the timing. At last, as any strategy, advertisement ends with the last step – evaluating advertising results and measuring the effectiveness of investment.

All the concepts discussed above are studied from a general point of view, however, it is worth keeping in mind that in the international market, advertising is required to behave differently based on the change of characteristics of various country markets.

### 2.5.2 Sales promotion as a helpful marketing communication tool

Sales promotion is perhaps the shortest-term marketing communication tool (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 496). It aims to encourage sale of a product or service. American Marketing Association ([ref. 3 December 2020]) defines this concept as follows

Media and non-media marketing pressure applied for a predetermined, limited period of time in order to stimulate trial, increase consumer demand, or improve product availability.

Same as advertising, the goal of sales promotion varies over companies and industries. Based on the research carried out by Kotler and Armstrong (2018, 497-498), there are three classes of sales promotion objectives: consumer, business and trade promotion. To simplify, the goal of sales tools in marketing communication is to create a market for new products, remain competitive, gain retailer's trust, increase brand awareness, engage existing customers.

### **2.5.3 Personal selling in marketing communication**

Kotler and Armstrong (2018, 480) regard the definition of personal selling as,

Personal presentations by the firm's sales force for the purpose of engaging customers, making sales, and building customer relationships.

This promotion tool relies on salesperson and interpersonal interactions with individual contacts. Therefore, it is the most cost-consuming tool in the marketing communication mix. Despite the expenses, out of the five major tools, personal selling generates the most sales and could be considered as the most powerful method (Blythe 2012, 206).

### **2.5.4 Publics relations' (PR) benefit on marketing communication**

The final promotion tool, public relations (PR), is usually confused with other concepts. Perhaps the earliest and most precise definition for this term is stated by Harlow (1976, 36)

Public relations is a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsible to public opinion; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools.

Kotler and Armstrong (2018, 470) shorten the definition for PR and state that it is the process, in which company attempts to build good relations with the company's various publics by blocking the negative rumors, maintaining favorable corporate impressions and creating good hype. In another argument, the first World Assembly of Public Relations Associations added that PR is a blend between the art and social science of analyzing trends, through which

forecasting and acting compatible to satisfy both business and public interest (Mexican Statement).

Especially, PR has the ability to promote a brand at a higher level but remains at a cheaper price than what advertising can do. Kotler and Armstrong (2018, 472) also state that the process of PR involves other tools, such as: news, special events, written materials, audiovisual materials, corporate identity materials, public service activities.

## **2.6 Event marketing**

Events is a time limited activity (normally lasting from 1 to 5 days) that aims to benefit and amuse a specific group of people. Although events may sometimes contain tangible objects (food, beverages, product), the crucial part contributing to the event's success is the intangible experiences provided throughout the event. According to O'neil et al. (1999), the production and consuming time for an event is simultaneously, and it is very difficult to store or control an event. As a result, event marketing and management requires much effort.

As all marketing activities, event marketing based on the tactical marketing mix. However, it should be kept in minds that event marketing should be similar to marketing a service rather than a tangible product.

## **2.7 Direct and digital marketing**

During the early age of marketing, a marketer's work could be nearly combined with his college in the advertisement department. It is the time when every business who wished to go further and expand the stands in the market would invest millions in printed marketing material. Without the existence of TV commercials or the internet, the only way to reach out to customers was letting your products be as much visible as possible. From newspaper to billboard, posters to flyers, the printing industry has been rising higher than ever. Around the 1980s, besides the occupancy of printed material, the work of publishing has been boosted by the birth of personal computers. Not until 1991, when the web was first introduced the first version of it to the market, marketers/advertisers were still working inseparably from printers. The later period from this year until now has been swiped by the continuous waves of innovation in web development

and technology, especially smartphones. This is also known as the time for the new sense of marketing.

Kotler and Armstrong (2018, 515) discuss that internet marketing is the fastest-growing form of direct marketing and the progress of information technology is behind this rapid growth. Investopedia ([Ref. 20 November 2020]) referred “digital marketing” as the effort of business in approaching buyers by combining various marketing channel: Internet, mobile devices, social media, search engines, etc. In comparison to traditional tactics, marketers are still strange to this new endeavor. Hence, there should be new approaching method and new way of studying customer’s behavior.

The big picture, including both earlier, later marketing method and the connection between the two concepts, is illustrated in the following diagram (Kotler and Armstrong 2018, 515)



Figure 6 Forms of Direct and Digital Marketing (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 515)

### 2.7.1 The web has shape how we communicate

Without any denial, it is observed from the marketing and advertising development history that before the existence of the web, businesses have clearly less choices in grabbing the eyes of the public. It was either purchasing high priced advertising or getting partnership with publishers to own a third-party ink contract. However, the rise of the web has changed the game. The differences in how the web is constructed, its principles, its information route and how users’ data are stored compared to the traditional channels, such as: radio, newspaper, especially television, brought organizations an enormous chance to precisely approach the right market while stopping consuming excessive amounts of funds.

Despite the advantages and effective results that the antecedent marketing technique has (and still) benefited us, it has unfortunately shown variable sides to be outdated for remaining

unchanged in the current needs. The previous marketing tactic was not only cost consuming but also emphasized unfairly strong to the role of 'goods showcasing'. As the flawed perception of 'marketing is only about advertising' has been discussed in the literature part of the thesis, what marketers used to do, prior to the growth of the web, did not apply the complete function of marketing and this is no longer effective.

The reason hidden behind the improvement of worldwide living standard which results in a drift transformation in buyers' needs. Smart devices have been praised as an opening gate for sellers to getting close to the niche audience, but this gate goes both ways. In fact, because information is everywhere, the buyers are more active in getting to know the potential sellers. The consumers are able to sit in place all day and get access to unlimited online data within one click. Researching products, assorting reviews, comparing different substitutes, and unearthing any related word of mouth, are regular things people do whenever they consider purchasing any item. Therefore, marketers need to stop nailing to the idea of interrupting audiences during a favorite television program by ads or cutting through a radio show with a bunch of seller-spun commercial messages is the best marketing strategy to get audiences' attention. What businesses should do is to be available on the web, where useful content can be delivered on time to the right targeted customer segmentation and customer relationships can be backed up with two-way conversations.

### **2.7.2 The most updated element to successful web advertising and marketing**

Web is an unlimited tool for marketing. However, web users and the platform are proliferating rapidly. Until now, the web has been improved by three stages. While the first version of web was one way top-down approach and vertical direction information (Cormode & Krishnamurthy 2008), which means that at that time the online citizens were mainly play the role of a content consumer and not vice versa, the newest generation allows companies to integrate different web data resources from different applications (Hendler 2008, 2009). This third version contains a wide range of tools: data storage from different websites, facilitated users' profile on social media in connection to suggested content and promotions, ...In this pace of change, there is always a place in the industry for traditional concepts but being neglected from the most updated changes is the fastest way to failure.

**Transparency:** Success comes with obstacles. Besides those outstanding effect resulted from web and digital marketing, there are a number of challenges. Following a research 'The Keep Social Honest' conducted by CIM, in 2016, there were only 19% of consumers saying that they can distinguish between marketing communication and non-commercial content on social media, which is 19% less than the same study in 2014 (The Chartered Institute of Marketing, [ref. 3 December 2020]) "This has led to consumers querying if what they are seeing is genuine. There is growing awareness of certain practices out there, brands should be wary," says CIM CEO Chris Daly. The more time the customer wasted trying to process all the fancy product introduction, the more objection company owned back. The consumers are now smarter than ever in front of a market inundated with competing ads. By taking control of the digital information, they can carry out the buying decision before ready to talk with sales. "Sixty-seven percent (67%) of the buyer's 'decision' is complete before a buyer even reaches out to sales." (SiriusDecisions, [ref. 3 December 2020]). Regarding the same issue, Seth Godin (2018) also clearly declared that: "When consumers get used to transparency, they're also more interested in the quality of what you sell and are more likely to willingly pay extra. And once people start moving in that direction, the cost of being an unethical provider get so high that you either change your ways or fade away". To sum up, the key to win customers nowadays is building an authentic and loyal brand image through a decent level of transparency.

**User-generated contents:** User-generated content, also known as personalization, is a familiar strategic idea which became one of the most recent marketing trends. Ward (2000, 450) described it as a specialized form of product differentiation in the purpose of providing tailored solutions to specific individuals. Peppers (14) and Rogers (1997) referred "the process of using customers' information to deliver a targeted solution to that concrete customer" as definition for personalization. Same as any other business term, user-generated content concept is perceived differently by different audiences. It is not only being directed by many other terms, such as: individualization, segmentation and one-to-one marketing, but also being defined by distinct ways in many researches. Hence, marketers are easily confused by the different meanings of personalization (Merisavo et al. 2002). Imhoff et al. (2001, 467) identified this concept at the base of communication a business's potency in operating personal messaging, targeted banner ads, special offers on bills, or other personal transactions to address and serve its customers as single personnel. In a technology approach, another viewpoint on personalization was stated by the Personalization Consortium (2005): "Personalization is the use of technology and customer information to tailor electronic



commerce interactions between a business and each individual customer. Using information either previously obtained or provided in real-time about the customer, the exchange between the parties is altered to fit that customer's stated needs as well as needs perceived by the business based on the available customer information". A list of numerous definitions is shown in the table below.

<b>Author</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Hanson (2000)	A specialized form of product differentiation, in which a solution is tailored for a specific individual. (450)
Allen (2001)	Company-driven individualization of customer web experience. (32-33)
Coner (2003)	Personalization id performed by the company and is based on a match of categorized to profiled users.
Roberts (2003)	The process of preparing an individual communication for a specific person based on stated or implied preferences. (462)
Wind & Rangaswamy (2001)	Personalization can be initiated by the consumer (e.g customizing the look and the contents of a web page) or by the firm (e.g individualized offerings, greeting customer by name etc.) (15)

Table 5 Different ways in defining personalization

In addition, personalization is often understood as one with customization and interrelationship. After studying the first two terms, Sunikka and Bragge (2012) concluded that there is an army of researchers that deny the connection meanwhile the other believes that personalization and customization are two distinguishing concepts. In another argument, Peppers et al. (1999) added that it is not necessary to declare if these terms are even. However, the most believed perspective on this issue belongs to Ward (2000, p.445) when the author regarded customization as a part of personalization. For example, one company could first study to recognize different customer segmentation and treat customers according to this information. This is called personalization and it is the stage when individualization is driven by the company. In contrast, customization is performed by the user (Corner, 2003). A company performs this concept when the producing process of product/services is based on the purchaser's proposal. In this thesis, the researcher will only adopt the concept of personalization, as it is separated from customization.

Regarding to the importance of individualization content in marketing, there is a wide range of researchers has proved that the absent of the concept would affect one business deeply. According to Ho et al. (2005), with one-to-one marketing, website could be handier tool for visitor in identifying the product that meet the requirements, which obviously would improve the quality of purchase decisions. Additionally, a truth in the customer behavior on web shop, has been found out by Tam, Ho (2006) and Lambrecht, Tucker (2013), shows that website with such features like personalized advertisement launched on website tends to be more persuadable. Personalization's effects on business are numerous and has been confirmed from long time before, however, its growth is being boosted greatly by the impact of a new generation. With Z generation taking over the online platform, the word is witnessing one the greatest shift in online citizens' behavior. Rather than paying attention to overly branded content, consumer have been dragging towards authenticity. Totally different from what millennials behaved on web in general and social media in particular, most of GenZers found it comfortable to send out personal data for the purpose of brand marketing. This new generation are thinking in a fair theory that if personal information can already be visible to developers and exploited by businesses via complex algorithms, why should it be a popularized. For that reason, nowadays people require more about personal relevant content from the producers.

There are many ways for businesspeople to satisfy this need. It can be adopted to website development, website advertising, social media advertising, email marketing, etc. The concept will be studied further in the empirical part of this thesis and support specific personalization procedure in the marketing strategy development for SHIFT Business Festival.

**Big data:** Digital marketers also find it challenging to analyze the vast troves of captured data and then exploit this information in new marketing efforts. Despite that big data is not a new phenomenon, marketers still take much time to take the full advantages from it. The first challenges in data analyzing is the immediacy of customer's perception, which makes the length of time for marketer to acquire data from sources affect significantly to the effectiveness of ended analysis. Secondly, data in marketing requires the cooperation from various departments of an organization. Most of the time, sales and IT teams are called up to work with marketing.

**Agile marketing:** According to Digitalmarketinginstitute.com, agile marketing is a measure of how efficient an organization is at achieving its marketing goals. A research from McKinsey ([ref. 11 November 2020]) added that

Agile, in the marketing context, means using data and analytics to continuously source promising opportunities or solutions to problems in real time, deploying tests quickly, evaluating the results, and rapidly iterating. At scale, a high-functioning agile marketing organization can run hundreds of campaigns simultaneously and multiple new ideas every week.

Agile marketing becoming one of the most significant trends in marketing in the last few years, is the consequence of there being more and more high-functioning insight tools behind each social media platform. By taking advantage of these instruments, marketers can classify what content resonates and what not. At the same time, one important lesson from the improvement of social media is that the quicker customers receive the wanted information in conversation with the seller, the better marketing result business gets. Agile marketing happened to be the best way to maintain user-brand relationships and cultivate real-time dialogues with customers.

### 2.7.3 Online marketing

According to Bala M. (2018), online marketing or internet marketing means marketing activities with the help of internet, such as company websites, online advertising and promotions, email marketing, online video, and blogs.

The researchers furtherly add that it is common for many companies to start planning online marketing by using websites as the major tool for marketing and branding. Kotler and Armstrong (2018, 516) points out the differences between the two functions of websites in marketing. On one hand, a marketing website refers to taking advantage of the platform to secure marketing outcomes. On the other hand, a website in branding is devoted to presenting the brand's image and tightening customer relationships with the brand. Such a vital tool like a website, obviously does not resonate by itself. The key to attract audiences to visit the website lies in visual appealing and content. Valued and updated content on a website will last longer in customer's minds, making it easier to get people to return and binge in the website. In turn, visual appealing is in charge of nailing the audience's first impression on the website satisfying visitors from the experience dimension. David M. (2011, 111) also stated that a functioning

website must meet quality standards in design, color, navigation and other appropriate technology.

Many marketers assume that operating a high-quality website is an expensive marketing method. Another army of people spending endless research to explore an exact way to build a good website. However, according to David M. (2011, 119), it is impossible to distinguish whether a website was built in the right or wrong way. The only thing that should be paid more attention to is reflecting the brand's personality (in published content, communication tone, text font and uploaded photo, etc.). The website should engage customers to the brand, not to the web-developer.

Moreover, online marketing can be classified in smaller marketing channels: online advertising, email marketing, online videos, blog and other forums.

Kotler and Armstrong (2018, 517) state that online advertising is

Advertising that appears while consumers are browsing online, including display ads, search-related ads, online classifieds, and other forms.

There are three ways to purchase digital advertising:

- Cost per thousand (CPM): Payment made when the messages are delivered to targeted audiences
- Cost per Click (CPC): Payment made each time there is engagement made upon the ads
- Cost per Action (CPA): Only when specific action is performed that advertiser need to pay

Email marketing is another aspect in online marketing. The strategy is undertaken by business when a commercial message is emailed to a list of potential customers. Spam is a common mistake that should be avoided in email marketing. Marketers can easily solve the problem by providing permission-based email marketing, which allows the receiver to decide the content is going through the gate. Nonetheless, email marketing should start with a contact list with attached analysis unifying information about customer's spending habits, likes and dislikes.

In the time that written content is eventually becoming old-school, online video becomes one of the most famous online marketing forms. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2018, 519), “good online videos can engage consumers by the tens of millions”. The most outstanding disadvantage of this strategy is minimum control on marketing results. Unless the message is attractive enough, the video campaign may blow up and go viral.

At last, blogs and other forums remain a useful tool in online marketing. Since blog does not throw a blast of information to the audience but content with narrowly defined topics, it is easier to be appealed to specific customer segmentation or specific organization related parties (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 520). Blog contents could be published in the company's own media room or any other external sources. What to be kept in mind is that businesses will have full control on the content, hence, blogs can work effectively with Search Engine Optimization (SEO) as an ultimate pair in marketing.

#### **2.7.4 Social media and mobile marketing in general and in Nordic**

Mobile marketing is a revolutionary tool for connecting companies with each of the clients via mobile devices. Social media, as defined by Chi (2011, 46) is the “connection between brands and consumers, [while] offering a personal channel and currency for user centered networking and social interaction”. In this thesis, social media will be mentioned from the field of YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.

As claimed by Bansal R. (2014), social media marketing benefits the company with a lower cost plan, in comparison with other marketing platforms. Most of the time, social media marketing will be most effective place to increase the accessibility for a brand. With the importance of agile and transparent business has been discussed earlier in the thesis, it is obvious that marketing on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram ... ensures the interaction and trust of customers in the brand due to the fact that people can now communicate with seller through any kind of social media channels. Besides, not only customers can observe a company's performance from these platforms but also the company's staffs can study their own working result with the help of insight tool. Insight tool or analytic tool is a function on social media that user with business webpage on Facebook, company Instagram account, etc. can keep track on potential customers and what are the contents that people found interested in.

Nonetheless, every issue has both sides. Social media marketing brings up numerous advantages, but marketer should never neglect the presence of disadvantages. Barefoot and Szaboo (2010) stated that there should be a specific team member takes the high responsibility to monitor each network, reply to comment, be connected with customers in real-time conversations, and at last spot the opportunity to introduce product by posting online. The work requires a lot of time and commitment from the company, perhaps more than most of marketing methods. It is necessary for company to be timely aware and reactive effectively.

Social media and mobile marketing may be tricky to process sometimes, but it will turn into a tremendous strength for any company soon realizes how to react with new trends, detect the risk in the market and be engaged with customers.

In terms of Nordic region, social media marketing is playing a vital part in the industry due to the vast amount of highly active account on social media. Figure number 7 shows that Iceland ranked first with 82% share of people being active on social media. Followed by Faroe Islands with only 4% less than Iceland (78%). Finland stays at the bottom with 60%.

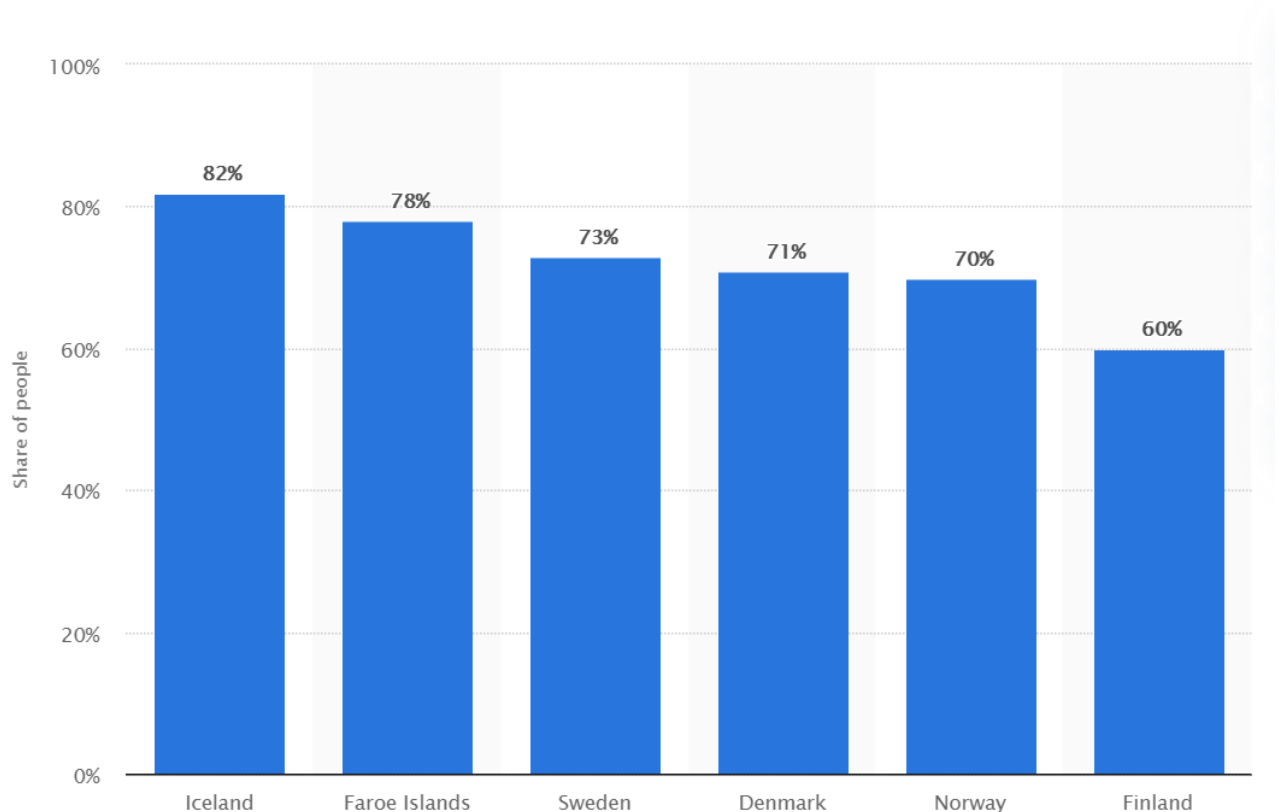


Figure 7 Share of active social media users in the Nordic countries in 2020 (Statista, [Ref. 3 December 2020])

In addition, it is worth noting that online marketing as well as social media marketing involves numerous channels (emails, Facebook, Twitter, etc.). Each platform functions in a specific way and attaches with distinguish customer segmentation. As a matter of fact, there are digital channels which engage more audiences than the others. If marketers are able to investigate the behaviour pattern and the amount of people activating on each platform, there will be a higher chance for the business to reach the niche market. The following figure (Figure 8) shows the Nordic consumers' first daily digital touchpoint.

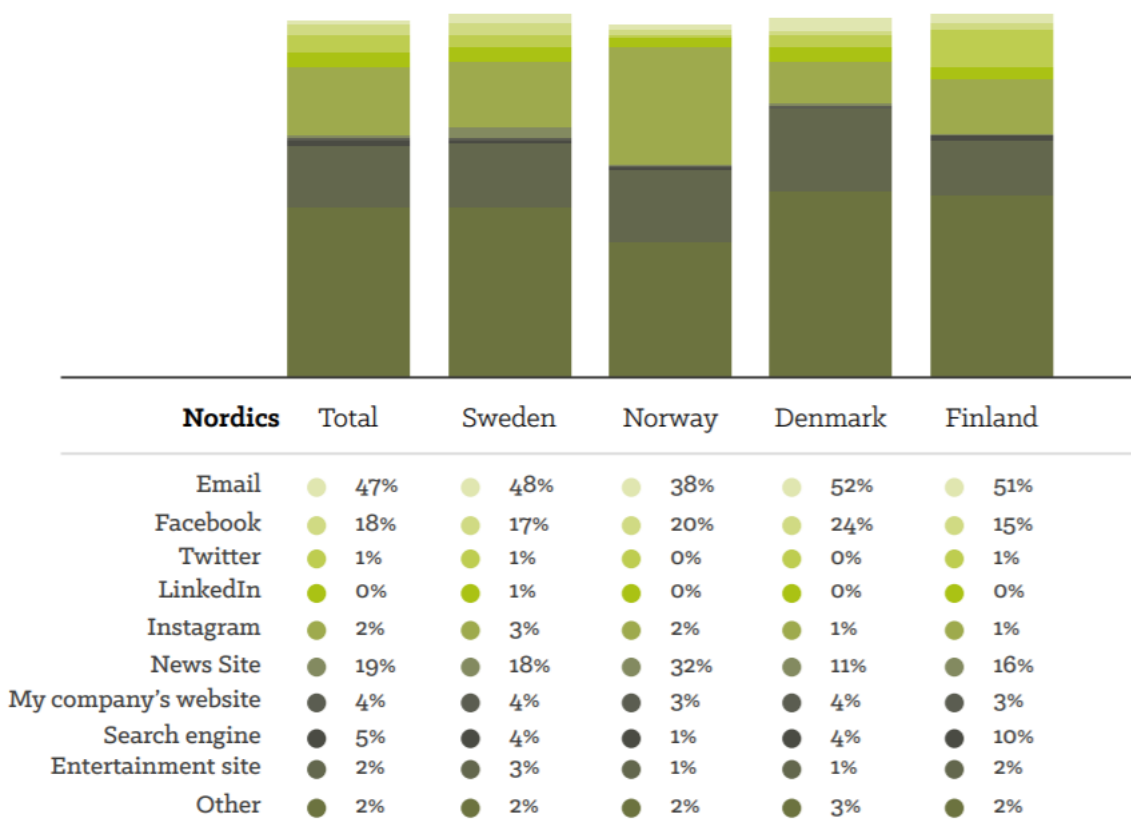


Figure 8 First digital touchpoint of the day for Nordic consumers (eCommerce Worldwide, Nordics 2014)

It can be seen from the data that email ranked first in all nations. News and Facebook respectively took the second and third place. The same research from eCommerce Worldwide also concluded that Facebook is the most popular social media platform in the Nordics. Besides, YouTube also owns a strong user-base. In addition, the video platform shows promising chance for effective branding program. Significantly, there were about 4,1 million visiting session on Facebook every day in Sweden. In turn, the number of people watching

YouTube per day was 1,6 million. The following table lists the daily visits to social media website in Scandinavia.

### Unique Daily Visits to Social Media Sites in Scandinavia

Country	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube	LinkedIn
Norway	2.1 million	37,000	1 million	45,000
Denmark	3 million	30,000	1 million	120,000
Sweden	4.1 million	75,000	1.6 million	100,000

Figure 9 Daily visits to social media websites in Scandinavia (eCommerce Worldwide, Nordics 2014)

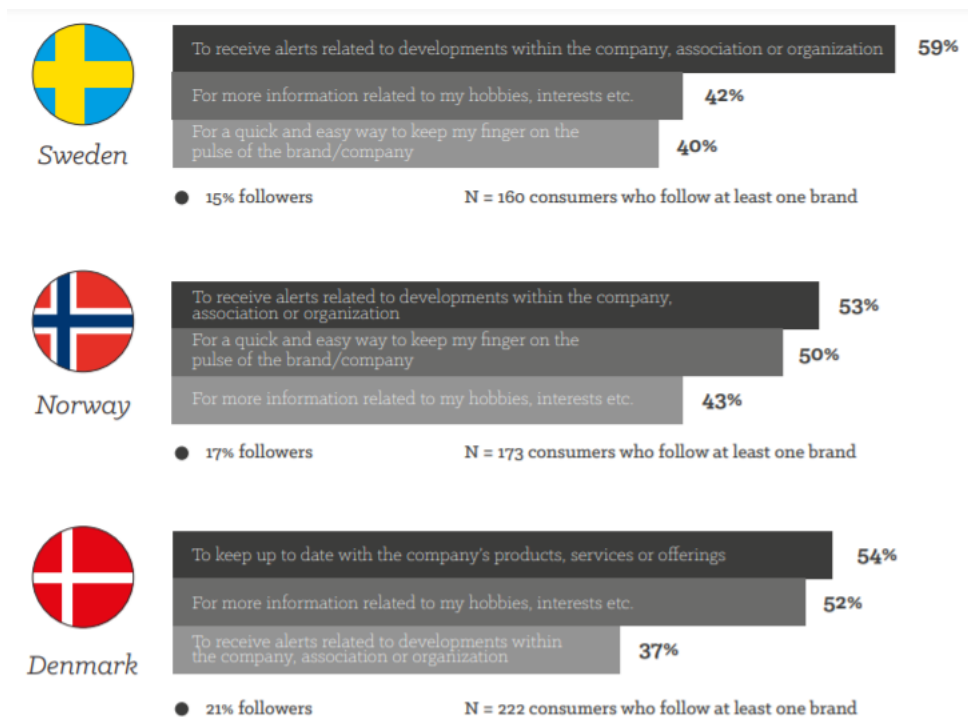


Figure 10 Why consumers follow a brand, by country: Norwegian social media usage 2015 (eCommerce Worldwide, Nordics 2014)

Figure 10 explains the reason why consumer decided to follow a brand on social media. It can be seen that in Norway and Sweden, there were respective 53% and 59% people subscribed to a brand on social media in order to receive development news within the company. This category only accounted for 37% in Denmark. By contrast, social media users in this country preferred to follow a brand for news related to product and offerings (54%).



In conclusion, Nordic is a developed market when it comes to social media marketing. This is an obvious the opportunity for businesses to approach consumers easier with a low budget, but also an undeniable threat for companies marketing online without a detailed strategy. A crowded market contains high competition. The solution is to understand the public and set up a suitable plan for both buyers and sellers.

## **3 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH**

### **3.1 Research environment**

As the marketing communication concept has been discussed in the theoretical framework of this thesis, people come to a realization that while using marketing communication as a supporting tool for sales, its core nature should not be underestimated. Especially in the international environment like Nordic and Baltic region, when the audiences are not aware of the brand and still hesitated to a new player in the market, a business like SHIFT should not only use marketing communication to emphasized price or pressurize customer's purchasing decision making process. The initial step is to understand customers' dreams, desires, wants.

Therefore, this section of the thesis is dedicated to study the research environment, where this all researches in this thesis are conducted. It is also the new international market that SHIFT is aiming to. In detail both Baltic, Nordic region and Finland will be mentioned under the field of geography, economic phenomenon and the human. Business event industry is also considered as a research environment in this thesis, since this is the direct industry affected to SHIFT's business. Hence, there will be a short study mentions this industry in this section. At last, there will be a part for Hofstede's dimensional paradigm, with which the researcher goes deeper into study the cultural difference and its consequences upon SHIFT's marketing and communication decision. This section also should tell the potential in new markets for SHIFT.

#### **3.1.1 Finland and Turku as a business environment**

Finland is located in Northern Europe. The country is bordered to the north by Norway, to the east by Russia, to the North-West by Sweden, making it one of the world's most northern and geographically remote countries. According to Wordometers, Finnish population in 2020 is 5 540 720 people, ranked at 116th in the world's population ranking. In the same year, it has been recorded that, there is around one-tenth (558 457 people) of the population are resident in Helsinki – the capital of Finland. The most current data shows that there is 86% and 14% of the population respectively living in urban and rural areas. Finns use two Finnish and Swedish as the national languages.

As claimed by the World Bank, Finland's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was worth 268.76 billion US dollars in 2019 (The World Bank, [ref. 11 November 2020]) The country is known as the safest, freest, most stable and happiest country (World Economic Forum, The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report, 2017; Freedom House, Freedom in the World, 2019; The Fund of Peace, Fragile States Index, 2019; Sustainable Development Solutions Network, World Happiness Report, 2019).

Finland has a successful partnership with its neighbors. Helsinki Business Hub cited from a study conducted by the National Board of Customs that Russia became Finland's most significant trading partner in July 2011. Besides, about 30% of Russia's total imports transit through Finland. Nonetheless, the number of Finnish companies operating on Russian market is going up to 650, in which there are around 500 companies in St. Petersburg.

Additionally, Finland is well-known for a high-functioning educational and welfare system. Based on a study carried out by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Finland scored high in education outcomes in regard to PISA score. The PISA is an international survey conducted by the OECD every three years and is widely used to assess the effectiveness of education systems around the world. In 2015, there were 540 000 students attend this examination (OECD, 2016). Sachs et al. (2016) agree that PISA is a useful tool for evaluating lower secondary school students' level between countries over time and navigating millennium development goals.

SOCIETY					
Income inequality (Gini coefficient)	0.26	(0.31)	Education outcomes (PISA score)		
Relative poverty rate	6.3	(11.3)	Reading	526.0	(493)
Public and private spending (% of GDP)			Mathematics	511	(490)
Health care, current expenditure	8.6	(9.0)	Science	531.0	(493)
Education (primary, secondary, post sec. non tert.)	3.9	(3.7)	Share of women in parliament	42.5	(28.7)
Pensions	11.7	(9.1)	Net official development aid (% of GNI)	0.4	(0.39)

Source: Calculations based on data extracted from the databases of the following organisations: OECD, International Energy Agency, World Bank and World Health Organisation.

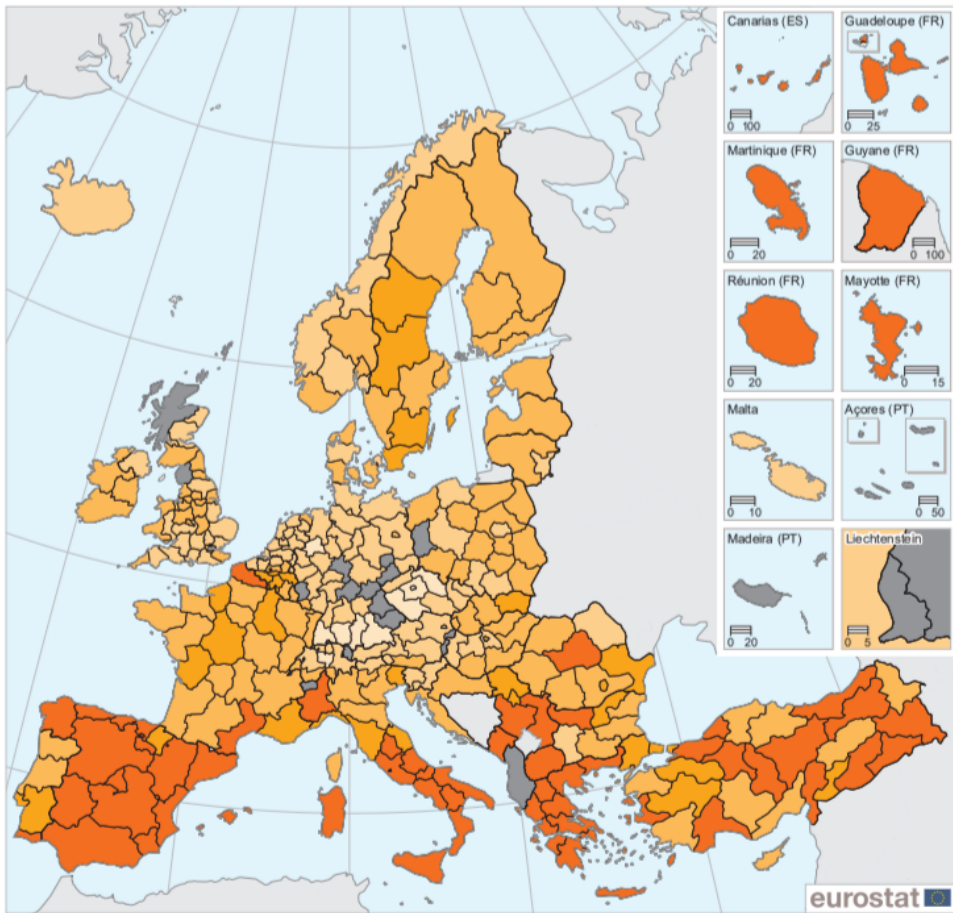
Figure 11 Finland PISA score (PISA)

Moreover, The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) states that in comparison with Nordic countries' performances in PISA, Finland held the first place, followed by Sweden. Norway and Denmark have remained consistent in reading and science and improved in

mathematics. Iceland has not shown any improvement from its 2012 performance and remains below the other Nordic countries and the OECD average on all subjects (APPENDIX 2-4).

Despite the excellent outcomes of education, according to Eurostat’s study (2017), there is an average number of unemployed young citizens, in comparison to other countries in Europe. The following figure shows the differences in youth unemployment rate between Nordic and Baltic countries.

**Map 4.4: Youth unemployment rate, 2019**  
 (% share of labour force aged 15-24 years, by NUTS 2 regions)



Administrative boundaries: © EuroGeographics © UN-FAO © Turkstat  
 Cartography: Eurostat — GISCO, 04/2020

Note: includes data of low reliability for some regions (too many to document). Bulgaria (except Severozapaden (BG31)); Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (DE80), Detmold (DE44), Ionia Nisia (EL62), Közép-Dunántúl (HU21), Zachodniopomorskie (PL42), Warmińsko-mazurskie (PL62), Świętokrzyskie (PL72) and Alentejo (PT18); 2018. Gießen (DE72), Lüneburg (DE93), Koblenz (DEB1), Limousin (FR12), Corse (FRM0), Nyugat-Dunántúl (HU22), Zeeland (NL34), Tirol (AT33), Podlaskie (PL84), București-Ilfov (RO32) and Bratislavský kraj (SK01); 2017. Tübingen (DE14), Saarland (DEC0), Kärnten (AT21), Salzburg (AT32), Vest (RO42), North Eastern Scotland (UKM5), Hedmark og Oppland (NO02), Trøndelag (NO06) and Nord-Norge (NO07); 2016. Mittelfranken (DE25), Dresden (DED2), Opolskie (PL52), Algarve (PT15) and Cornwall and Isles of Scilly (UKK3); 2015.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: ifst\_r\_fu3r)

Figure 12 Youth unemployment rate (Eurostat, 2019)

It is worth noting that with a stable economy, high-quality welfare system, low gender gap in society, etc. Finland became an attractive business land. Especially, Uusimaa region holds the highest rate of enterprise births. Besides, Finnish human resources in science and technology also ranked high among European nations (APPENDIX 5-6).

Turku is defined to be a large region located within the Northern Growth Zone, a zone stretching across the Northern Baltic from Stockholm to St Petersburg. Regarding Finnish region, the city belongs to the Southwest, where it was recorded to be rapidly growing in the field of metal industry, ICT, business services and maritime industry. Turku is the third largest urban region in Finland with 317 000 inhabitants. There are around 100 nationalities residing in the area, which made Turku an international city. More importantly, Turku is a bilingual city, which means that part of its citizens is able to communicate in Sweden language. Besides, one of the busiest ports of Finland is also located in Turku. The port welcomed over 3,5 million passengers in 2012. The city is praised as a thriving center of growth in the Baltic region. Nonetheless, Turku goes ahead many other regions in Finland with great strengths in highly educated population, dynamic business sector and strong culture of innovation (City of Turku). All in all, Turku is a suitable destination for many enterprises.

### **3.1.2 The Nordics**

Nordic region is a term that often gets mistaken with Scandinavia and Northern Europe. This report studies Nordic region as all municipalities and administrative regions of five Nordic countries (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Denmark), as well as Åland (part of Republic of Finland) and Faroe Islands, Greenland, which is part of the Kingdom of Denmark.

The Nordic Region (the Nordic) ranked the 12th largest economy in the world. With a total area of 3,425,804 km<sup>2</sup>, the Nordic Region perhaps the 7th largest nation in the world. Averagely, the Nordic populated faster than the EU. This region is well-known worldwide for a stable and high-quality welfare system. Three out of five Nordic nations (Denmark, Finland, Sweden) are presented to be members of the EU. This has brought a significant advantage for these countries by the implementation of free movement of goods and labors in the European Union. Besides, Iceland and Norway are members of EFTA (European Free Trade Association). Only the Faroe Islands and Greenland are, so far, not a part of these economic organizations.

Ever after the economic crisis of 2007 and 2008, the Nordic has proven its strength regarding the economy (Wooldridge, 2013). It is believed that the Nordic has persuaded their strong stand in the economy by aligning a generous tax-funded welfare system with efficient public administration and a competitive business sector. However, across the region, people are more believed in another hidden reason, which is Nordic working force. With the vision of a sustainability developer, all Nordic nations are willing to invest in education and a skillful labor market for a long-term scenario.

There are 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) (United Nations (UN) General Assembly, '2030 Sustainable Development agenda', September 2015):

- No Poverty
- Zero Hunger
- Good Health and Well-being
- Quality Education
- Gender Equality
- Clean Water and Sanitation
- Affordable and Clean Energy
- Decent Work and Economic Growth
- Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- Reduced Inequality
- Sustainable Cities and Communities
- Responsible Consumption and Production
- Climate Action
- Life Below Water
- Life on Land
- Peace and Justice Strong Institutions
- Partnerships to achieve the Goal

In which, each sustainable goal directs the nations to act in a global policy framework, aiming to support solving some critical issues.

In addition, it is worth noting that some of the Nordic's nations were praised for narrow employment gender gaps: the Finnish regions of Etelä-Suomi and Pohjois- ja Itä-Suomi, and Mellersta Norrland in Sweden. Both of Lithuania's regions are also included in this list as the

representative of the Baltics. The following figure shows the comparison in gender gap in the labor market among European countries.

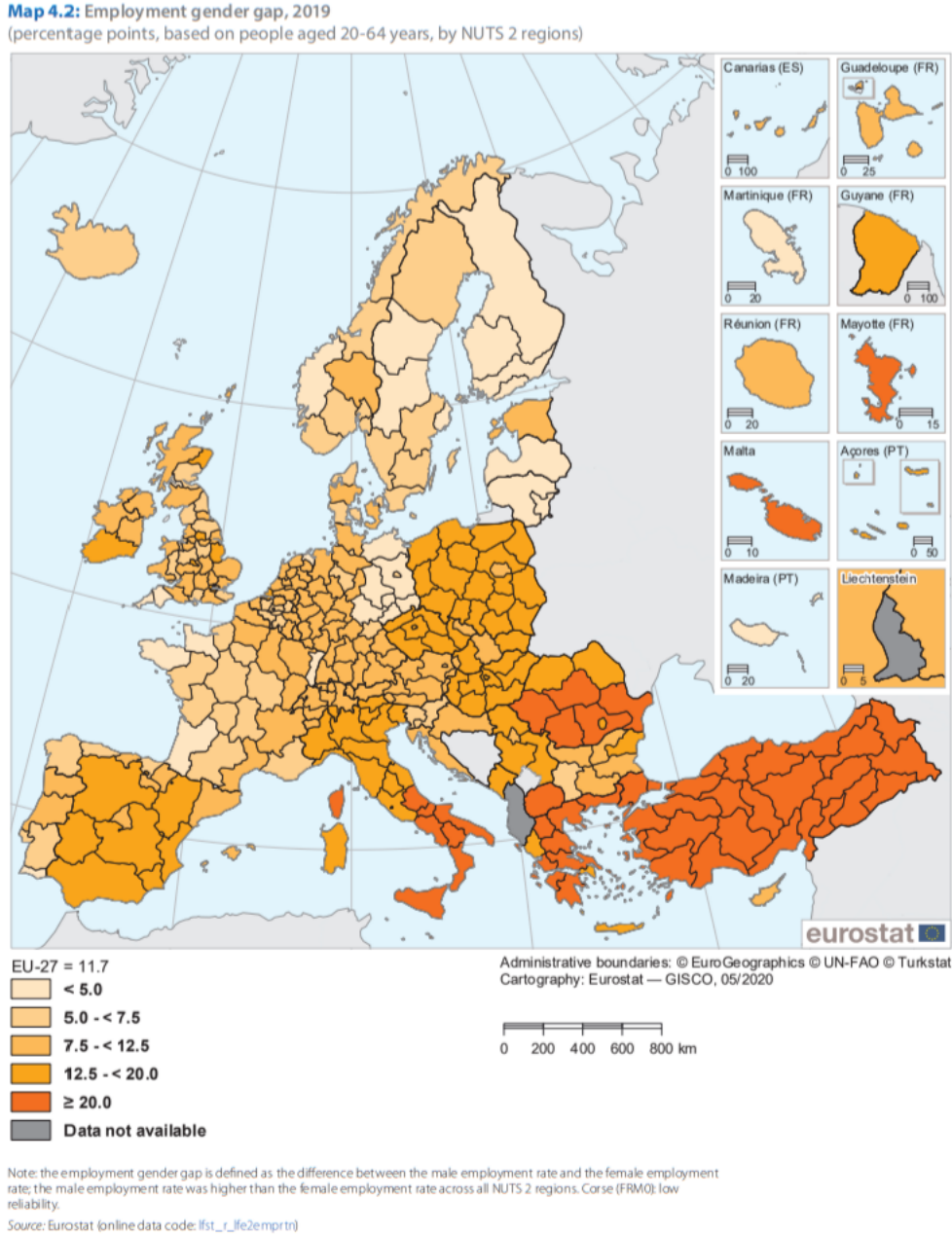


Figure 13 European gender difference in labor market (Eurostat, 2019)

### 3.1.3 The Baltics

The Baltic region or The Baltics refers to three European countries: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania. Baltic nations regained independence from Soviet Union and attended the European in 2004.

Despite the outstanding growth of Estonia compared to the other two, the Baltic nations share several similarities in geography, size, economic, policy, climate etc.

According to Koskio A. (University of Turku, [ref. 12 November 2020]), the founder of Fin-Pol Business Club, there is a mindset about the cultural gap between countries related closely to each other like the Baltics. In fact, each Baltic nation has a specific behavior and communication pattern. The researcher also added that Lithuania, as a Catholic country, are more different from the other two countries.

Concerning the relationship between the Baltics and Finland, Estonia stands out to be the closest partner with the Nordic neighbor. Estonia also contributes a large number of foreign participants in Finnish labor market. Based on a study carried out by Purju A. (3/2019), despite the small size of Estonia, it has been recognized by the Finns as an important foreign trade partner and a target for FDI, based on the similarities in geography and culture. It is not deniable that the closeness between the two nations cannot guarantee a totally non-barriered communication. Karolina Ullman (NJORD, [ref. 12 November 2020]) stated that Finns are likely to be more confident in their home country than in foreign environment, and the sustained high self-esteem from Estonian is slightly hard for Finns to welcome. Besides, there is a difference in language between Finland and Estonia. Finnish and Estonian are considered visually alike but in fact, are distinct. In conclusion, when it comes to professional conversation, it is important for both partners to keep an eye on behavior differences and take advantage of English if there is no other joint language.

Latvia is not as close to Finland as Estonia, but still remains as a potential partner. As claimed by Vahtera M. (6/2020, [ref. 12 November 2020]), the Deputy Chairman of Finnish Chamber of Commerce in Latvia, the Baltic country is surely a promised business destination for Finnish. In detail, Riga (Latvian capital city) is geographically close to Helsinki (Finnish capital city). From three different largest cities of Finland (Helsinki, Turku and Tampere), people are able to take direct flights and arrive at Riga International Airport in an hour. Moreover, With the Rail Baltica railway project (expected to be implemented by 2026), the gap between Finland and Latvia is even smaller (Kristine Naseniece, 2019). Latvian office work environment is internationalized, which made most of the “white-collar” workers speak fluent English. Information technology, healthcare, life sciences, woodworking, metal working, mechanical engineering, transport and storage, green technology, and food processing are potentially the most attractive industry in Latvia (LIAA, [ref. 12 November 2020]). Another key advantage in



operating business between Latvia to the international market in general, to Finland in particular, is the fair treatment of foreign investors and domestic companies (Embassy of the republic of Latvia in the Republic of Finland, [ref. 12 November 2020]).

Nonetheless, Finland and Baltic region share another economic positive impact, which is the Baltic Sea. The following figure (Figure 10) displays the strategy of Finnish Government towards Baltic Sea Region.

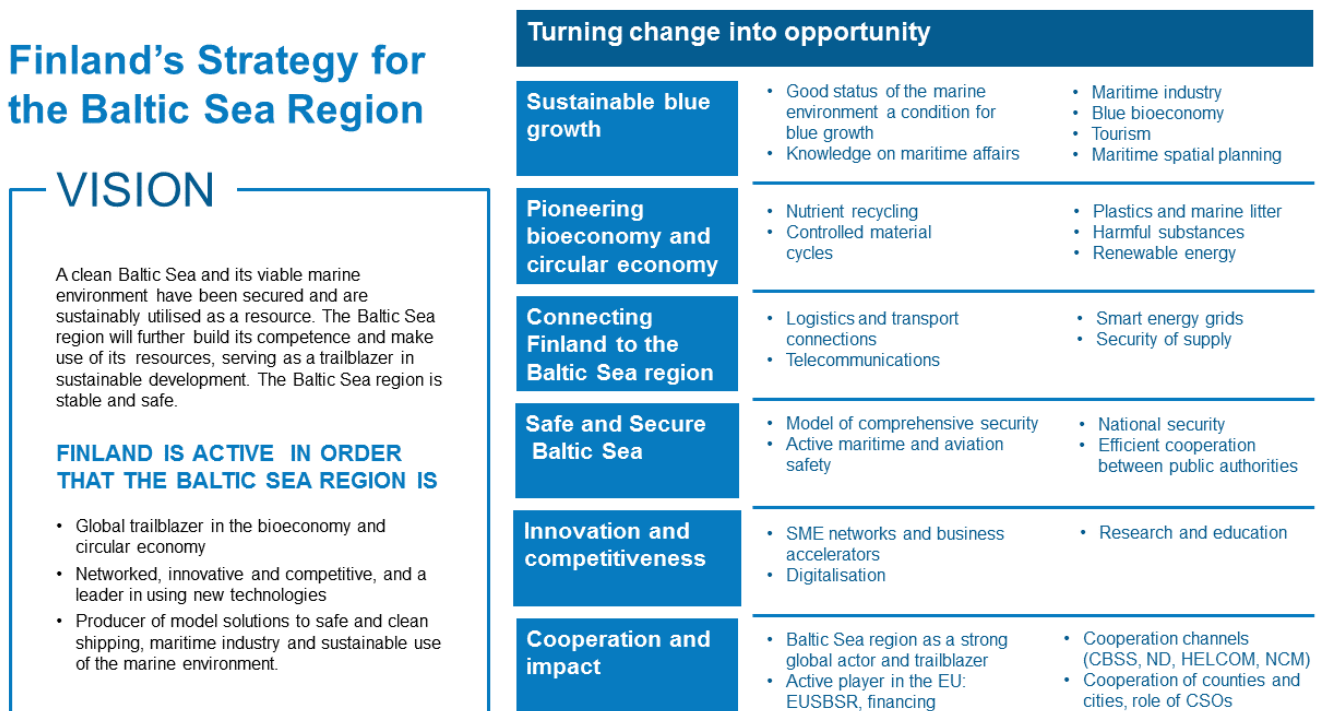


Figure 14 Finland's Strategy for Baltic Sea Region (Prime Minister's office, [ref. 12 November 2020])

From the above figure, it is understood that Finns government pay a significant attention to the Baltic Sea region and aim to make it beneficial to all surrounding neighbors rather than only to Finland.

### 3.1.4 Business event industry

Business Event is a gathering designed for business purpose, containing around 10 or more participants for a minimum four hours in a contracted venue. In November 2018, events industry council and Oxford economics has developed a study on Global Economic Significance of Business Events. In which, the authors stated that profit from the business

event sector contributed to the total economy, more than consumer electronics and computers and office equipment. To be specific, the business event sector has generated 2,5 trillion US dollars business sales, 25 million jobs and 1,5 trillion US dollars GDP to the general global economic impact in 2017. Which makes it ranked at the 13th place in a ranking list of large economies globally. The following figure (Figure 11) displays the business event's sector total impacts on different countries in 2017 (Events Industry Council, 2018).

#### Total impacts generated by the business events sector (2017)

Top 50 countries, ranked by total output impact (billions US\$ and thousands of jobs)

Rank	Country	Total output impact (billions US\$)	Total GDP impact (billions US\$)	Total job impact (000s)	Rank	Country	Total output impact (billions US\$)	Total GDP impact (billions US\$)	Total job impact (000s)
1	United States	\$787.0	\$446.1	5,905	26	Saudi Arabia	\$6.4	\$3.8	69
2	China	\$372.8	\$247.3	5,215	27	Poland	\$6.4	\$3.6	185
3	Germany	\$285.7	\$165.0	1,939	28	Austria	\$6.1	\$3.6	41
4	United Kingdom	\$198.9	\$133.5	1,829	29	United Arab Emirates	\$5.8	\$4.1	48
5	Japan	\$147.2	\$78.2	1,420	30	Thailand	\$5.7	\$3.6	308
6	Italy	\$70.2	\$38.3	569	31	Portugal	\$5.5	\$2.4	90
7	Canada	\$67.3	\$42.4	493	32	Finland	\$5.1	\$2.1	53
8	Australia	\$56.0	\$31.1	545	33	Philippines	\$4.9	\$3.2	154
9	France	\$53.6	\$27.4	456	34	Belgium	\$4.8	\$2.3	51
10	Mexico	\$52.8	\$37.6	1,130	35	Singapore	\$4.2	\$2.1	60
11	Sweden	\$46.0	\$30.6	279	36	Chile	\$4.2	\$2.3	77
12	Spain	\$27.4	\$17.2	253	37	Switzerland	\$3.7	\$2.3	31
13	Brazil	\$24.3	\$17.0	484	38	Colombia	\$3.7	\$2.0	77
14	Argentina	\$22.9	\$13.7	303	39	Pakistan	\$3.5	\$1.8	124
15	South Korea	\$22.8	\$15.9	216	40	Romania	\$3.5	\$2.2	59
16	India	\$19.5	\$9.7	228	41	Czech Republic	\$3.2	\$1.4	25
17	Russia	\$17.5	\$9.3	316	42	Kenya	\$2.4	\$1.2	66
18	South Africa	\$13.4	\$6.0	155	43	Greece	\$2.3	\$0.9	37
19	Indonesia	\$12.8	\$7.8	278	44	Norway	\$2.3	\$1.1	21
20	Turkey	\$10.4	\$4.4	167	45	Myanmar	\$2.3	\$1.1	78
21	Nigeria	\$9.0	\$4.2	140	46	Algeria	\$2.0	\$1.5	52
22	Netherlands	\$9.0	\$4.8	67	47	Ireland	\$2.0	\$0.8	31
23	Hong Kong, China	\$8.2	\$5.2	80	48	Egypt	\$1.9	\$0.9	48
24	New Zealand	\$7.7	\$4.8	61	49	Vietnam	\$1.3	\$0.7	65
25	Denmark	\$6.6	\$2.7	102	50	Peru	\$0.8	\$2.0	151

Figure 15 Total impacts generated by business event industry (Events Industry Council, 2018)

The data from Events Industry Council (2018) shows that there are two countries from Nordic region has been impacted greatly from the performance of business event industry. In 2018, Denmark had 6,6 billions US dollars output impact, higher than Finland 1,5 billions US dollars. The business event industry also influenced the labor market of Denmark and Finland, as well as contributed to the two countries' total GDP.

### 3.1.5 Research environment conclusion

Finland is a developed country with most of the population located in urban areas. The country has many strengths in various field, from education, health care and welfare system to

technology. As a matter of fact, Finland became a promising investment for both domestic and international entrepreneur. Finnish appreciate the development of technology and is also one of the most developed country in this industry. Therefore, it could be said that SHIFT Business Festival has a perfect location to serve it vision of bringing all industries together with the growth of technology and AI to shape the future. As has been discussed from the theoretical framework in this thesis, one of the 7Ps is place. The decision of where the product of SHIFT, which is SHIFT Business Festival, presented decides a big part to the success of the event. In terms of location, Turku – the city of SHIFT Business Festival – is a city for entrepreneur. Besides, Turku has strong connection with Riga (Latvia). With the Rail Baltica project, the distance between Finland and Latvia is no more a big problem. Reflect this matter with one of the most considered barriers for any company when going internationalization is the distance, SHIFT has more chance to reach out for Baltic region. Another potential in this city that SHIFT can considered as the company's potential in Nordic and Baltic market is the drastically growth of metal industry and maritime industry. In fact, the event has already dedicated a theme to maritime industry in the past. While Baltic Sea Region is considering as a valuable source for economy of the surrounding country, and there is the fact that Latvia is also a strong metal working country, SHIFT has full potential to exploit these conditions to be more available in the targeted market. A minor advantage from the research environment study that can be seen is the youth unemployment rate. As a youth-driven society, SHIFT is not only providing jobs but also training youths to be the future decision makers. People is also one of the core elements in the marketing mix, therefore, to focus in developing talent and providing training to young people is a strength that SHIFT can take advantage of.

New market always has place for both potential and risk. The biggest one here is languages differences and cultures.

### **3.2 Hofstede's theories**

After investigating the research environments, it can be seen that despite various similarities in climate, geography, economic growth, etc. Baltic and Nordic regions do not match each other at some points and most of them are related to cultures. These differences are believed to be solved by the Hofstede's theory. In this section of the thesis, the researcher will explore the theory of Hofstede and apply it in on countries that SHIFT is aiming to expand. The purpose of this part is making conclusion on how should SHIFT behaves differently to avoid cultural

conflicts, which has been mentioned in the internationalization theory in this thesis as one of the most critical reason for company's failure in foreign market.

### **3.2.1 The six dimensions applied to the Nordic, Baltic countries**

As business has been agreed to be customer-driven, the needs for cultural studies in marketing and communication, especially advertising has been viewed as increasingly important. Regarding studying the research environment, the researcher chooses to apply Geert Hofstede's dimensional model to provide comparison between home market's behavior with the destined region, as well as between two targeted regions (Baltics and Nordics). This section of the thesis will provide an overall look on Hofstede's cultural theory and deeply research Finland, the Nordic and Baltic region according to the study.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions unanimously agreed that one of the best tools for evaluating the weight of culture values in the workplace. It is defined as a framework to study national value systems and the attitudes of individual consumers in those countries.

It is undeniable that there is a vast amount of major problems upon economy, technology, medical issues, etc. has been sorted out merely as technical. The reason behind the failure of implementing various technical views on these problems lies on the lack of understanding heterogeneity in thoughts/minds among partners. Everyone owns a thinking pattern from a young age, and it will be accumulated and developed throughout human life, under the impact of the surrounding environment and living experience. Therefore, it is distinct and cannot be treated like a computer program. As Hofstede et al. stated in a research, the software of minds has a customary term which is more familiar with us – culture. Culture is a “collective phenomenon” and it is learned, never innate (Hofstede et al. 2010, 6). The author also added that humankind is living based on a major routine, which is grouping people and changing membership (Hofstede et al. 2010, 17). It means that in one or many ways, people always need to choose a group, whether it is a society, an organization, or a working environment, and every group has a culture. This culture may already exist before the group was formed. It may be there at the moment people get drawn to join the specific organization because people with the same “culture” will naturally attract each other. On the other hand, the culture may shape throughout the co-living of the group. As a result, attendees to an event also share some mutual “culture”. From which it is easy to state that event builders should figure out the

tendencies in actions, thoughts of the targeted customers (Are they willing to work in hot weather? Do they drink while working or after? Etc.). However, before exploring the customer's mind, the event organizer should investigate the internal community first, because there is a “culture” already existing inside the team. In general business, it is called a brand personality, which decides how to distinguish the brand identity on the market and how customers perceive the company. Additionally, the organizer should be able to blend this “culture” well that customers would feel being a part of the event, of the society created by the event.

There are gaps between groups, or its “culture” to be exact. Based on Hofstede’s study, these differences can be measured by six indexes: The Power Distance Index (PDI), the Individualism (IDV), the Masculinity (MAS), the Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI), the Long-Term Orientation (LTO), and Indulgence Versus Restraint (IVR). The following table explains each dimension meaning.

Dimension	Definition
Power Distance Index	Chen and Starosta (2005, 52) define PDI as “the dimension of power distance to what extent a culture adapts to inequities of power distribution in relationships and organizations”.
Individualism	Individualism refers to “a social mentality which focuses on the individual, valuing and recognizing individual achievement, and encouraging independent thought and action” (Arasaratnam, 2011, p. 45)
Masculinity	The dimension shows how obviously the stereotypically masculine and feminine traits present within a culture program. In detail, participants in a culture which is identified as masculine expect men to be ambitious, competitive, strong and women to be supportive, deferent and nurturing (Dainton & Zelle, 2011, p. 186).
Uncertainty Avoidance Index	The index answers the ways people react to the fact that there will be ambiguous situations and tolerate uncertainty about the future. It indicates to what extent members of a culture pattern would feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations.
Long-term Orientation	Short-term-orientation cultures emphasize the past, stability, universal morality, nationalism, and luck; long-term-orientation cultures place emphasis on the future, adaptability, situational morality, internationalism, and effort (Hofstede, 2011).
Indulgence VS. Restraint	An indulgent culture is “a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun (Hofstede, 2011, 5).

Table 6 Hofstede culture dimensions

This thesis will study the Nordic region’s culture with five representatives: Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Finland.

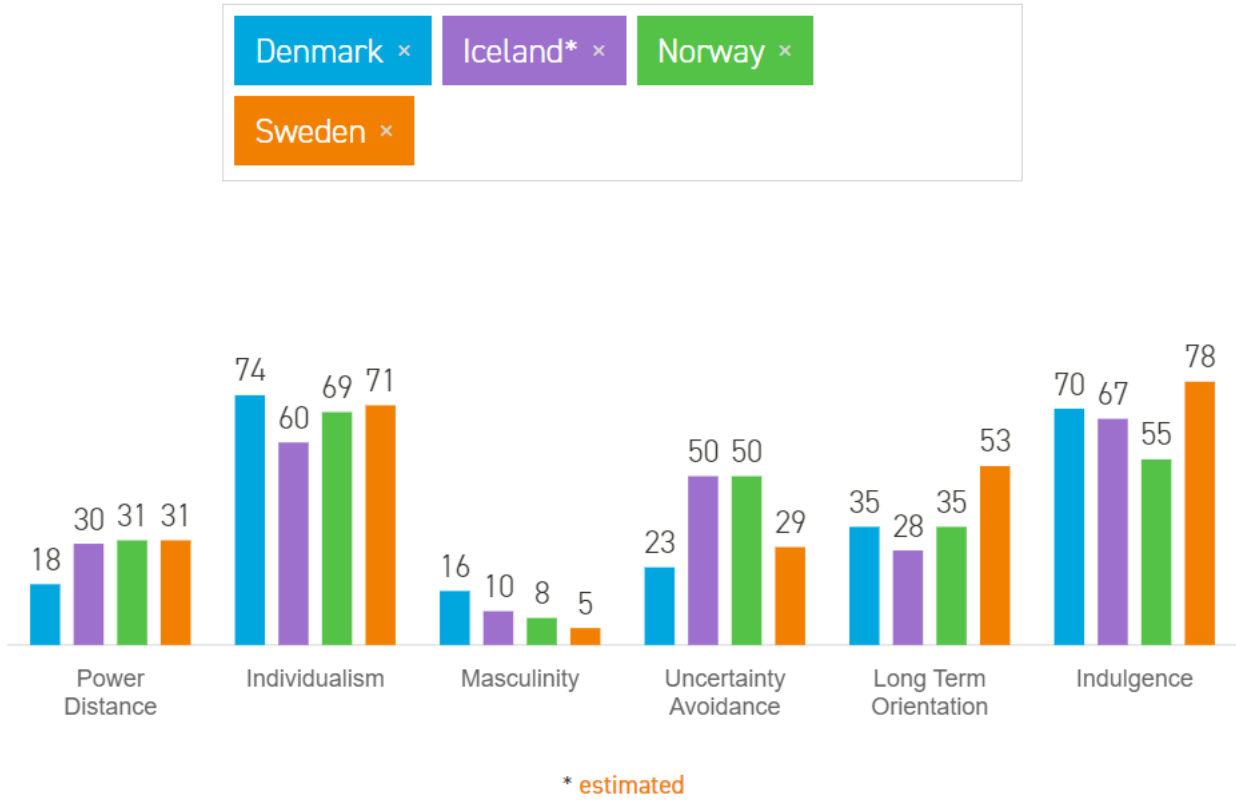


Figure 16 Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden six dimensions (Hofstede G., [ref. 11 November 2020])

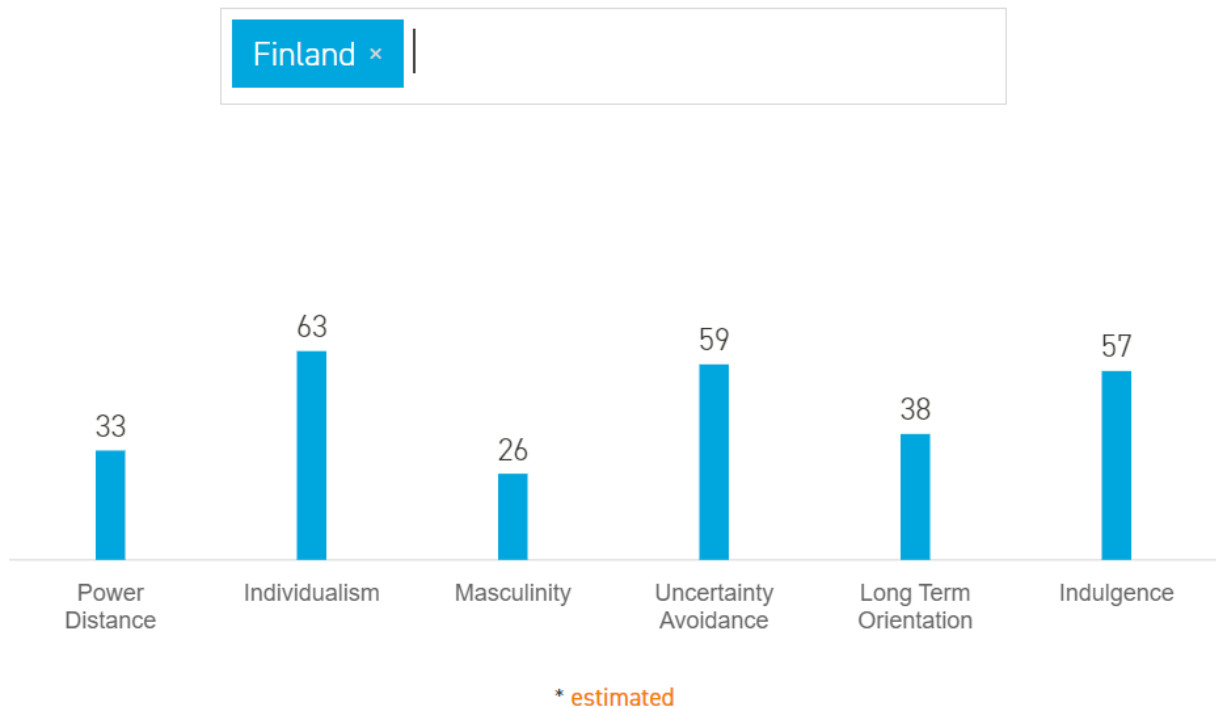


Figure 17 Finland six dimensions (Hofstede G., [ref. 11 November 2020])

From figure 12 and 13, it can be seen that Denmark has the lowest power distance country with 18 points in comparison with the highest is Finland with 33 points. Other countries remain at a rate of 30 and 31, not so different from Finland's. Concerning individualism index, the gap between the five countries is not big while Denmark ranked highest with 74 points, only 3 points higher than the second (Sweden) and 14 points more than the last (Iceland). Finland's individualism stays at an average point of 63. Masculine becomes the most obvious distinguishing element between Finland and other Nordic countries. While Finland has 26 points in masculinity, Sweden, Norway, Iceland and Denmark own respectively 5, 8, 10 and 6 points of masculinity. Generally, the Nordic region does not preserve the traditional thought about male and female traits. In terms of uncertainty avoidance, once again Finland scores the highest with 59 points, 9 points more than Iceland and Norway (50) and left Denmark behind at 23 points. Sweden remains at an average level with 29 points only. The next dimension to be discussed is long-term orientation. It is easily observed that except for Sweden, all Nordic countries stay lower than 50 points. The lowest score belongs to Iceland (28), lower than Denmark and Norway 7 points (35). Finland has 38 points in this aspect, 15 points short from the highest (Sweden). The last index to be studied is indulgence. Every country stays at a higher than average score in this part. Sweden has an indulgent culture with 78 points, respectively higher than Denmark and Iceland 8 and 11 points. The lowest points were 55 from



Norway, only 2 points gaps from Finland. In conclusion, all five countries are feminine culture types, which means Nordic citizens qualify a life to be successful based on its quality, not on the issue of being outstanding from the crowd or not. With not so high-power distance index, the Nordic region is understood to be independent, respect the equality in rights, and subordinates in these cultures look forward to being consulted. However, it is worth noting that Finland still has the highest power distance index out of five countries. Besides, Finland also has the highest score for uncertainty avoidance (59), thus has a high preference for avoiding uncertainty. Meanwhile, Iceland and Norway culture stay average in this field. Denmark and Sweden are the most likely to accept an unstructured future scenario. Concerning indulgence scale, Finland is an indulgent country, which means Finns in general highly appreciate the importance of leisure time and live towards optimistic and fun life. In comparison, the other four countries are also indulgent, especially Sweden. Lastly, the long-term orientation index shows that the Nordics are normative. Nordic citizens tend to exhibit strong belief in the importance of traditions and tendency in achieving immediate outcomes.

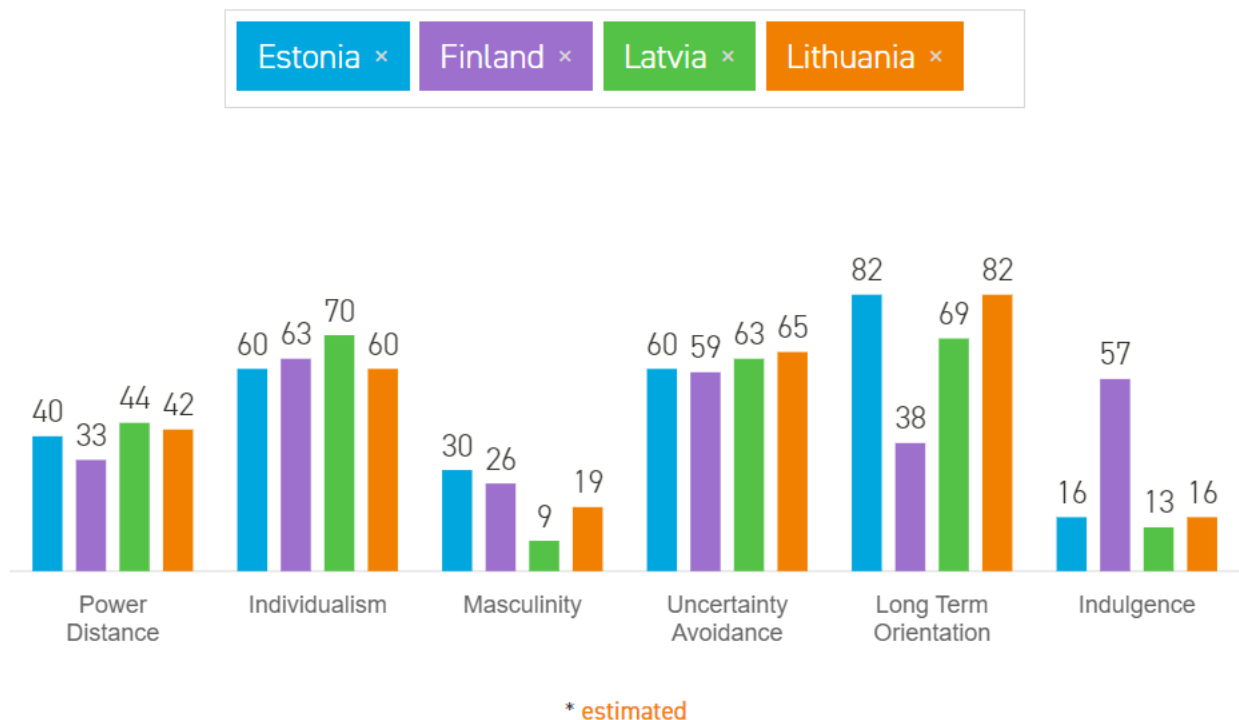


Figure 18 Baltic six dimensions (Hofstede G., [ref. 11 November 2020])

With regard to Finland's and the Baltics' index. Generally, there is a large gap between Finnish culture to the Baltic region's one. The most outstanding data indulgence index was Finland holding the highest position with 57 points, much higher than the second place of Estonia and Latvia (16). Lithuania becomes the less indulgent country with only 13 points. As for uncertainty avoidance, Finland has the least point – 59. However, the other countries maintain not radically higher than Finland with 60, 63 and 65 points for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania respectively. Finland once again ranked last when it comes to long-term orientation index with 38 points, 44 points lower than the highest (Lithuania and Estonia). Latvia has an average point at 69. In respect of masculinity, on a whole, Finland and the Baltics have a weak masculinity culture with overall points lower than 31, the highest is 30, belonging to Estonia. As has been discussed before, Finland and Estonia have a closer connection to each other, therefore, the Nordic country stays second in the ranking chart with 4 points shorter than Estonia (26). Finland is followed by Lithuania (19) and at last is Latvia with only 9 points. In regard to individualism, the overall score is higher than 59. At the highest is Latvia with 70 points, creating a great difference of 7 points with Finland at the second place (63). Both Lithuania and Estonia remain not far behind Finland at 60 points. Lastly, while Finland is an absolutely low power-distance country with 33 points, all three Baltic nations stay higher than Finland in this dimension. Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia respectively rank at the first, second and third place with 44, 42 and 40 points. To sum up, in Finland and the Baltics, power-distance does not matter much. The communication is direct and participative. Besides, the four countries are individualist societies, especially Latvian would show the clearest trait. Which means citizens are expected to look after themselves and immediate families only. Moreover, in these countries, management remains individual management. With low masculinity score, Finland and the Baltic region is quite feminine culture, which is similar to the earlier analysis on the Nordic's dimensions. These societies are motivated by the thought of people enjoying the work's result more than being stand out. Out of the four, Finnish turns out to be the least likely to avoid uncertainty. However, the others stay close to Finns on the chart, it means that these societies' people have an inner demand for punctuality and productivity at work. Security is also valued highly. It can be seen also that compared to the Baltics, Finland has the lowest score in long-term orientation, therefore, in this dimension, the Baltic regional culture believes more in the idea that truth relies on situation, context and time. Furthermore, the citizens of Baltics exhibit the ability to adapt traditions easily to changed conditions. Lastly, the Baltic countries are restrained in nature. The culture does not emphasize much on leisure time.

### 3.2.2 Cultural differences conclusion

SHIFT should pay more attention to power-distance index when communicating with Baltic customers and be prepared for a slightly different communication style. It is important to be less direct and adapt to the higher hierarchy trait. Besides, because of the high power-distance index, Baltic citizens expect the other to be skeptical when it comes to higher level manager. In addition, Latvia is the most individualism out of the three Baltic countries, therefore, SHIFT should keep in mind that these people appreciate to stand out by individual success. Also, Baltic region does not emphasize much on leisure. This does not mean that the special laid-back atmosphere at SHIFT will not attract them, but when it comes to Baltic audiences, it is better to persuade them with numbers and value data. Based on the theoretical framework, this is the rational customer type and prefer informational approach.

As for Nordic customers, this group of people highly emphasize the importance of fun in life. Therefore, Nordic customers are more likely to receive information about experience at SHIFT (the atmosphere, the space, the program and entertainment show etc.). The best approach method to this group is balanced mix because they made purchase decision irrationally (based on emotion) but still focus on the productivity of work. Finland is the highest power-distance index out of all Nordic countries mentioned in the analysis above. Which means that SHIFT must let down the hierarchy and be direct when communicating with this customer segmentation. Moreover, all Nordic countries are low in masculinity index, hence, they tend to not react positively to content focus on individual trait.

There is an irrefutable fact that the Swedish speaking Finns were not separately studied in the theory of Hofstede. That is to say Hofstede's six-dimension model should not be applied as a rigidity standard but adapted flexibly to specific case. However, it can be argued that culture generating itself (Godin, 2018). To be more precise, when parents are nurtured in a certain culture environment, the cultural trait would usually pass through the next generation. As a result, the issue of bilingual may ease Finns who speak Swedish to communicate and approach closely to Sweden cultures, but their core culture would still exhibit most Finnish traits.

### 3.3 SHIFT 2019 marketing situation considerations and analysis

"It's easier to make products and services for the customers you seek to serve than it is to find the customers for your products and services" (Seth Godin 2018, 6)

The first question comes to SHIFT Event Oy when attempting to enter the new market of Nordic and Baltic is not where to meet them and persuade them to turn their interest into ticket buy but how to create the solution for them to solve their problem. This leads to SHIFT studying the event from the inside and detecting how it can be changed for a broader market.

This chapter of thesis will combine analysis on collected data, survey answers and interviews, with the acknowledged theories from the precedent chapter. At each small section, the researcher will conclude with change considerations and suggested strategies for SHIFT Business Festival.

### **3.3.1 Website analysis**

The analysis was conducted on web data from August 1, 2020 to December 12, 2020. The analytic was processed based on Google Analytic tool for SHIFT Business Festival website. It should be noticed that SHIFT owns only one main website. There was 86,6% of the visitors to the website are new and 13,4% is the returned guest. Averagely, people spend around 2 minutes on the website. In terms of visitor origins, there is a promised number of Swedes and Estonians interested in SHIFT's content. Most traffic to SHIFT's website was directed from Google searching system. From the observation, from Google, most of the sessions continued with the program page, however, this is where people dropped out from the website most of the time. There were only 37,6% sessions bounced to the next page, leaving behind 62,4% people who existed from the website. Besides, there were only 8 sessions which went through this part and ended at the ticket page. Most of the traffic from this path ended again at the program.

The second most common path to go on the website after entering from Google and homepage was "What is SHIFT Business Festival" page. The click-through session from this page is higher than the dropped one. From this page, there were around 7 sessions that ended up at the ticket page.

The most sessions going through Google/home page then ended at ticket was ticket page. Which means people went straight from Google, to homepage, then was drawn to ticket page, after some more exploration through other sections of the web, it ended at ticket page. This could be considered a positive sign for SHIFT to count on. However, it is worth noting that in this behavior flow, people also dropped from the website mostly at the program page.

In conclusion, SHIFT Business Festival is required to investigate the program page and improve its quality in order to cut down the amount of dropped sessions at this page. Nonetheless, SHIFT has a strong homepage navigation and experience due to the fact that the call-to-action and sales campaign was visible enough that people got drawn to the section right after entering the website.

### 3.3.2 Social media analysis

Because social media marketing can be either opportunities or threats to a business, it is important to learn from the current social media situation of SHIFT in order to furtherly develop a marketing communication strategy. This part of the thesis will go on analyzing the following platforms: Instagram, Facebook.

Data collected from Instagram and Facebook was studied through the time the researcher took part in the Marketing and Communication team at SHIFT Business Festival. The data will be presented by percentage in order to secure the SHIFT's information. The following table (Table 6) concludes the observation of the researcher on both Facebook and Instagram.

		<b>Conclusions</b>	
		<b>Instagram</b>	<b>Facebook</b>
<b>Categories</b>	<b>Origins</b>	Estonia, Sweden (same with data observed from website)	Sweden, Estonia, Latvia
	<b>Gender</b>	57% Women and 43% Men	51% Women, 47% Men
	<b>Age</b>	At the highest is people aged from 25 to 34 years old (43%), followed by 35-44 age group (35%) and at the third is 55-64 age group (12%)	No data
	<b>Active hours</b>	Most active hours are from 12p.m to 9p.m	Same as Instagram

Table 7 Facebook and Instagram performance analytic

From this analysis, there are a few points that SHIFT should pay attention to:

- The data about the Nordic/Baltic countries where SHIFT's social media audience came from overlaps with what the website analysis has shown earlier. It means SHIFT already attracted the attention from Estonian, Swede, and Latvian audiences. Therefore, it should be better for the company to take advantage of this and adapt the online content to be more appropriate and deliver more value to these group of audiences. Online simple survey through Instagram stories or Facebook polls tool are popular in the marketing industry lately as a simple way to collect user's data as well as increase the interactions between seller and buyer. SHIFT could use this method to study further the new audience group.
- Since SHIFT's online audiences are mainly from the age group of people from 25 to 34 years old and have significantly less young audience from above 25 years old, SHIFT should use compatible content to this stronger crowd age group and limit to use special terms which is hard to understand in posts.
- Moreover, based the active hours of audiences, it can be seen that the more in-time the company post to these hours, the better engagement will be.

### **3.3.3 Sales data analysis**

Sales promotion and personal selling may be old marketing tactic but still play an important role to any company's marketing performance. As been discussed in the theory part of this thesis, with an appropriate sales promotion and personal selling method, company will be able to satisfy customers better.

Sales statistics were provided by the sales force of SHIFT Business Festival. The detail number will not be listed in this thesis to protect the company's information.

From the sales statistics of the 2018 festival, SHIFT did attract the Nordic and Baltic market. To be more specific, foreign attendees at SHIFT 2018 were from Sweden, Denmark, Latvia and Estonia. There was a development in the number of foreign participants at SHIFT 2019, accounting for 8,29% of the total ticket sales.

The number shows the potential to grow intentionally, especially to Sweden, Denmark, Latvia and Estonia of SHIFT Business Festival.

### 3.3.4 Interviews and feedbacks conclusions

To begin with, according Anja Karppinen – the head of SHIFT Business Festival marketing and communication (October 1, 2019), marketing and communication within the company and its event cannot be separated as individual departments. In addition, marketing communication serves the festival as a useful tool to shape the brand, direct the perception about the brand within the public and reach out for potential partners and attendees. It is worth to keep in mind that SHIFT Business Festival is an international event which has been and still being partly affected by the domestic image, therefore, without the help from marketing and communication team, the event will still survive with a large amount of audiences coming from the Turku region and Finland, however, would probably go deviated from the total goal and international image. Besides, the marketing and communication of SHIFT Business Festival agreed that the festival is focusing more on the quality than event size, which is also the main goal that the company would like to maintain for now in both domestic and oversea markets. It is believed that once the reputation of the festival blooms in the international market, there will be more opportunities for SHIFT Business Festival to improve the quality in program content and partnership. Concerning the performance of the marketing and communication team in 2019, the manager highly praised the ticket campaigns before in the early of 2019. Hence, sales promotion was not only boosting the real time sales but also functioned as a supporting base for strengthening the website performance. To be specific, SHIFT has held a concern to the visit traffic on the website, which has been partly solved with the help of sales promotion. Nonetheless, SHIFT Business Festival believed that there are more rooms to innovate this side of the brand. The question that needed to be answered is how to increase the quality of the website so that there is a higher number of visitors and stronger engagements with audiences. Following that there was another issue noticed within the event team performance that most of SHIFT's campaigns are targeting to support sales. This raises up needs for a well-structured marketing communication strategy with a balance combination between engaging customers messages and call-to-action (CTA) programs. The manager of SHIFT Business Festival marketing and communication team added that especially when it comes to international marketing, it is worth noticing that the new market will rarely react to such pricing campaigns due to the lack of understanding about the event. In line with this, there is a crucial need to align marketing and communication to sales at SHIFT Business Festival. The two departments are recognizably to be tightened together. In order to take advantage of this close relationship between salesperson and marketers, there should be a mutual material/pitch/introduction about the SHIFT Business Festival that every member within the two departments should be able to

present at any time. Regarding to observed chances and risk for SHIFT Business Festival in 2019 and the near future, Ms. Karppinen emphasized that a new event will be considered as new for at least the first three year, this is the time for the festival presents and later the customers will decide whether they will come back or not. Therefore, it is important to deliver the best service, superior content and program to the customers. Especially, rather than focusing on the visual or festival atmosphere, the team needs to pay more attention to deliver the message of SHIFT being a useful platform, which leaves a positive impact and real advantages to industries and businesses. In comparison, SHIFT Business Festival is one of the biggest and original business-tech festivals in the Nordic. Another opportunity for SHIFT Festival to grow based on the well feedback from existing attendees and partners. Most of the feedback mentioned the unique program, spacious and laid-back venue to networking of SHIFT Business Festival (Personal interview with attendees at the festival, August 28, 2019). At last, Mrs. Karppinen emphasized the role of media and journalists from the point of view as the head of marketing communication (Anja Karppinen, November 1, 2019).

The following list will note down some main issues as a conclusion for the interview and the collected feedbacks, as well as a key development for the later marketing communications strategy:

- SHIFT Business Festival’s goal: to emphasize the international element of the festival and expand to foreign market through constructed marketing communication campaign.
- SHIFT’s differentiation: spacious venue, festival original feeling, amusing atmosphere.
- SHIFT’s current problems: Communication between sales and marketing communication department, attracting more journalist and media attention, website traffic improvement, and lack of pure communication campaign.
- SHIFT’s strengths: sales promotion and personal selling.

### **3.3.5 Competitor analysis**

In theoretical framework of this thesis, competitor analysis has been claimed as one of the most useful for marketer to develop a marketing communication strategy. Therefore, in this section, the researcher chooses to learn from one of the most popular business events in the region and benchmark to support the later SHIFT’s strategy.



In terms of SHIFT Business Festival competition, it should be highlighted that the festival does not have a direct competitor due to the unique idea and theme. When SHIFT was first introduced to the public, there were many controversial opinions raised upon the idea of SHIFT Business Festival. In five operating years, it turns out to be the outstanding advantages of SHIFT Business Festival. With the SHIFT Business Festival, future tomorrow is built today and in order to make it happen, people need to be active. The festival does not stop at only business, only technology but was born to bring AI, high-tech and industry developers together to shape and benefit the future.

As for in-direct competitor, SLUSH – a worldwide startup event located in Helsinki, is an example of a successful event which is worth learning from. As it has been cleared from the name, SLUSH's focus is on startups and serves to connect startups with investors, mentors, partners, etc. all over the world. The event has great advantage in the scale since it is held in the most populated city of Helsinki as well as other countries (China, USA and Japan). Besides, as a volunteer-driven event, SLUSH knows how to engage with the power of this force. Volunteers nurtured from SLUSH are the “word-of-mouth” marketers. The event was not only making sure every volunteer was aware of the tasks by providing pre-boarding courses, but also getting them to feel as the most important part of the event with a well-organized orientation day. Nonetheless, SLUSH puts much effort in pre-events, a wide range of partnership and co-operated work. Regarding social media and website, the organizer ensures that the brand is available on different channels but majorly attempts to stand out with high quality website experience.

In conclusion, although SHIFT does not have a direct competitor in the industry due to its operation method, goal and theme (as most of the answers for survey and interview with the researcher have stated), it is necessary for SHIFT learn from some benchmark. The most noticeable value from SLUSH is a website which create nice and smooth experience to customers. The event does not provide customers blast of posts and information on social media everyday but maintain in an appropriate pace and at the same time integrate all valuable information to the website so that customers know one solid source to count on whenever they have questions. SHIFT, in fact, can learn from this tactic and designed purpose for each information channel the company owns in order to have a more logical way to communicate with audiences. Besides, to increase the website function as a whole information gate is another issue that SHIFT should consider carefully in the marketing communication strategy.

Especially the with a business festival as SHIFT, website is one of the heaviest parts to do since the whole event information, program will be later publishing here.

### 3.3.6 Survey report

In order to support the reliability of this thesis. A survey has been sent to foreign companies' representatives in the area of Nordics and Baltics. The contact list was provided by the head of Sales at SHIFT Business Festival, as well as some collected email addresses that the researcher gains through research and internship time at the event. The inquiry was made in February 2019 and was sent via email to a total of 100 contacts (although the survey was asked to be speeded if possible, to the subordinate/partner by the direct receiver). The email included introduction to the subject, a short pitch about SHIFT Business Festival and a hyperlink to the electrical form. The form was made with an online service and under the advice of Mrs. Sini Toivonen (who was the head of Sales and Marketing at SHIFT Business Festival at the time the survey was designed). There were 18 questions (including optional questions which may direct the next question differently and end the survey sooner) in English. The researcher chooses English as the language for the survey due to the brand's goal (to be perceived as an international festival) and the convenience in communication with answers from both Nordic and Baltic regions. The first part includes questions related general information (name, job title, working industry and years of experience in the industry). The second part aims to study the customers' behavior when it comes to business events. The third part studies the interest, preference of answerers towards SHIFT Business Festival in particular, and other business events, in general. Main objective of this survey was to find out SHIFT Business Festival's position in the Nordic and Baltic market and possible changes to the event that can be done to attract new customers from outside of Finland.

There were 20 answers received (already excluded the unqualified answers). Since the number of answers is not compatible to the size of the whole targeted market. The researcher excluded the optional questions and analyzed only open questions which people use to express freely the idea about a promising event and content.

The result of the survey shows that 60% of the answerers prefer going to local events than international ones. This is consequences from the inconvenience of travelling across the nations, expensive cost and the relevance in the topic and network of domestic events.

Besides, 10% of the answerers also stated that it depends on the purpose. The others were willing to go outside of the country for business events due to the needs for freshness in ideas and event concept. When being asked for the other business event the answerers went to, 50% shows that they were going to local meet ups, and domestic fairs. The others listed out some event names: FIN-RUS Partneriat, SLUSH and Artic15. 80% of the answerers knew about SHIFT Business Festival through social media. The next 10% only acknowledged the SHIFT through the survey. There are 5% of answers that show that answers were past attendees of the event and the last 5% have read through SHIFT's website. In terms of attending motivation, only two answers were given, one stated that there are various options of events to choose so that the answerer chooses to spend time wisely to the most related event. The other was not persuaded and have not had enough information about the event to make the decision. Lastly, answering the question of content and benefit in a business event that might attract the answers, there were a few options: potential partners, new technology, new acquaintances, networking, smart cities and smart mobility topic.

The survey's result clears up the fact that there was not enough information about SHIFT Business Festival available in the new market. Moreover, social media was the most effective tool to deliver the brand's image.

### **3.3.7 Potential target audiences**

Every marketing communication starts with a precise goal and segmented audiences. After studying the targeted countries, company's current situation, at this part of the thesis, the researcher will come to conclude the potential customer group that SHIFT should firstly aim to. With such a large market like Nordic and Baltic region, it is always good to have sub-project to the great marketing communication plan, and this target audience listed here is the near goal for that sub-project.

SHIFT Business Festival, in regard to entering the international market of Baltic and Nordic region should start targeting first Sweden, Estonia and Latvia. Firstly, it is because of the already existing interest from these nations' citizens to the SHIFT. Secondly, the three countries have always been close to Finland in terms of geography, economy and partnership. As has been discussed from the research environment section, while Sweden shares the most similarities with Finland in culture, business style and economic growth, Estonia is opened to

the world to be stronger and stronger in economy and technology. In the most developed period of Finland, there was the success of Nokia, no longer after, Skype was also created in Estonia. As for Latvia, with the benefit from the railway project in 2026, letting Latvian closer to Finns more than ever, as well as the advantages from Baltic Sea Region, Latvians are very potential to be part of SHIFT Business Festival network.

Furthermore, the festival should aim to meet more people from these new markets through the past attendees/partners. Besides, based on the interview with the SHIFT's head of marketing and communication, more Latvian, Sweden and Estonian media and journalists should be invited to attend the festival.

In the theory part of this thesis, it has been mentioned that when the company has got segmentation for its customers, the next step is to build buyer persona. The following content includes a suggested buyer persona format for SHIFT Business Festival without any detail information to protect the company know-how:

#### Buyer Persona for Executive Pass:

- Age:
- Level: People who manage the organization, their role varies depending the type of organization.
- Sector:
- In industry differences:
- In role differences:
- Purpose: Receiving truly credible information, getting real answers to their business problems and absolutely avoiding excuse for a sales pitch. Consider presenting exclusive survey findings, industry data, case studies or the opportunity to debate a pressing industry issue with others who can really add value to the conversation.
- Benefits for startups:
- Where you find us: Technology and science fair; Direct contacts (emails, phone number, f2f meeting) ...

### 3.3.8 SWOT

As has been stated from the theoretical framework of this thesis, SWOT analysis is an important tool for companies to study the current situation of the company as well as identify risks in the future market which may affect to the implementation of the new marketing communication strategy. In this part of the thesis, the researcher will gather information from the earlier analysis as well as environment research in order to create a SWOT analysis for SHIFT. With which, the company can later build a marketing communication strategy.

<p><b>Strengths:</b>  Clear target group  Attracting location  Event unique atmosphere and operation  Voluntary work community provides vast amount of jobs for unemployment youth from domestic and international labor market  Wide range of channels</p>	<p><b>Weakness:</b>  Did not have a clear strategy for international market  Marketing and sales team works closely but lack of common material and understandings  Distances between targeted country and where SHIFT located</p>
<p><b>Opportunities:</b>  Theme and program aligned related to the developing industry in the region  Many young talents in the market are unemployed and looking for place like SHIFT  Already has a number of attendees coming from Baltic and Nordic countries and this number has been increased over each year  Open trade and upcoming development project in the area will bring SHIFT closer to targeted countries</p>	<p><b>Threats:</b>  Cultural differences may bring up conflict while marketing online  Pressure from the domestic event at Baltic and Nordic regions</p>

Table 8 SHIFT's SWOT

## 4 CONCLUSION

In this part of the thesis, the researcher meets the other objective of the thesis which is designing an example marketing communication strategy for SHIFT Business Festival based on the learned theories from theoretical framework and different conclusions from the empirical chapter. The later part of this chapter will revisit the entire thesis and give evaluation to the usefulness of the thesis's outcomes. Additionally, the validity and reliability of this thesis will also be reviewed. The researcher will also explain how she how she has improved throughout the writing process.

To begin with, SHIFT Business Festival has high potential in the Nordic and Baltic market, especially Sweden, Latvia and Estonia. The potential is both active and re-active.

<b>Proactive motivations</b>	<b>Reactive motivations</b>
Strengths in program building	Relationships with detination markets
Festival atmosphere	Cultures similarities
Wide channel	Growing general economy
Already existing international customers from the past market	

Table 9 Mejur motivations for SHIFT to grow internationally

For the active or internal potential, the company has strengths in program building, festival atmosphere, wide channel, and already existing international customers from the past market. As for reactive motivation, the relationships and cultures similarities as well as general economy between Nordic and Baltic countries has created a strong environment for SHIFT to moving forward. The next step for SHIFT is to only catch the chances and build an effective marketing communication strategy.

### 4.1 Example marketing communication strategy and recommendations

**Target audience:** The perfect target for social media marketing are people aged from 25 to 60 years old from Latvia, Sweden, Estonia. Besides based on the interview and survey conclusion, SHIFT should aim to meet more media and journalist from these three countries.

**Goal:** As has been discussed from the theory part, a goal for marketing communication strategy should be specific and based on SMART model. Therefore, the goal for SHIFT should

looking like this: To publicize SHIFT's brand to the aimed audience and improve the company's operation/product to adapt with new market's behavior but at the same time, maintain stable within domestic field by the end of 2021. To be more specific, the goal has *specifically (S)* points out the business plan for developing current work and adapt with new customer's demand. Besides, this goal is *relevant (R)* to the general goal of SHIFT, which is to grow internationally and be seen as an international brand. Consequently, the goal is *in time (T)* for the internal plan of SHIFT. Moreover, as has been mentioned in the research environment section, the business event industry as well as Nordic and Baltic regions are showing positive signs for a business-tech festival like SHIFT to grow beyond the national border. Hence, this goal of SHIFT should be done by the end of 2021, before the general industry changes.

Since marketing communication includes several channels and the goal for marketing communication strategy should be *measurable (M) and achievable (A)*. There should be small goal for each of that department. The goal for sales could be doubled the international sales in the next event and for social media objectives, it could be increasing the Sweden, Latvian, Estonian audiences to top 3 after 3 months implementing plan. However, it should be kept in mind that SHIFT is taking the initial serious step to the new market, it requires the company to change and adapt several sides, therefore, the influence will not be significant be immediately. The advice is to divide the general project to several sub-project and keep track on the influence of each small project in order to timely change the method.

**Action plan: (The action plan should be built to meet all 7Ps, which means each action should all points out what are the Ps that is applied to)**

- Website: Improve the program page structure to decrease the dropout percentage from the website; increase the use of SEO in blog posts; ensure the appearance of internal link (related posts section) is visible from the webpage, it is also suggested that moving the related post bar to the side of the page may increase the bounced rate and time visitor spending on website; include blog post topics relevant to the targeted audience or updated with the newest information in the market; make sure the quality of uploaded photo is good.
- Due to the statistics from section 2.7.4, there are three most engage digital platform in the Nordics: Email, Facebook and YouTube. Thus, besides investing in website development, SHIFT Business Festival should pay more attention to Facebook and Email marketing.

- Instagram: Pay attention to hashtag; avoid the banned hashtag from Instagram post; repost or edited post will lost all the existing engagement, therefore, content should be checked before posting; use multiple image slide to improve the engagement; set the location whenever possible, especially when there is a population destination nearby; make sure the content language is suitable for the age group.
- Pay attention to cultural differences whenever email or create content for targeted audiences. It will be the best to consider Finland and Sweden as one group (group 1) while the other two countries formed another segmentation (group 2). Group 2 is long-term orientation and restraint cultures while group 1 is not.
- Use balanced mix method to communicate with targeted customers. Which means that the company should combine both emotional and informational elements in post.
- Even though video and moving pictures are expensive, it is worth the investment. Furthermore, to be one of the few taking advantages from this platform will easily improve the engagement for SHIFT. Only to remember that on YouTube, too many categories is the easiest way to fail the campaign. Devoting to one category on YouTube is better. For example: weekly podcast or monthly interviewing etc. Besides, the SHIFT should build videos around a single keyword; promote YouTube channels on other platforms; design one-way thumbnails for each series.
- Internationalize program and include the topic which the new market is willing to know.
- Create a short video/PowerPoint for sales and marketing can use anytime to introduce the SHIFT Business Festival.
- Educate both sales and marketing team to enhance the company's vision.
- Sending invitations to media at targeted countries much earlier than the festival; including accommodation, flight, other kinds of instruction in the invitation.
- Business event sector is struggling because of COVID-19 (2020) but this situation pushes people to a realization that technology could be the key for the future and to stay connected to the world is crucially important. As one of the pioneers in shifting to hybrid/virtual events, SHIFT has a high chance to use this content to share and create discussion.
- Remains transparency and agile to the customers by be committed to the work on social media. Be prepare to response quickly to customer's questions and keep the



posting frequency at a certain amount. Avoid posting too much post in a week or create a high-density posting situation.

- After targeting enough media, the next step is to boost up the brand engagement by attending more Nordic and Baltic networking events. Offline marketing may be old, but it has been confirmed to be effective, especially to business like SHIFT. Concerning the fact that SHIFT has no physical presence (which is one of the /Ps) in the targeted countries, the company must find another way to be available at the market. The most benefited way is offline marketing through sales and event marketing. The researcher did not include advertising in here because this method is cost consuming. The company can apply this tactic later when their stand in the new market has been built strong enough. The advertising type that should be applied are: Informative and persuasive.
- Since SHIFT is already succeed with its sales promotion, it is better to make these promotions to the new market after they have acknowledged about SHIFT.
- It is known that information is also a kind of exchange in the market, while sellers find out and get information from customers, customers also require a similar amount of information from the producer. In addition, nowadays, more and more people are asking for the transparent from the dealer. Therefore, the next idea in SHIFT's marketing communication strategy is to use media room and other sites to provide free informational value to customers. A fairly popular way today is to use a brochure or magazine format. These can serve as the company's business card, blog, or catalog but are broader in size and provide more useful information for customers. This could be a market situation report prepared by SHIFT itself or a third party and exported to customers as a pdf file. To get this necessary information every month, customers will have to register an email to SHIFT's channel.

The action plan for SHIFT Business Festival is concluded in the following table.

	<b>Product</b>	<b>Promotion</b>	<b>People</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Physical presence</b>
<b>Product</b>	Sharing hybrid event content and create discussion; internationalize program	Update the newest information			Improve the uploaded photo's quality
<b>Price</b>		Remains sales campaign: sales marketing at other events, trade-fairs			
<b>Place</b>	Increase SEO on blogs	Attending event marketing			Instagram plan
<b>Promotion</b>		Video on YouTube			Free informational value to customers
<b>People</b>			Educate sales and marketing	Remains transparency and agile	
<b>Process</b>		Sending media invitation with detail information		Moving related post bar to side	Improve program page
<b>Physical presence</b>				Use balanced mix in communication	Pay attention to culture differences in content

Table 10 7Ps in action plan

**Measuring and revisiting:** After implementing the plan, it is necessary to use ROI to calculate the strategy effectiveness then schedule another plan based on the success and fail from the previous plan.

ROI is calculated by taking the benefit (or return) of an investment and divided it by the cost of the investment. The result is expressed as a percentage or a ratio.

Not to mention, social media and website performance should be measured in another way. The result should be reflecting on the previous situation analysis and see if the past problems has gone or not. For instance, in this situation of SHIFT, website plan is succeeded when the amount of people dropping out from the program page has been decreased and there are more customers from the targeted countries visit the website. Besides, if the amount of people subscribed to the web increased, this is also a sign that the plan has gone right way.

**Recommendation:** The marketing communication strategy should only be an example for the commissioner to modify and adapt to the situation in the future.

## 4.2 Usefulness

This thesis is aimed to construct a description on how to analyze information, collect research and predict the obstacles in order to form an effective marketing communication strategy rather than just creating a solid strategy for a business festival in Finland that they can only use once. The research method of this thesis is observations, qualitative and quantitative. The theory's base for this written work relies on marketing communication and internationalization studies.

After the writing process, the researcher realized the complexity in marketing and communication. As for marketing, this business function has been developing through a long history, under several impacts and general change from human innovation. And it will constantly be moving forward over time. At this day in age, marketing is not just selling or advertising. Instead, this function in business decides customer's perception and relationship with the brand. While customer study was built on three basic elements: wants, needs and demands, the first thing to do in marketing is studying these components in order to understand customers and put them at the center of the business. To satisfy customers means to deliver superior value through offerings. It is also important to remember that many marketers disappointed the market by being tricked with marketing myopia. Businesses are customer-driven and in order to stand out in the crowded market, the business owners must keep maintaining a stable seller-buyer relationship and improving all aspects of an offering based on one customer's studies. This is the reason why marketing and marketing communication strategies are important. This statement is supported through the research on SHIFT Business Festival marketing situation both in Finland and in the international market. The company experiences several good relationships with international customers wherever it is online or

offline but have not been really understanding how to increase this number of international interactions. Furthermore, when the company has recognized expanding to the international market is the next goal to approach, the need for a marketing communication strategy is, again, emphasized. Internationalization caused many confusions, even from its definitions. It is observed that the term frequently gets misunderstood with some other terms. For most of the time, to be international is a tricky question because each country has its own cultures and cultures vary all over the world. Citizens of Finland in general, and people of SHIFT Business Festival have a unique culture also. The question here is how to avoid unexpected risk caused by these differences in culture. By studying several international marketing concepts, the researcher went deeper to explore Hofstede's dimensions, which is claimed to be the best tool for customer's behavior studying.

All in all, the researcher's work including the most wanted objective required from the commissioner, which is an example marketing communication strategy, an analysis on the potential segmentation in the international market as well as an overall study on marketing and communication to clear out all confusions and get the rightest look on the matter.

### **4.3 Reliability**

The thesis was conducted based on the researcher's study on various secondary data, her own experience gained through working time with the commissioner. The researcher ensured the reliability of the thesis through selecting trustworthy sources of secondary data based on year of publication, the clarity in topic and examination around the data. Besides, the researcher collected many sources of information to reflect and support one statement/concept/definition.

Since the thesis is a commissioned project between the researcher and SHIFT Business Festival, the researcher focused on studying the company's situation and data as another source of information. In fact, this could be the most realistic and closest information source to the case of SHIFT Business Festival. The researcher has not met any difficulties during the analyzing process for this source of information based on the grant from the commissioner that allowed the researcher to access and observe different channels. The interview with the commissioner's head of marketing and communication at were conducted without obstructions thanks to the support of the interviewee. The information concluded from this interview was

again confirmed by other interviews processed with attendees at SHIFT 2019. There was also a survey analysis done during the writing process. Although the researcher did not meet the goal for the number of answers from the survey. The researcher chose to increase its quality by sending it to further contacts, eliminate unqualified questions and support the uncovered part of the survey by other secondary data sources and analysis.

#### **4.4 Validity**

As mentioned earlier, there will be some obstacles during the writing process. Since SHIFT Business Festival is a quite unique event in the region, and there are no direct reports to this kind of industry, therefore, the research is limited to some certain field. Besides, SHIFT Business Festival is still developing and changing day by day, these changes may also influence the collected data in this thesis. Therefore, there are some doubts about the validity of this research:

- How valid is this study until the next SHIFT Business Festival?
- Is the study still compatible when applied in the change of the new market?

To answer these questions, the researcher has devoted more effort in the theoretical framework part of this thesis to point out the core value of marketing, communication and a strategy as well as the most precise way to carry out an effective marketing communication strategy. Example marketing communication strategy is only one of the thesis's main objectives. The noteworthy points of this study is for the commissioner to see marketing communications at its real value and be aware of the potential existing in the new market, in order to be active on time and use the take advantages that they are having at the moment. Based on the provided method in analytics and marketing communication theory the researcher has included in the research, the commissioner can easily modify and adapt to the future action.

#### **4.5 Self-evaluation**

While working and carrying out the thesis, I have learnt several new skills. First and for most, it is the skill to collect and filter information source, both online and offline, to support the topic of the thesis. By performing intensive reading from various source, I have increased the ability

to self-study and be discipline. The thesis writing process also required a lot explanation skill and combine information in the most logical way to understand. In short, I have known how to create a research document. After carrying out this thesis result, I believe that I have potential to delve deep into the area of business event marketing. Besides, the thesis working course brings me the skill to perform a well connection with the commissioner and process interviews without any obstacles. Over the writing time, I have been encouraged and motivated to develop interpersonal skills, including communicating, presenting, which is useful for the later career development. Due to the massive workload that has to be carried out, I was able to learn time-management as well as result orientation. Lastly, what I have considered the biggest benefit from the researching course is the chance to enhance the knowledge in marketing communication and business administration.

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1. Survey questions

Appendix 2. PISA (reading)

Appendix 3. PISA (Mathematics)

Appendix 4. PISA (science)

Appendix 4. Enterprise birth-rate, 2017

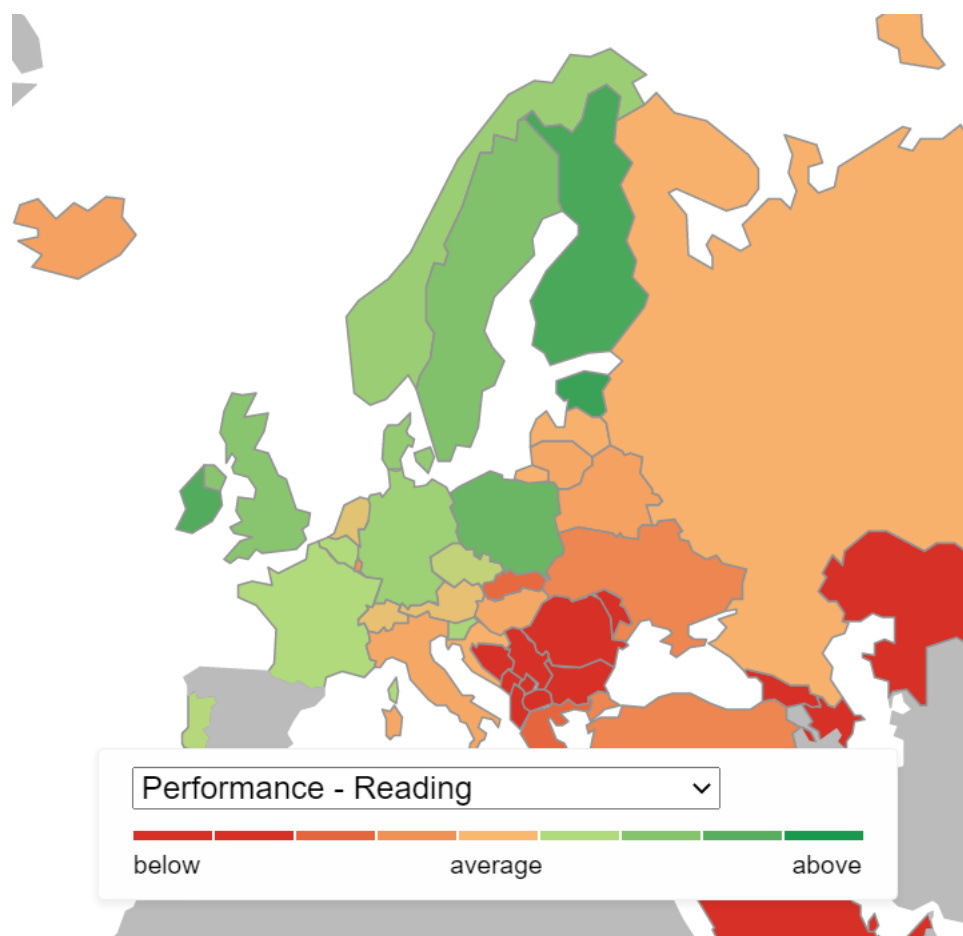
Appendix 4. Human resources in science and technology, 2018

## Appendix 1. Survey questions

The survey questions for this thesis are listed below:

1. Please provide your full name.
2. What is your organizations?
3. What is your job title?
4. What is your industry? (Optional choice: Mobile, Telecom, Wearable; Health/Biotech, Fintech, other...)
5. You choose "other", please write specific bellow
6. What is your experience in this industry? (Optional choice: fewer than 5 years, more than 5 years, minimal experience, but team is full of experts, other)
7. You choose "other", please write specific bellow
8. Have you ever attended a business event in Finland before?
9. What is the name of that business event in Finland?
10. Have you ever heard about SHIFT before? (Yes/No question)
11. If yes, how did you hear about SHIFT?
12. What are you looking for most at a business festival?
13. What topic should the event cover next to attract you?
14. How likely are you to attend this festival?
15. If you don't want to attend this event, please explain.
16. If you want to receive more information, how would you like us to contact you?
17. Please include a phone number and email address.
18. End survey: Thank you!

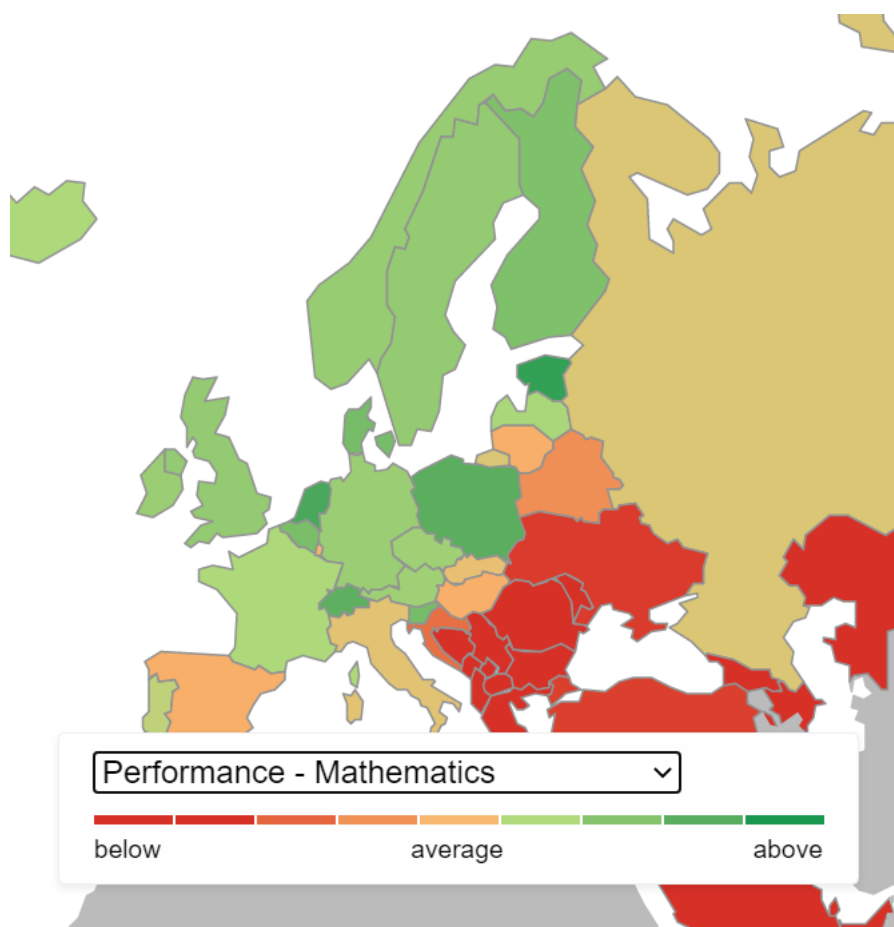
## Appendix 2. PISA (reading)



Comparison in PISA (reading) score between Nordic countries

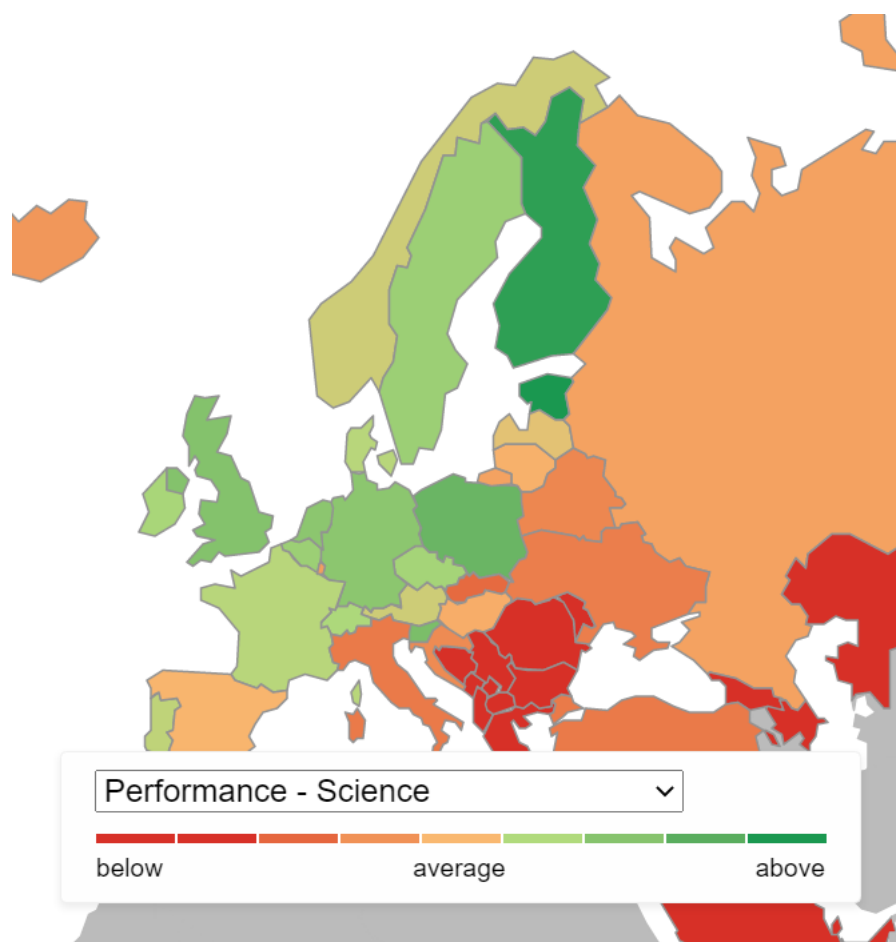


### Appendix 3. PISA (mathematics)



Comparison in PISA (Mathematics) score between Nordic countries

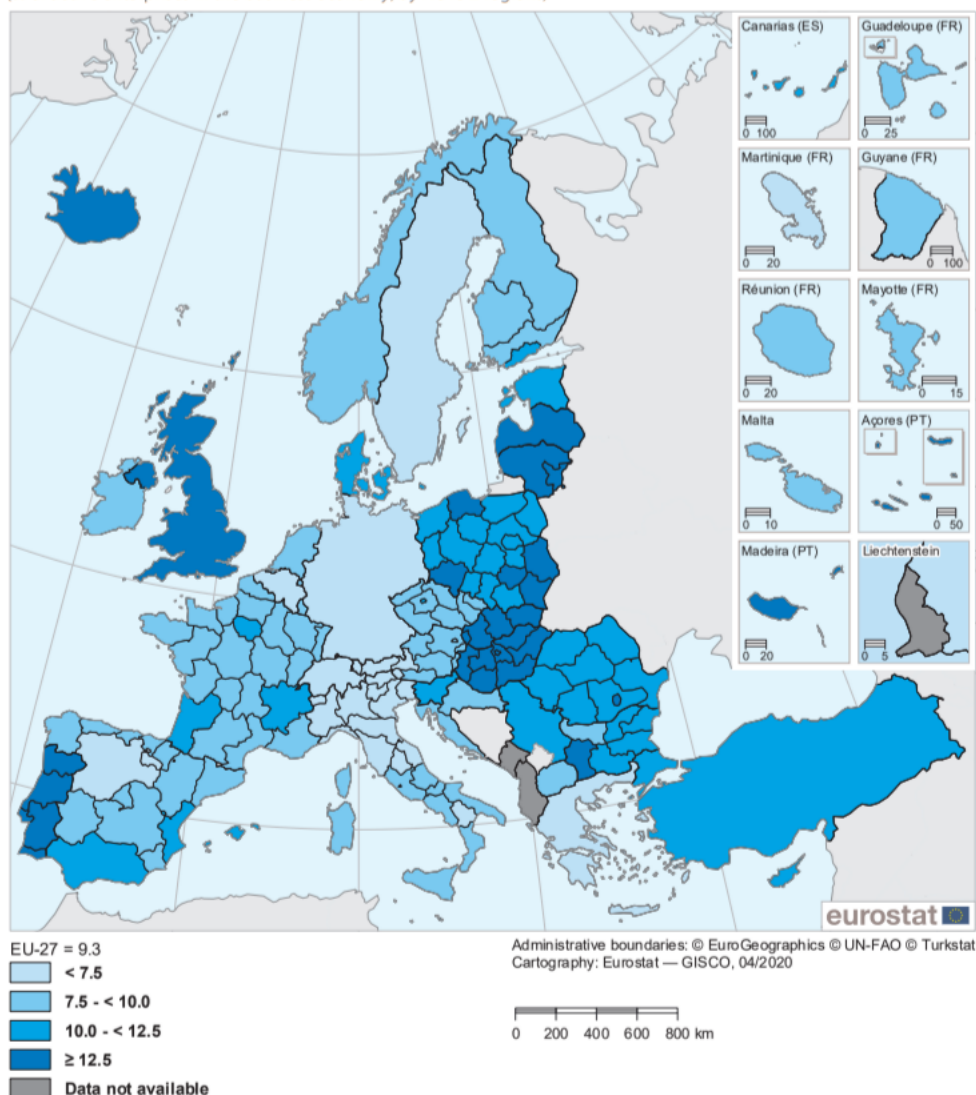
## Appendix 4. PISA (science)



Comparison in PISA (science) score between Nordic countries

## Appendix 5. Enterprise birthrate, 2017

**Map 7.1: Enterprise birth rate, 2017**  
(% of active enterprises in the business economy, by NUTS 2 regions)



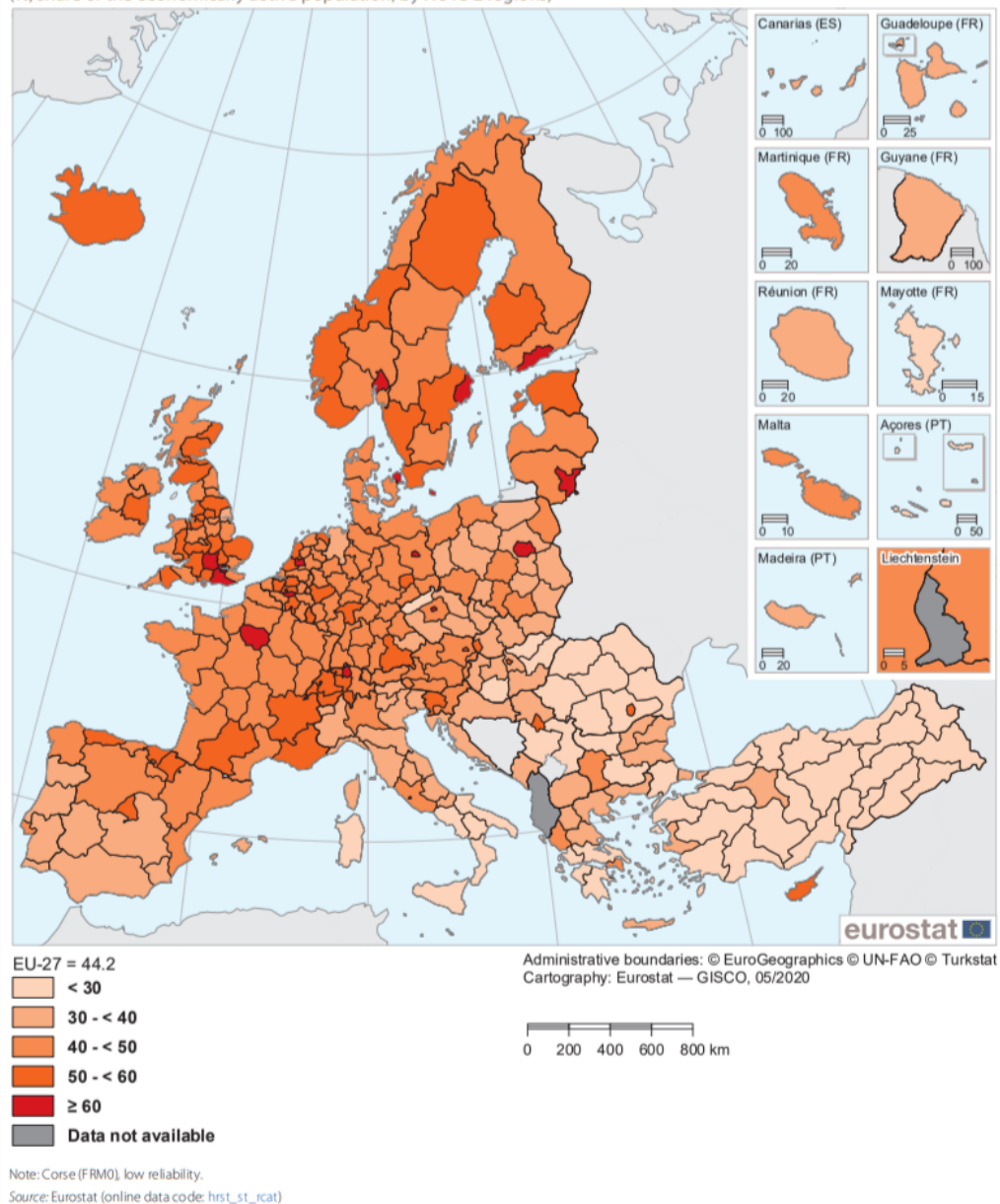
Note: the business economy is defined as NACE Sections B to S excluding the activities of holding companies (NACE Group 64.2). EU-27: Sweden and Iceland: NACE Sections B to N excluding the activities of holding companies (NACE Group 64.2). Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Greece, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Norway, Switzerland, Serbia and Turkey: national data. Ireland: estimate. Greece, Austria and Serbia: provisional. Cyprus: 2016. Turkey: 2015.  
Source: Eurostat (online data codes: bd\_size\_r3 and bd\_9bd\_sz\_d\_r2)

Enterprise birth rate (Eurostat, 2017)

## Appendix 6. Human resources in science and technology, 2018

**Map 8.3:** Human resources in science and technology, 2018

(%, share of the economically active population, by NUTS 2 regions)



Labors in science and technology (Eurostat, 2018)