

Saimaa University of Applied Sciences  
Faculty of Business Administration, Lappeenranta  
Degree Programme in International Business

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# **Marketing Communication Strategy for International Children's Club in Lappeenranta**

Thesis 2013

## **Abstract**

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Marketing Communication Strategy for International Children's Club in Lappeenranta, 58 pages, 1 appendix

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Degree Programme in International Business

Bachelor's Thesis 2013

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This bachelor's thesis was created for the purpose of giving a new company, Satumainen Lapsuus Oy a better understanding of entering the market with their new service idea. The main goal was to find out how to create the best marketing communications strategy for building a trusted brand name.

This thesis used both qualitative research and quantitative research. The interviews are based on a questionnaire official statistics and SWOT analysis which are the major information sources of the empirical data for the research. The theoretical framework in this thesis aims to study the main elements of the marketing communications strategy.

This research can be used by Satumainen Lapsuus Oy to gain an understanding of the future potential customers and their needs, competing service, SWOT, and more. The outcomes show a marketing channel which seems to be more effective as a company's main marketing strategy tool. The results of this project can be further used by the company to make a marketing communication plan.

Keywords: marketing communication strategy, service marketing, children's club.

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# 1 Introduction

The first subchapter content is background of objectives and delimitations of this thesis work.

## 1.1 Background of the study

During the last few years the author has been participating as a teacher in the Lappeenranta City Library program “Fairy Tale in Russian”. This program is aimed at children 3-7 years old from Russian or bilingual families living permanently in Lappeenranta (South Karelia, Finland). The program aims to maintain and further develop the childrens’ Russian language as a mother tongue. Within this period and during an international exchange program at Winthrop University (USA), the author has visited and worked for the International Children Club in one of the Rock Hill (South Carolina, USA) schools as a representative of Russian culture.

Unforgettable feelings and emotions, meeting new people, positive feedback from parents and children inspired the writer to start her own company in the same international field. So, on April 8, 2013 a new company Satumainen Lapsuus Oy (Fairy-tale childhood) was registered in Lappeenranta. Satumainen Lapsuus is an international children club for children from 1 till 9 years old, which provides service of additional education and care.

The main goals of this new business project are:

- to develop and keep the children’s competence in the Russian language, pride of knowledge of the native traditions, games, fairy-tales, and happiness to share the culture
- to make Lappeenranta more attractive for Russian visitors as a child-friendly city
- to give Russian tourists free time to go shopping while providing their children with interesting and useful development classes

- to give local children the unique possibility to enjoy the advantages and benefits of bilingualism, to absorb all the best that various cultures offer
- to give a chance to international and Finnish children to learn how to speak Russian confidently from childhood and make Russian friends
- to prepare children for a life in a multicultural environment and to prepare for future professions
- to test the idea and to create the possibility of its expansion
- to create workplaces in the region
- to provide employment and a worthy financial position to the company staff.

Today the idea of an international childhood, a multicultural life and particularly sharing one's culture with other cultures are becoming more and more popular. A lot of parents try to give their kids a wonderful feeling of life in a boundless environment. The author dares to suggest that internationalization is a pedagogical trend for the near future.

Crowds of tourists travel to Finland and Lappeenranta with their children and there already are many Russian-speaking inhabitants living there with their children.

The Finnish Border Guards statistics show that border crossing is growing rapidly. In 2011, Finland received 7.3 million foreign visitors, which is more than the whole population of Finland. The number of foreign visitors increased by 17 percent (or by one million visitors) from the year 2010. Foreign visitors brought EUR 2.2 billion to Finland, which was approximately EUR 180 million more than in the previous year. This data is derived from the Border Interview Survey by Statistics Finland and Finnish Tourist Board. (Statistics Finland 2012.)

The research of money spent indicates that the average expenditure of foreign travelers was EUR 60 per day. The highest amount of money spent per day

was by visitors living in Russia. The average expenditure of visitors from Russia was EUR 111 per day in 2011. (Statistics Finland 2012.)

Visitors from Russia comprised the largest visitor group. 45% of the visitors, (approximately 3.3 million visitors in total), came from Russia. Compared to the previous year, travel from Russia to Finland increased by 27 % which is the highest growth among the tourist groups.

Visitors from Russia made the highest number of one-day visits to Finland; over two-thirds of them did not stay overnight. In total, visitors from Estonia and Russia spend the highest numbers of nights in Finland. (Statistics Finland 2012.)

At the same time there is no special Russian-language service for preschool age children in Lappeenranta. Local people and tourists visit shopping areas with disobedient children and usually it is very disturbing and tiring for them and for others.

Hopefully, International Children Club can fill this market gap and provide an excellent service for the growing number of customers flow. This research is making an attempt to identify the exact needs of the future clients.

The author supposes in the strategic context of Lappeenranta that the presented business idea has sufficient potential to develop. As tourism from Russia grows both in visitor volume and in euros spent, more services are needed to serve them in order to make them come back or to stay longer. Therefore, it is logical to perceive a broader nationwide potential for a well conceptualized and branded service catered to the specific needs of Russian tourists.

Parallel developments that require notice are relative success stories that have emerged abroad from international tourism industry locations where holiday resorts offer Russian tourists all Russian-speaking staff and services. A trusted brand name with familiar operating language can reduce hesitation to travel, especially with children.

The theoretical background of the study concentrates on official statistics, marketing of service, marketing communication methods and strategy. The empirical study examines the SWOT analysis, communications channels which are preferable for potential customers and target group attitudes, difficulties and needs.

## **1.2 Objectives**

Many companies in Lappeenranta try to attract attention from the same customer group and use the same marketing communication tools for it. Either we continue watching the growth of tourism and the service sector or try to earn money from them. If a company wants to succeed in the market, it is crucial to create something new and different compared to competitors. At the same time, it is very important to know the attitudes of possible target markets and how to reach and serve them.

The objective of this thesis was to find out how to create the best marketing communications strategy for a new company Satumainen Lapsuus Oy for building a trusted brand name.

## **1.3 Delimitations**

There are many criteria that should be taken into account when researching the marketing communication strategy.

In order to focus on a specific area of the research, only respondents from Russia and Finland were interviewed. In this thesis the author conducted research with two main groups of potential customers.

- Russian parents visiting Lappeenranta as tourists
- local Russian-speaking parents.

Even though in the theoretical part of research the 7 P's were studied, only 3 P's (Product, Price, Promotion) were analyzed in empirical part of research.

All of the parents selected have children aged 1-9. However, the target market for Satumainen Lapsuus Oy can be wider, when taking into account the population of nearby cities and include the Finnish and international parents whose children do not speak Russian at the moment but wish to learn. There are many pregnant women in Lappeenranta and their future children are also potential customers of our company.

#### **1.4 Research question**

The author wanted to find out about the demand in the market and consumer attitudes towards this quite new service in Lappeenranta. What kind of services should be created for them? How could the company best serve the demanding target group? What kind of communication behavior do potential customers have? The goal of this work is to give guidelines to the case company on how to build its market communication strategy to the highest level from the first days of operations. Before implementation of this business idea we need to get answers for the following questions. Hopefully, the answers will support this business idea.

Therefore the research question is: What are the potential consumers' attitudes towards the International Children Club service?

The results of the study can be used as a base for the strategy of the company's marketing communications for writing a future marketing communication plan for International Children Club.

#### **1.5 Research method**

In this thesis the author used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods – "*mixed methods research - a popular term for mixing qualitative and quantitative data in a single study*" (Harrison & Reilly. 2011. p. 8).

Primary and secondary data were collected during the research.

A 21 question questionnaire (Appendix 1), which took on average 30 minutes, in a face-to-face interview with the target group was developed and conducted directly for the purpose by researcher.



A lot of secondary data (existing information) through available information sources were also analyzed (information from statistics agencies, municipal agencies, libraries and local councils).

Quantitative research gathers numerical data. We used it when analyzed possible prices and financial trends of the Satumainen Lapsuus Oy. Quantitative part of research also helped us to understand the demographics of potential customers, such as their age and gender.

Qualitative research gathers views and attitudes. It helped us to understand the customers' feelings and attitudes towards our service. By using the qualitative method the author also revised competitors' practice of work to understand their products, customer service and pricing. Analyzing qualitative data requires a different approach and took longer to interpret than quantitative data because of the nature of the information.

Mixed methods research combines qualitative and quantitative research methods to create a broader understanding of a specific area.

According to Rebeca Renata, 2013, "*This hybrid approach can be particularly helpful when the use of one method has not been sufficient to fully explain or understand a certain phenomenon*". (How to Design and Conduct Mixed Method Research)

The survey was implemented during two months in the spring 2013. The results were analyzed and the suggestions for the marketing strategies were proposed based on the responds.

## **1.6 Structure of the study**

The current thesis work includes four main parts: introduction, theoretical part, empirical part and conclusion.

In the first section, which is divided into six short chapters the author describes the background of the study, objectives and delimitations, the research question and method, and the structure of the study.

In the second section, the theoretical part has the relevant literature which is reviewed and the theoretical framework is presented. The chapter includes information about service marketing and marketing communication tools. The theoretical concepts about characteristics of services, services marketing management, competitor analysis are described. Marketing communication as an instrument and communication tool in the global strategy of a company is analyzed.

The third part of the study includes the empirical findings which have been collected through the questionnaire and face-to-face interviews, SWOT analysis and official statistics. The third chapter applies the steps of marketing research to the study.

In the final part the conclusion is discussed and recommendations are highlighted.

### **1.7 Definition of terms**

Every scientific work requires definitions of the terms before discussing the subject. In this thesis research the following terms will be used with concrete meaning.

#### **Marketing research**

Marketing research is the systematic and objective planning, gathering, recording, and analyzing of information to enhance the decision making of marketing managers (American Marketing Association (AMA).)

*"Marketing research is the function that links the consumer, customer, and public to the marketer through information - information used to identify and define marketing opportunities and problems; generate, refine, and evaluate marketing actions; monitor marketing performance; and improve understanding of marketing as a process. Marketing research specifies the information required to address these issues, designs the methods for collecting information, manages and implements the data collection process, analyzes, and communicates the findings and their implications."*(Shao, A. 1999 p.6)

## **Strategy**

Henry Mintzberg's (McGill University) definition of strategy as "*a pattern in a stream of decisions*" from our point of view does not contrast with Max McKeown's view of strategy as planning (Mintzberg, H. 1978) McKeown argues that "*strategy is about shaping the future*" and is the human attempt to get to "*desirable ends with available means*". All these definition describe the same but from different perspectives.

## **Attitude**

*Attitude is psychological constructs, a way of conceptualizing the intangible. Attitudes are mental states used by individuals to stricter the way they perceive their environment and guide the way they respond to it. (Aaker, 1988, p. 282)*

## **Marketing communication**

All strategies, tactics, and activities involved in getting the desired marketing messages to intended target markets, regardless of the media used (Marketing Glossary).

## **Communication strategy**

A communication strategy is a single, coherent narrative that describes a communications solution to a problem or bundle of problems (Government Communication Network).

## **2. Theoretical framework**

### **2.1 Service marketing**

One of the major reasons for conducting marketing research is to identify market opportunities, niches, target groups and the way of positioning on the market. In this case service marketing will be analyzed. In marketing a service is a non-material equivalent of goods. According to Philip Kotler (Kotler, P. 2012, p. 377),

*“A service is an act of performance that one party can offer to another that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything. Its production may or may not be tied to a physical product.”*

Service marketing is the promotion of economic activities (services) offered by a business to its clients. The Satumainen Lapsuus will offer child care and educational services.

### **Characteristics of services**

In marketing literature many characteristics of service are mentioned. All of these characteristics are described in different words with the same core nature. Services do not belong to one group of products. Nevertheless, there are some general characteristics that can describe many service products. According to Brassington (2003), these characteristics differentiate services from physical goods.

Intangibility:

It cannot be taste, feel and smell before they are bought unlike a physical product. The intangibility creates a feeling of uncertainty about the outcome of a particular service.

Inseparability:

Services cannot be separated from the services provided. In fact the product delivers consumption of a service.

Variability:

Service of high variability. It is almost impossible to have the same service from the same seller the second time.

Customer participation:

Service product is not a one sided activity, the customers are the core of the products of services. The product quality of services greatly depends on the ability, skills and performance of the employees as well as the activity and performance of the customer.

No ownership:

Service consumer will have experience but not ownership since services are intangible.

Perishability:

They cannot be stored.

Kotler (2012) claimed service marketing to be a process that creates benefits by facilitating either a change in customers, a change in their physical possessions, or a change in their intangible assets.

Service marketing is marketing, based on relationships and value. Marketing in a service-based business is different from marketing a goods-base business. Service marketing will be defined later on as a function by which a marketer delivers, promotes and plans services to customers and clients.

From the next table reader can clearly see the difference between services and goods:

<b>Basis</b>	<b>Service</b>	<b>Goods</b>
Intangible	Fully intangible may be physical evidence	Fully tangible
Inseparability of buyer and provider	Both must be present	Remote transaction easy
Ease of inventory	Cannot store or warehouse the service	Easily inventoried

<b>Basis</b>	<b>Service</b>	<b>Goods</b>
Difficulty in Measuring and controlling quality	Measure and control people processes instead of product	Measure and control product quality only.
Sensitivity to time	Needed on demand or sale is lost	Can usually wait to receive the product
High degree of risk	Cost of failure very high	Product can be replaced
Consumption of the offering	Customization likely to enhance customer perception of perceived quality	Customization increases cost, but likely to enhance perceived product quality
Personalization of buyer relationship	Relationship can be as important as service	Product is the focus of the transaction

Table 1. Service and goods: difference. (Brassington, F., 2003)

Each characteristic creates problems and marketing requirements. It needs marketing efforts to find ways to make the service more tangible, to increase the productivity of providers who are inseparable of their products, to standardize the quality to balance the variability and to improve demand movements and supply capacities to control perishability.

## **2.2 Marketing strategy and the marketing mix in service marketing**

### **2.2.1 Marketing strategy formulation in service marketing**

Marketing strategy was defined by Prophet's David Aaker as “*a process that can allow an organization to concentrate its resources on the optimal opportunities with the goals of increasing sales and achieving a sustainable competitive advantage*” (Baker, 2008).

According to Donald Cowell, (1993) “*adaptation required to marketing strategy formulation and the marketing mix*” in service marketing.

Developing a marketing strategy, in this case, the author uses this term here which involves two relative tasks:

- 1) Select a target market (or markets) in which the enterprise plan will operate; and,
- 2) Developing a “marketing mix” for each target market selected. (Cowell 1993, p. 59.)

### **2.2.2 Target market**

Philip Kotler (2012, pp. 120-121) defines a target market as “*a well-defined set of customers whose needs the organization plans to satisfy*”. He suggests that the target market may be the total focus of the organization or it may be viewed as only a starting point for later expansion to other market segments. The point is that he recognizes that there are many groups and companies or organizations that probably will not target them all.

Segmentation is nothing more than identifying homogeneous groups. In performing market segmentation marketers identify the major groups they face in the environment, defining them in terms of criteria that are pertinent to an organization.

After we have identified all of the focus groups, we evaluate each group in terms of:

- 1) How important the group is to the accomplishment of the organization’s objective(s); and

2) How likely it is that the company has the resources to meet the needs of the group and can satisfy the individuals in the group given the resources it has available (program, human, financial, etc.).

For example, as stated by Czinkota and Ronkainen (2001) the marketers must select the markets to which efforts will be targeted, keeping in mind uncontrollable environments (cultural, political, legal, technological, economic and societal) and analyzing the eight Os – characteristics of intended target markets: occupants, objects, occasions, objectives, outlets, organization, operations and opposition.

According to Czinkota and Ronkainen (2001) occupants are target of the marketing efforts, the marketer must define them among different dimensions such as:

- Demographics (age, gender, nationality, etc.);
- Geography (country or region);
- Psychographics (attitudes, interests and opinions),
- Product- or service-related variables (usage rate, brand loyalty).

Objects are what are being bought at the present time to satisfy a particular need. They can be services, physical objects, ideas, and places.

Occasions are when members of defined target market buy the service or product. A service's consumption may be tied only to a particular time period.

Objectives are the motivation behind the purchase. Many customers look for hidden value in the product they purchase, which may be expressed (national origin, brand name).

Outlets are where customers expect to be able to procure a product or to be exposed to messages about it.

Organizations describe how the buying or acceptance of a (new) idea takes place. For developing a proper product or service the marketers should know as



much as possible about the decision-making processes in the heads of their consumers.

Operations represent the behavior of the organization that is buying products and services. More and more huge corporations are concentrating their purchases to fewer suppliers and making longer-term commitments.

Opposition refers to the competition to be faced in the marketplace. The nature of competition will vary from direct service-type competition (in this case) to services that satisfy the same needs.

### **2.2.3 Marketing mix in service marketing**

The marketing mix is an essential and core element of any marketing strategy. Traditionally the product marketing mix consists of 4Ps: Product, Price, Promotion, and Place. However, as a service is not tangible, service products require additional elements to explain the special characteristics of service marketing (Cowell, 1993). These are People, Physical evidence and Processes. Tracy Tuten adds one more element – Participation. (Tuten & Solomon, 2013). All these extra marketing mix elements greatly influence the customer's service experience.

Traditional marketing mix of 4 Ps has been studied by Learnmarketing.net materials.

#### **Product (Service)**

The firm needs to determine what service features will appeal to their target market. When an organization is considering introducing a service into a market, they should ask themselves the following questions:

- Who is the service aimed at?
- What benefits will customers expect from it?
- What will be its advantage over competitor service? Or its unique selling point?
- How does the firm plan to Position the service within the market?

The correct, full and true answers to these questions will help a firm design, promote and add value to its services.

## **Price**

There are lots of different pricing strategies but every strategy must cover at least the costs of the company. As a best way – exceed the breakeven and make a profit. A service is only worth as much as people are ready to pay for it. The amount the target market is prepared to pay for a service depends on service features and the target market's budget. Competitor pricing and factors within the marketing environment also needs to be considered. Effective pricing involves balancing several factors such as season, time, rate of the service, competition policy and others.

## **Place**

The place element of the marketing place is about how and where the service is transported to the customer. The place for each of these things should ensure that the service gets to the right place at the right time suitable for people in business premises. The ideal place will be:

- convenient for the customer and the business
- low cost, free or accessible for the customer if it is the place where the service is offered
- reasonable cost to the business.

## **Promotion**

A successful service means nothing unless the benefit of such a service can be communicated clearly to the target market. Promotion is any activity to raise awareness of a service or to encourage customers to purchase a service. Advertising is a form of promotion but not all promotions are advertisements.

Promotional activities will be different depending on the business type. The following things will influence how a firm chooses to promote its service:

- promotional campaign purpose

- the budget for the promotional campaign
- legal rules about what you can promote and how
- the target market for the product
- the marketing environment in which the firm operates

## **People**

People are a core ingredient in service provision. The human factor has destroyed a lot of fairly successful businesses. Recruiting and training the right staff is required to create a competitive advantage. Customers make judgments about service provision and delivery based on the people representing the organization. This is because people are one of the few elements of the service that customers can see and interact with.

Staff requires appropriate interpersonal skills, attitude, and service knowledge in order to deliver a quality service (LearnMarketing.net).

Sometimes a customer decided to use/not use service only because of sympathy/antipathy to its staff.

Davidson suggests that *“In a service industry the secret of success is recognition that customer contact personnel are the key people in the organization”* (Cowell, 1993, p. 73).

## **Process**

This element of the marketing mix looks at the systems used to deliver the service. All services need to be underpinned by clearly defined and efficient processes. This will avoid confusion and promote a consistent service. In other words, process means that everybody knows what to do and how to do it even in dangerous, unpredictable cases. “The policies and procedures adopted, the degree of mechanization used in service provision..., the customer involvement with the process of service performance, the flows of information and service, the appointments and waiting system, the capacity levels available” – these are parts usually implied by the Process in service marketing mix (Cowell, 1993, p. 73-74.)

## **Physical Evidence (Physical Environment)**

Physical evidence helps to understand where the service is being delivered from. This element of the marketing mix will distinguish a company from its competitors. Physical evidence can be used to charge a premium price for a service and establish a positive experience. Customers will make judgments about the organization based on the physical evidence. Physical evidence includes, according to Cowell, physical environment (furnishings, color, layout, noise) the facilitating goods that enable the service to be provided and other tangible clues like labels or packaging. For example if somebody enters a children club he/she probably expects a clean and child-friendly environment. If the club is smelly or dirty, customers are likely to walk out. This is before they have even tested the service. (Cowell, 1993, p.73.)

## **Additional “P” - Participation**

Peter Drucker once said, *“The purpose of a business is to create a customer”*. The authors of “Social Media Marketing” book Tracy L. Tuten and Michael R. Solomon have expanded this definition: *The purpose of a business is to create customers who create other customers. That is Participation in the process is the new P of marketing.* (Tuten & Solomon , 2013, p.15.)

Summarizing all above, the service marketing mix involves now 8 P’s: Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, Physical Evidence and Participation. Companies marketing a service need to get each of these elements correct. The marketing mix for a service has additional elements because the characteristics of a service are different compared to the characteristics of a product.

### **2.2.4 Service marketing system**

Many different elements contribute to the customer’s overall view of the service organization.

*These include the communication efforts of the advertising and sales department, telephone calls, faces from service desk at the reception, letters from service personnel, billing from the accounting department and random*

*exposure to service personnel and facilities, new stories and editorial in the mass media word of mouth comments from current or former customers and even participation in market research studies collectively these components plus those in the service delivery system and up to what is termed as service marketing system. (Cowell, 1993, p.59.)*

From own experience author noticed it greatly affects the perception for colors and smells. The company should pay a lot of attention to important issues of its target markets. Everything has to be taken into consideration. There are no minor details, especially in such a significant area where children get an education.

## **2.3 Marketing communication**

Marketing communications is the "promotion" part of the "marketing mix".

### **2.3.1 Communication process**

Communication is the transmission of a message from a sender to a receiver in an understandable manner. Communication can be described as a process of exchanging verbal and non-verbal messages. This process is made up of four key components. Those components include encoding, medium of transmission, decoding, and feedback. There are also two other factors in the process, and those two factors are present in the form of the sender and the receiver. The communication process begins with the sender and ends with the receiver. (<http://www.managementstudyguide.com/components-of-communication-process.htm>)

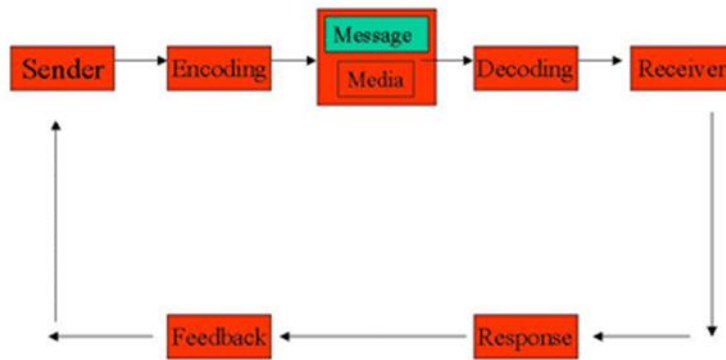


Figure 1. Communication process.

(<http://www.managementstudyguide.com/components-of-communication-process.htm>)

It is a continuous process. Pre-requisite of communication is a message. This message must be conveyed through some medium to the recipient. It is essential that this message must be understood by the recipient in same terms as intended by the sender. He must respond within a time frame. Thus, communication is a two way process and is incomplete without a feedback from the recipient to the sender on how well the message is understood by him. (<http://www.managementstudyguide.com>)

The key factor from this issue for club's business idea is understandability of messages for parents and children both in company's marketing communication process.

### 2.3.2 Marketing communication tools

In this section, the author intends to analyze only the ability to make some of the huge manifold of marketing communication tools which seems appropriate to our service marketing niche.

#### Word of Mouth

Word of Mouth - is oral or written form of unpaid promotion. Satisfied customers tell other people how much they like a company, product, service, or event. According to Entrepreneur Media, word-of-mouth is one of the most credible

forms of advertising because people who don't stand to gain personally by promoting something put their reputations on the line every time they make a recommendation. (<http://www.entrepreneur.com>)

### **Relationship Marketing**

Hooley & Piercy claim that companies are forging to build ties and bonds with customers aiming to increase both sales volume and loyalty. Relationship marketing requires trust and constant interaction to attain its objectives. Companies have a task of transforming prospective customers to active partners in adding value and profitability. (Hooley & Piercy, 2008, p. 397.)

Effective networking is all about building relationships. Successful businesspeople understand that networking and relationship marketing are more about "farming" than they are about "hunting." It's about building long-lasting connections with other professionals.

(<http://www.entrepreneur.com>)

Relationship marketing is a strategy designed to foster customer loyalty, interaction and long-term engagement. This customer relationship management approach focuses more on customer retention than customer acquisition.

(<http://searchcrm.techtarget.com/definition/relationship-marketing>)

### **Sales promotion**

Sales promotion aims at increasing purchase of product offerings by using a collection of incentive tools. It is designed for short-term use and consists of consumer promotion tools such as coupons, samples, premiums, prizes, patronage, rewards, free trials, warranties and free goods. Incentive tools are designed to meet specific customer expectation or strengthen existing customer relationships. (Kotler 2009, p. 735). While advertising explains the reason of purchasing a product, sales promotion tries to induce a customer to purchase an offering.

Keegan and Green(2003, p. 562) define sales promotion as any paid consumer or trade communication program which increases the tangible value of an offering in a given period of time. The use of sales promotion is due to the reduction of perceived risks of the buyer in purchasing a product and accountability of the volume sales in respond to the sales promotion.

The reason why companies use sales promotion is to attract brand switches to trying their offerings that could eventually lead to customer retention and subsequently increases in sales. It raises awareness where there are many brands and competitors and differentiates offerings from main competitors. (Kotler 2009, p. 735).

### **Events and Experiences**

The use of sponsorship of sports events, arts festivals, fairs, charity events is employed to target a niche market where they desire to deepen and forge a stronger relationship, prestige and credibility with consumers (Kotler 2009, p. 739). However, events have to be carefully chosen, and parameters executed to ensure the effects of the events. Objectives of event sponsorship revolve around the enhancement the company's brand or corporate image.

### **Internet Marketing**

For many companies or organizations, the Internet has become an important channel to communicate their offerings and reach a wide target group. The internet has transformed marketing as a new drive of enterprise competition. According to Chaffey, D.& Ellis-Chadwick, F., 2009, Internet marketing refers to how the Internet is used in association with other traditional forms of media to acquire and provide information and services to customers. Names associated with Internet marketing are e-marketing, digital marketing, e-business, and e-commerce. It is worthy to note that the Internet provides a direct response tool which enables customers to react to offers and promotions which are channeled through other forms of media. (Ejombonteh, E. & Vovobu, P. 2012. p.29)



### 2.3.3. Trends in marketing communications

Which megatrends in marketing communications do we have to consider for the future of the company?

The economic landscape has been fundamentally altered by technology and globalization. Companies anywhere can now compete anywhere, thanks to the Internet and more free trade. Figure 2 illustrates evolution of marketing communication.

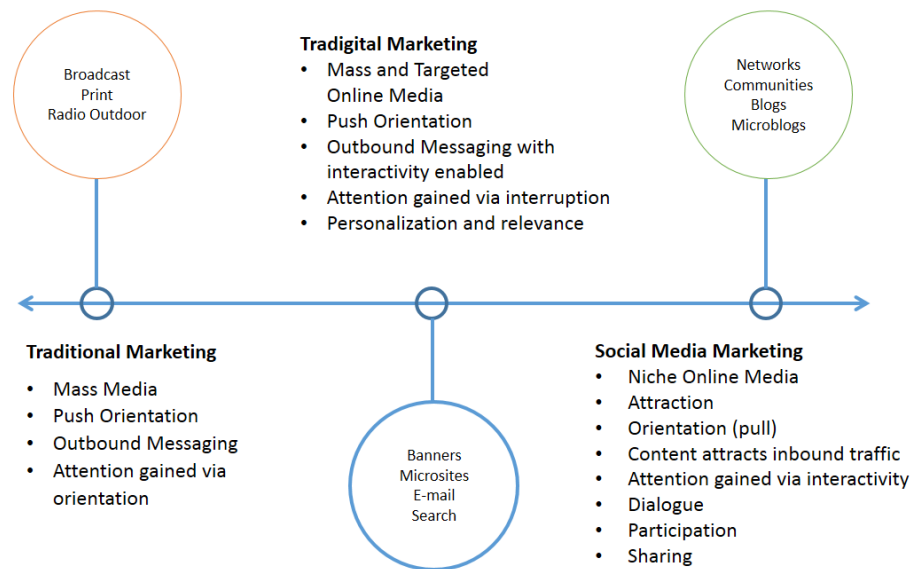


Figure 2. The evolution of marketing communication (Tuten & Solomon 2013, p.16).

The major economic force is hyper-competition, namely companies are able to produce more goods than can be sold, putting a lot of pressure on price. This also drives companies to build in more differentiation. However, a lot of the differentiation is psychological, not real. Even then, a company's current advantage doesn't last very long in an economy where any advantage can be copied rapidly.

Companies must pay attention to the fact that customers are getting more educated and have better tools such as the Internet at their disposal to buy with more discrimination. Power has been passing from the manufacturer to the

distributor, and now is passing to the customer. The customer is King. (<http://www.kotlermarketing.com>)

Social media marketing has expanded rapidly as much for its efficiency given its low absolute costs, potential business applications as a tool for garnering customer attention, managing customer relationships, developing new product ideas, promoting brands, driving store (online and off) traffic, and converting consumers to customers. Author agrees with Tuten when he writes: "...social media are not a substitute for traditional marketing communications, but they are also more than a complement to traditional methods". (Tuten & Solomon 2013.)

While it is clear that marketing communication tools are used to convey messages from companies to stakeholders, word-of-mouth, relationship marketing, sales promotion, internet marketing and event and experience may give to Satumainen Lapsuus a chance communication with stakeholders at reduce costs. It would be difficult and ineffective to use all the marketing communication tools to get to potential customers.

### **3. Analysis of the research**

This chapter is devoted to data analysis and discussion that highlights the significance of the research.

The information was gathered from local authorities, newspapers, Internet and by interviewing Russian tourists and Russian speaking inhabitants living in Lappeenranta.

#### **3.1 Statistics analysis**

Lappeenranta is a growing international and university city. The population of Lappeenranta is 72,000 and approximately 400,000 people live within its regional catchment area. The city is also located on the border between Finland and Russia, only some 200 kilometers from St. Petersburg, a metropolis with

more five million inhabitants. Annually about two million Russians visit Lappeenranta. Official data of Citycon (an active owner and long-term developer of global shopping centers) focuses on financial information:

*"In recent years, the increase in tax free sales and the number of Russian tourists has been particularly high in Lappeenranta. The tax free sales of the Russian tourists are now approximately at the same level as in Helsinki. During year 2012 the tax free sales amounted to EUR 94 million and grew by 20 per cent in Lappeenranta".(http://globenewswire.com.)*

It is logical to assume that with two million visitors in Lappeenranta, at least some of them might be interested in receiving additional services and the classes for their children.

According to official statistics of local authorities (Source Kaakkois-Suomen maitsraatti statistics) Lappeenranta is a home city for the people of 93 different nationalities; 2822 foreigners (1424 men and 1398 women) live there. From this number it can be suggested that interest of the idea of being international from the childhood, which is a foundation stone of Satumainen Lapsuus.

There are 1505 Russian people, 208 Estonians, 18 Belarusians, 19 Ukrainians, 29 Latvians, 5 Georgians, 2 Azerbaijanis, 4 Kazakhs. Typically the representatives of the former Soviet Union countries speak Russian. Theoretically, it can be assumed that there are between 1505-1790 Russian-speaking official residents.

Unfortunately, the author does not have official statistics of Russian-speaking children living in Lappeenranta and the surrounding area. Even if assumed that only one of ten Russian-speaking residents has a child, it can be said that there is an opportunity to get customers for Satumainen Lapsuus with possible focus on Russian language.

### **3.2 Interview analysis**

The aim of this study is to look at the future customers and their attitudes, needs and communicating behavior toward Satumainen Lapsuus Oy with particular reference to communication strategy. The author felt a need to learn basic orientation and attitudes of present (from Fairy-tale class in the City

library) and perspective customers. Their attitudes based on the information they have, associations, their feelings (liking and disliking) and the intended behavior. What the researcher wanted to understand and to influence in the future is behavior. The attitudes are precursors of behavior. When we are familiar with the reasons of behavior, with basic attitudes, habits, then it is easier to find the correct impact on the behavior itself.

Quantitative and qualitative data in order to research attitudes of Satumainen Lapsuus potential customers have been collected through the personal interview with questionnaire (Appendix 1) and have been analyzed by the computer program Excel. The target group of the questionnaire included parents with children aged 1-9 years old. The respondents of this study were both male and female from both Finland and Russia respectively. Only Russian-speaking parents (either mother or father) were interviewed.

In order to have visual results of the research, several diagrams and tables have been created. The presented numbers and percentages are explained and described according to the results of the collected data. The obtained results could be scientifically precise since the answers have been conducted by a quantitative and qualitative research of a solid number of participants.

The personal interviews were carried out within two months and they lasted from 20 minutes to one hour and 15 minutes. Sometimes it took a long time due to the great interest of the respondents in this service and field and attempt to address the author as an expert in matters of children education (especially young parents).

Interviews were conducted at the Lappeenranta city library, shopping mall Iso Kristiina, shops Alinan Bambino and Tenavapiste, at the Myllysaari Public Sauna and the Russian Club in Sammonlahti.

The questionnaire consisted of twenty-one questions. Mainly open-ended and multiple choice questions and a couple of close-ended questions were included in the questionnaire. These types of questions assisted in getting valuable information applicable to making a strategic decision. No pictures were used in

the questionnaire. The author decided to present analysis of responds in the same order the questions has been asked.

The sample size for this study is 30 (thirty) respondents, 16 of them (what makes 53,33%) living in Russia and 14 (46,67%) living in Finland. The data for this study was analyzed using statistical tables indicating absolute figures as well as percentages. From the participants' demographic characteristics, gender of the respondents and the gender and age of their children were analyzed.

The researcher also collected some background information from the respondents: name, phone number, email address and place of work. Due to time limit for some Russian shopping tourists the researcher decided to make these questions optional. But in all other cases valuable information for social networking and advertising campaigns was collected. Table 2 below shows the detailed analysis of the distribution of respondents on the basis of gender.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	8	26,7%
Female	22	73,3%
Total	30	100%

Table 2. Distribution of respondents on the gender basis.

Of the 30 respondents studied, 22 are female and 8 are male potential customers. The male customers are less than their female counterparts for the reason that the women usually have more power in the Russian family decision-making process concerning children. When the author met for an interview with a family they had the opportunity to select a representative – almost every time a woman was delegated.

In total there were 41 children (13 boys and 28 girls) aged 1-9 who participated in the research. On average one respondent has 1.366 children in this age group. The author did not count in this statistics other children of the respondents. The author can analyze the distribution of the age among all children in the Figure 3. The main group of potential customers aged 3-4 and 6-7 years old.

Contrary to expectations, the results indicated there are not so many potential visitors of the youngest age group. It would probably be a wise idea, at least at the first stage, to abandon the original plan of developing classes for children from 1-3 years of age. Children in this age group demand the most attention and costs, but they are not so much represented in the sample. From the information obtained it may also be concluded that the special girl classes, will probably be more popular.

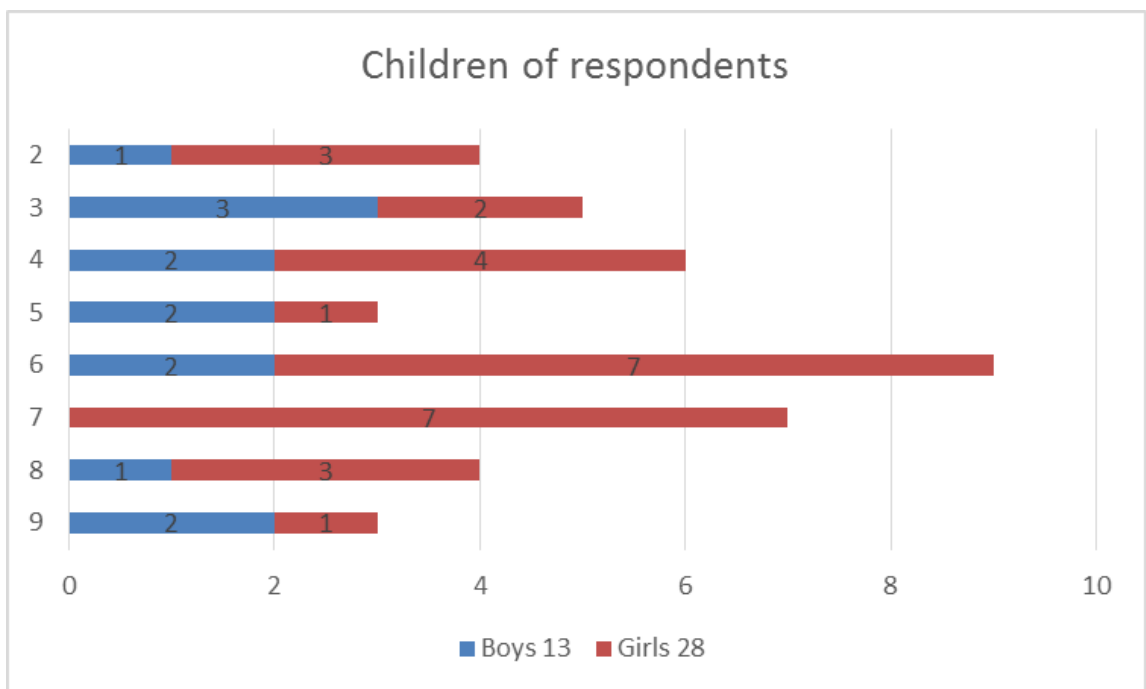


Figure 3. The respondents' children gender and age distribution.

Analysis of the respondents linked with the expression of a fairy-tale childhood. From figure 4 visible the most frequently mentioned concepts associated in the minds of adults with memories of their happy childhood: Sun, Laughter, Garden,

Game, Toys, Mother, Sea, Fairy-tale, Ice cream and others. The author believes this is one of the most valuable results of the study. On the one hand, we verified correct selection of the name of the club (“Fairy-tale Childhood” in English, “Satumainen Lapsuus” in Finnish and “Сказочное Детство” in Russian). On the other hand a number of visual and verbal memories incarnations of the happiest periods of human life - childhood have been received. This series of concepts can be used by the company for advertising, website and interior spaces design, creating souvenirs, blogging and any selected channels of communication.

The size of the word in the figure reflects the frequency of its mention in the associations.



Figure 4. Concepts associated with memories of a happy childhood.

Willingness to use the services of the club is illustrated in Table 3. The question “Are you ready to use International Children Club’s service?” The readiness to accept this totally new market idea for the city was tested. The results of the study presented even higher expectations – 93,3% of potential customers are interested in this kind of a service. Some of them (6,67%) are willing to go only if pricing and/or scheduling will be suitable.

It was very important to know the reasons for the reluctance of 2 members (6,67% of total respondents) to visit the club. In both cases, the mothers

signaled that their girls are intolerant to the presence of unknown kids in a class, feel uncomfortable, shyness and communication problems. Here clients' real problem was faced and opportunity for the development of consulting activities. Maybe in the future it will be useful to have a staff psychologist in the club and/or to organize a set of articles about these issues on the web pages of the Club.

Variant	Frequency	Percentage
Ready to use	26	86,67
Do not ready to use	2	6,67
Do not know	0	0
Ready with special clause	2	6,67
Total	30	100

Table 3. Willingness to use the services of the Club.

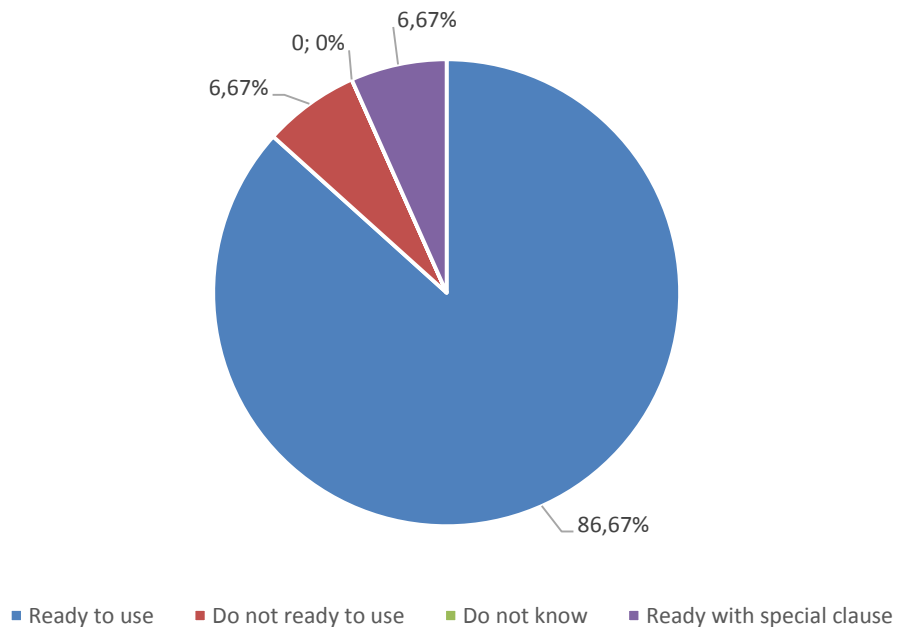


Figure 5. Willingness to use the services of the Club



Parents - tourists from Russia and parents from the local Russian-speaking population - have different focus of interest, but in many ways their needs are the same.

Both categories want a successful future for their children, a happy childhood and lessons that would develop their abilities. But the main task of the locals is to support and develop the native language. The interest of the Russian tourists' is entertainment and the opportunity to leave the child for a while under supervision. During the research the author has got information about suitable for parents' timetable. Now it is possible to evaluate and estimate the work load for a week, to determine the need for additional personnel on Russian holidays and during weekends. The possible frequency of service used was also analyzed. The results are shown in the Table 4.

Variant	Frequency	Percentage
Depending of the visit to Lappeenranta	9	30,00
Once a month	1	3,33
1-2 times per month	3	10,00
Up to 4 times per month	5	16,67
Up to 8 times per month	6	20,00
Up to 12 times per month	2	6,67
Do not know/no answer	4	13,33
Total	30	100,00

Table 4. The planned frequency of service use

The results show a greater degree of uncertainty that characterizes the visits of Russian tourists to Lappeenranta. Also children often get sick, families sometimes have other plans. In this context, it seems reasonable to have a system of subscriptions (season ticket), that makes it possible for kids to visit the club whenever there is an opportunity and a desire.

Table 5 reflects the preferences of the market to use flexible schedule of the service. According to the presented results there is 2,5 times less supporters of the firm schedule compared to the flexible schedule.

Schedule variant	Frequency	Percentage
Firm schedule	8	26,67
Flexible schedule	20	66,67
Do not know	2	6,67
Total	30	100

Table 5. Preferences in the schedule.

The question “Are you ready to devote more time shopping, if you have more free time?” was initiated by the leadership of the shopping center, where the company is going to lease a business premises. Table 6 shows that many parents are willing to do more shopping (60% of respondents), but there are still those who will spend the money and time on something else. In any case, the company now has sufficient statistics for the mall chiefs and owners that the club location should be in a shopping center which will attract more consumers.

More shopping time?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	18	60

Not	8	26,67
Do not know	4	13,33
Total	30	100

Table 6. Intention to spend more time shopping when the child is in the club.

Decision regarding price ranges for the new service have to be made early in the development stage. A service concept cannot be tested, so, the service suitability has to be introduced for future customer matters. It has been explained what kind of unique service plan to offer to the Lappeenranta market and the analysis of the respondents' willingness to pay for the Satumainen Lapsuus services offers a wide range of "reasonable family price". During the research one of the respondents has firstly answered that "the best price for this service would be for free". He expected the Finnish government would be ready to pay for the Russian tourists' children due to enormous spending of Russians in Finland. Price expectations are very different: from 3 to 40 euros per hour. Here the attitudes of people researcher are faced. There is still no service. It is just a project. At the same time some people believe that it is worth it for this *future* service to be 40 euro and others expect only to pay 3 euro. Both of these extreme categories are based on the same information they have, but everyone has their own associations and feelings about this cost. The average acceptable for the family of participant's price ranges is €10.02 - €12.64. Generally local Russians are ready to pay less than tourists, because there are a lot of children's services are available in Lappeenranta which are very cheap or free (sport centers, hobby groups, churches etc.). As we see from Figure 6, price expectation is mainly concentrated in the area €5 - €10 per hour.

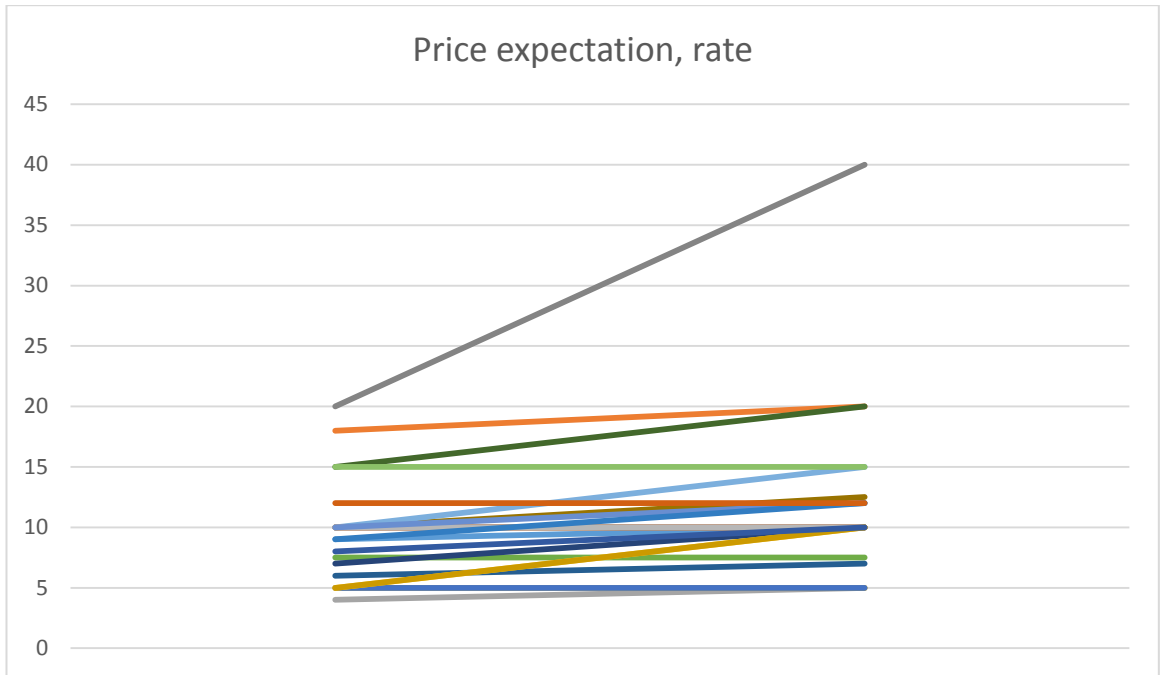


Figure 6. Rate of the price expectation.

Within this research one of the main tasks was to understand media habits of of the respondents: to accurately determine what they read and what tools of social networking they use.

In answering this question “How do you search information about services and events in Lappeenranta” the major part (76,74% of respondents) answered they use Internet and word of mouth. Due to results of survey in Table 7 it seems absolutely meaningless to spend money on media advertisement.

Source	Frequency	Percentage
Internet	19	44,19
Word of mouth	14	32,55
Newspapers	3	6,97
Magazines	1	2,33
Radio	1	2,33

Brochures in the info centers or malls	2	4,65
Thematic groups on social networks	1	2,33
Spontaneous decisions	1	2,33
Parents meeting at the schools	1	2,33
Total	43	100

Table 7. Sources of information.

At the same time if the company for some reason would decide to act so, from the Table 8 it can be seen four most popular for participants' newspapers: Lappeenrannan Uutiset, Delovoi Petersburg, Vartti, and Spektr.

#### The most popular media

Title	Frequency
Lappenranta.fi	9
Lappeenrannan Uutiset	7
Delovoi Petersburg	4
Vartti	4
Spektr	4
Etelä -Saimaa	3
Fontanka.ru	3
Gosaimaa.fi	3

Kommersant	3
Lenta.ru	3
Vedomosti,	3
Google.fi	2
Finnish complimentary newspapers	2
Stop In Finland	2
Terve	2
7 Days	1
Abc	1
Caravan Of Stories	1
Expert	1
Geo	1
Helsingin Sanomat	1
Leisure	1
Luumaki	1
Meidän Perhe	1
Money	1
Popular Mechanics	1
St.-Peterburgskie Vedomosti	1
Süddeutsche Zeitung	1

Travel	1
Spigel	1
New Horizons	1

Table 8. The most popular media.

Most often respondents communicate using social networks. Almost everyone has a personal registration on social networking website, and a lot of participants have several profiles on different networks.

Networking are the interactions among people in which they create, share, and exchange information. The result of this research probably would be a creation for the club of two social groups at the most popular in Russia and in the world platforms: VKontakte and Facebook. It is still absolutely free and as the research shows, very effective way to reach, follow and stay ahead of own customers.

Social Network	Information	Frequency	Percentage
 VK.com	The largest Russian-language Internet social network	23	51,11%
 facebook.com	The world's largest social network	14	31,11%
 odnoklassniki.ru	One of the largest Russian social networking	3	6,67%




 livejournal.com	The world's largest blogging platform to conduct online diaries	3	6,67%
 linkedin.com	Social network to find and establish business contacts.	1	2,22%
 icq.com	Centralized instant messaging computer program	1	2,22%
Total		45	100%

Table 9. Social networking websites.

One of the most time consuming parts of the research was the study of the product. The author has asked parents what kind of service exactly would potential customers like to see in the club. The company had its own ideas, they were shared with parents and asked to note what types of proposed activities would be interesting for their child. Most of all they are interested in comprehensive lessons (25 responds), music (24 responds), and sport (23 responds). The full results are feasible below.



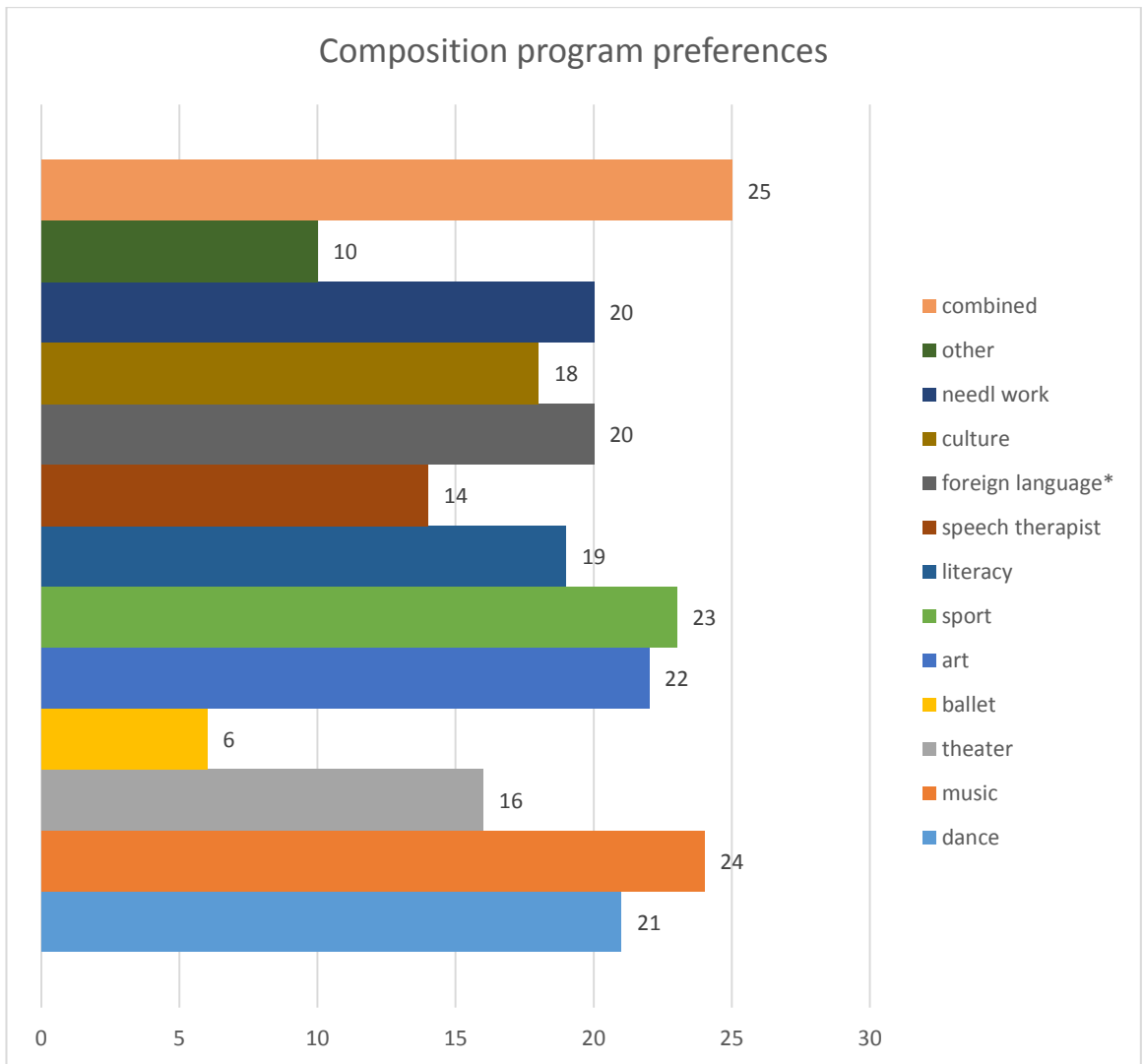


Figure 7. Composition program preferences.

Parents have shared with company some thoughts about possible additional service for the children and together the list of potentially interesting themes has been created.

The following composition requests for additional studies, not included in the main program of the club:

- history of Finland and the other Nordic countries
- Russian culture
- communication

- designing
- puppet theatre
- magnets
- gardening
- singing
- baking, cooking
- meteorology
- marine and military affairs
- survival skills
- natural history
- robots
- construction
- tourism
- magic tricks and circus
- gymnastics

The answers to this question were the most inspiring: it has been seen that parents are interested in the club and ready for co-creation.

Much support was found for the idea of an International club. The parents are interested in their kids learning and speaking foreign languages. The distribution of interests from highest to lowest is found in the Table 10.

The author supposes that the classes with a native speaker (at least English and Finnish languages) would have been particularly popular.

Languages	Frequency	Percentage
1. English	19	48,72%
2. Finnish	9	23,08%
3. France	5	12,82%
4. Chinese	2	5,13%
5. Spanish	2	5,13%
6. German	1	2,56%
7. Russian	1	2,56%
Total	39	100%

Table10. Suggestions for the study of languages, the frequency of mentions

The best and most acceptable time for the lessons was also analyzed from the parents' point of view. Many of the children of younger age group still take a nap, we need to plan a rational use of the premises so, the question of time is very important to us. The author has received information about the acceptable and the best time for activities.



Figure 8. The best time for the lessons, work days.



Figure 9. Acceptable time, work days.

Analysis of time scheduling preferences shows two peaks;

1. Morning, after 10 a.m. for local housewives and tourists from Russia;
2. After 4p.m. - for residents of Lappeenranta.

The greatest demand for the club can be predicted in the range of 17-19 on week days, and in 10-17 hours on weekends and public holidays.



Figure 10. The best time, weekends, holidays.



Figure 11. Acceptable time weekends, holidays.

A lot of entrepreneurs (probably, they were our future competitors) tried to convince that summer is the worst time to start business. Children are in countryside and kindergartens are closed. From our point of view there are a lot of children in the city, kindergartens have closed and it is good for the club

because people will come to us. The result answering the question, “Are you ready to visit the club in the summer?” shows in Table 11: people are ready.

Summer time attendance?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	21	70
Now	3	10
Do not know	6	20
Total	30	100

Table 11. Intention to use the club services during summer time.

What kind of difficulties do you sometimes have with your children? This question was offered to parents as a part of research. The answers are arranged in descending order:

The children

- do not listen to/follow only their decisions/only do what they like
- do not want to follow the rules
- want to watch cartoons endlessly
- lying
- do not accept the authority of mother/father/parents
- cannot cope with emotions
- it is difficult to switch to a new activity
- too active/too shy

- conflict with the brother/sister because of everything
- difficulties in concentrating, restlessness
- thinks that the child is the head of the family
- want to eat a lot of sweets despite parental prohibitions/allergy
- trust strangers
- Grandmother/Grandfather spoiled children
- do not have any difficulties (only 1 respondent has answered so)

The results of this qualitative part of the research make smile, laugh, and think about one's own children, but also think about the huge opportunities that are opening up for the club. Every business starts with a diagnosis of the client's problems and suggestions how to solve this problem. In this case, it could be psychological counseling and classes for children, which would allow them better understand the behavioral rules in the family and in society in general.

### **3.3 SWOT analysis**

This SWOT analysis is a suitable tool for the marketing planning process. SWOT helps managers make strategies for companies. Table 12 is the SWOT analysis for the Satumainen Lapsuus Oy made based on survey's data and the author's experience. This table gives a chance to have a whole picture of inside factors (S-W) and outside factors of an organization (O-T) and to identify the positive factors (S-O) and negative factors (W-T).

The SWOT analysis represents strengths and weaknesses of the internal operational environment, and opportunities and threats of the external environment of the company. Developing a full awareness this case can help with both strategic planning and decision-making.

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lappeenranta - one of the most popular locations for Russian tourists with kids (short distance for travel) and very international city</li> <li>2. Administrative and teaching experience of the owner</li> <li>3. Place of the club location (city center)</li> <li>4. Customers are ready to attend and to pay</li> <li>5. Positive potential customers' attitude</li> <li>6. The ability to deliver custom high quality service</li> <li>7. Belief in their own service and the idea</li> <li>8. Know-how and expertise including this research</li> <li>9. Good network with local society.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The risk of injury of children</li> <li>2. Lack of every day ready program</li> <li>3. Only one employee in the company</li> <li>4. Dependence on the tourist flow, income and spending habits</li> <li>5. Unknown in the market</li> <li>6. Limited resources</li> <li>7. Lack of Finnish business experience</li> <li>8. High breakeven point of business</li> </ol>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Growing market potential</li> <li>2. No direct competition</li> <li>3. Trend in internationalization</li> <li>4. Chance to build beneficial and important for the city business</li> <li>5. Social responsibility</li> </ol>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Competitors</li> <li>2. The availability of free alternatives with similar service</li> <li>3. Customer identification</li> <li>4. Rising competition on the market</li> <li>5. Tax level in Finland</li> </ol>

Table 12. Satumainen Lapsuus SWOT analysis.

The author enjoyed recognizing so many Strengths. The next step of the SWOT analysis by the management of company needs to be done in direction of “making lemonade from the lemons”. The SWOT template enables proactive thinking, rather than relying on habitual or instinctive reactions. It gives a chance to build the right plan of action for the months and years ahead.



## **Conclusion**

In this thesis the theoretical base have been combined with empirical understanding, as well as builds a strategic view on the way of development marketing communications of Satumainen Lapsuus Oy.

Theoretical research of service marketing, marketing communication, marketing strategy and the marketing mix in service marketing were analyzed in the theoretical part. SWOT analysis, statistics and interview analysis have been used in the empirical part of the research.

The answer to the research question “What are the potential consumers attitudes towards the International Children Club service?” was presented in the empirical part of the research.

It can be suggested that the case company will devote more resources to plan marketing communication very carefully and using all potential customers’ recommendations in order to build a strong company image based on them and to attract new customers. The results of this research can be further used by the company to make a detailed marketing communication plan.

The outcomes show that this quite a new service idea in Lappeenranta – organizing International Children Club is potentially very interesting for the customers and has a chance to be in demand in the future. The readiness to accept this business idea was even higher than expected - more than 93% of potential customers are ready to pay for such a service. Almost 7% of potential customers are willing to go only if the price and schedule will be suitable. That signals how important the consumers point of view is with price and time issues and how much case company has to pay attention to this part of the work in order to attract this group also.

The target groups were defined, but only two of them were interviewed in this research. In order to have the whole picture, it is necessary to organize a new research.

The author notes the high level of respondents' interest in answering the questions. The interviewees were happy to discuss child development and parenting, which was meaningful for all of the participants without exception.

In addition to gathering information, the author is confident the interviews carried out had an important promotional function, a large number of people now know about the plans of the opening of Satumainen Lapsuus Oy.

The writer supposes that is very important to understand the reasons for the reluctance to visit the club, objections of the customer, and their thoughts about pricing and promotion strategy. During the research parents have shared some thoughts with the company about possible additional services for the children and together created a list of potentially interesting themes. Using the results of the study it will be much easier for the company to build a suitable schedule for most visitors.

The outcomes show marketing channels to be used as the most effective in a company's communication strategy tools (Internet, social networking, word of mouth).

The writer has noted that children are valuable for the respondents and they desire to talk about their kids to everyone. Participants have demonstrated the willingness to share their feelings and thoughts about different family issues. This important notice needs to be taken into account in the construction of communication between the club and parents. That's why the case company should see marketing communications as part of their everyday operations, even when the teacher is just discussing children' results and behavior.

Now the company has a view how the potential customers look, how they talk, what they are interested in and all this information is very valuable. Every member of the company should be conscious of the objectives of each marketing communications tool. Although the resources in the case company are limited, they have to particularly invest more in groundwork communications. The prerequisite of success in this field is long-term investment.

The essential principles of the foundations of marketing communication strategy for the International Children Club are:

By combining various tools in the communication strategy, it is necessary to be ensured that the audience is reached by leveraging the various tools in ways that are the most effective. Utilizing the results of the survey and the influence of the customers' attitudes and behavior, to help customers build positive attitudes towards Satumainen Lapsuus.

The usage of strengths and turning the opportunities into achievements will provide better results.

Due to competition, especially in Lappeenranta, the company should be increasingly creative and fast in their efforts to reach potential markets. It is important to satisfy more customers' expectations.

Combining different types of activities and providing an integration of messages achieves better results.

Due to the results of the survey it seems absolutely meaningless to spend money on media advertisement. Usually, potential customers of the company use Internet and word of mouth as a source of information about services and events in Lappeenranta.

The use of social media represents even more opportunities for defining integrated marketing communication strategy to increase awareness and preference for International Children Club services. The use of tools, including VKontakte, Facebook, word of mouth connects objects with various audiences. Combining blogs and websites with other online tactics will potentially broaden the reach, and lessen the cost, of communicating with the customers.

Through flexible pricing and scheduling, the company can try to attract different target group representatives.

Considering rapid growth of Russian tourist flow, increasing number of immigrants and development of interests in internalization, culture issues and early child development, the management of Satumainen Lapsuus Oy can suggest the growing popularity of the club in the future. Now, thanks to this study the company has more chances to concentrate its resources on the optimal opportunities with the goals of increasing sales and achieving a sustainable competitive advantage.

## **5. Recommendation for the future research**

The author is satisfied with the research results and believes that the outcome of the study meets the objectives. The base for future marketing communications plan for the case company was created and only the final plan just need to be done. The findings of this research can be further used by Satumainen Lapsuus Oy to develop a consumer marketing plan. For the future research the company needs to interview other targets groups (Finnish parents and international parents whose children do not speak Russian at the moment but are ready to learn), recognize their marketing mix (probably, not reduced like in this thesis work) and to create additional marketing communication plan based on the results dedicated to the needs and attitudes of the target groups. This prospect opens up new horizons for the club and allows the company to attract more potential customers.

**The questionnaire for future Friends of the International Children's Club**

1. Name

2. Job

3. Phone

4. E-mail address

5. Children and their date of birth?

6. What kind of associations do you have with the phrase "Fairy-tale childhood"?

7. Are you ready to use the services of the international club kids? (Information about the club)

Yes  No  I do not know  Other

8. How often do you plan to attend?

9. You would suit a firm  schedule  flexible

10. Are you willing to devote more time shopping, if you have more free time?

Yes  No  I do not know  Other

11. What level of prices for the developing lessons you feel appropriate for your family?

12. How do you decide what kind of new services for children you would like to try?

13. How you are looking for information about events and service in Lappeenranta?

14. What are your favorite Web sites on the Internet about Finland and Lappeenranta?

15. What social networks do you use?

16. What newspapers do you read?

17. What magazines do you read?

18. What kind of difficulties do you have sometimes with your children?

19. What kind of lessons do you think might be interesting to your child personally?

Complex classes

Dancing (ballroom, sport, modern, folk, complex dance classes)

Musical  Ballet  Theatre  Sports  Literacy  Speech Therapist

Learning a foreign language (what?)

Study the cultures of other countries (which?)

Needlework

Other

20. A good time to organize lessons for your children?

The best

Acceptable

21. Would you like to attend the club in the summer?

Yes  No  I do not know  Other

Thank you for your participation!

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