



# Improving Effectiveness of External Communication

Case: Tamminen Newsletter

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## ABSTRACT

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This thesis was commissioned by Lihatuksu Harri Tamminen Oy. Tamminen is a family business with decades of experience in production of high-quality meat products in Finland. The company needed expansion in their marketing practices to improve communication and relationship with their customers. The company has not had digital marketing for B2B sector, so there was a need for a new marketing tool that would increase turnover.

The author familiarized herself with scientific literature about digital marketing tools and their importance now, and especially in the future. The research was conducted by qualitative research in the form of phone interviews and in-person interviews. In-person interviews gathered data about the current marketing situation within the company, communication methods with customers and their goals regarding the future. Phone interviews done with the customers included questions like would they benefit from an email newsletter and what kind of content would make it beneficial for them.

Based on the research of recent literature, the author found out the big importance of personalized email marketing. Personalized digital marketing tool delivers the feeling of importance and acknowledgement to the customer. This would benefit the company when trying to maintain the approachability and quick reaction time that are their strengths.

Through the primary data gathered from customer and employee interviews, it was found out that email newsletter would be something that the customers would benefit from. Based on the findings from the interview, a beneficial newsletter would be informative with personalized and themed content including price and campaign information, company values and news. This digital marketing tool would function as a supportive activity to Tamminen's other communication practices. The findings suggest that Tamminen would execute a monthly digital newsletter and invest to an email service provider.

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Key words: external communication, digital marketing, customer relationship, business to business

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

According to Lee & Zhang (2017) importance of company social responsibility (CSR) in companies' strategics have been growing over the past few years. Studies over the years have shown the effectiveness of CSR practices when generating business value as well as the consumers' evaluation of their purchase decision. The consumers today are aware of sustainability agendas and have started to change their daily consumption habits to affect the increase of environmental pollution. They now preferably choose green, recycled and responsibly produced products. (Crowther & Quoquab 2021.)

As stated by IFRC (2020) COVID-19 pandemic has stressed the importance of reliable and good communication. In the time of isolation, it is vital to distribute correct information equally. Taunton (2020) stresses the effect of the pandemic to people's daily communication skills regarding especially the face-to-face communication.

The time spent on different internet-based platforms has increased, which means that the digital skills have been improved and are even now preferred over original communication. It has also made companies need to implement new marketing tools as the digitalization has changed quickly. Email is still the most effective tool in communication, and it is growing. Its' easy access and affordability make it a strong method when wanting to improve company's external communication.

External communication is important to maintain the relationship with customers and grow sales. The commissioner wanted to improve their external communication by utilizing digital communication methods. The hypothesis the author tried to find out was "Is digital newsletter something that the customers would benefit from?" Tamminen must be up to date regarding all current digital marketing methods and deliver their customers all possible tools and content they need. Also, to be on the same level as the other companies and preferably doing things better.

This thesis will help the commissioner company by creating an email marketing plan on how to implement an effective newsletter. Through the improved external

communication, Tamminen would have better relationship with their customers and increase sales.

## 2 THESIS PLAN

This thesis plan introduces the topic and objectives of this thesis. It will also introduce the working methods and thesis process timeline. These are important to include to understand the purpose of this development project. In addition, this chapter will introduce all main concepts and theories related to this field of study.

### 2.1 Topic

The topic of this thesis is improving the company's external communication by launching a new digital marketing tool to support their B2B marketing. The new marketing tool would be directed to their largest customer group, grocery retail. More specifically, the commissioner company suggested that this research would be focused on the external communication with the K Group as a customer, because their purchasing process is different and more direct compared to for example S Group. K Group is one of their largest customers in the grocery retail segment and second largest grocery trade operator in Finland (Kesko 2022).

According to customer satisfaction research made in the case company (Kantar TNS Agri 2017), customers mentioned there was a significant lack in the external communication and the commissioner found it important to improve it in order to preserve the relationship between with the customers and to increase sales.

Currently, the company does not have great effort in digital B2B marketing, and the commissioner saw it as an important improvement area since the businesses are more and more focused on digital marketing and the customers find it valuable. It is crucial for companies nowadays to retain great communication habits with customers to maintain close relationship and receive valuation.

The main focus of this thesis is on the business to business (B2B) marketing, because the company already has significant amount of marketing in the business to consumer (B2C) sector for example social media and website. The company's nature is to sell products to their customers that are other businesses such as grocery stores.

According to Miller (2012) digital marketing is an important way to keep a company competitive and to “establish a one-to-one connection” with the customers. Customers expect a company to have digital marketing, preferably in many media channels. Even a company that has marketing in most media it is important to update the practices and tackle also other channels and methods. Miller (2012) says that customers appreciate the easiness of online business handling and the ability to get information quicker from digital sources. (Miller 2012.)

In the customer satisfaction research made in 2017, it was found that the customers need more communication about new products and that they want to be informed more and frequently about the case company and the industry. Another point mentioned for improvement was that the customer would like the case company to be more self-imposed and sales driven. Implementing a new digital marketing tool would answer to most customer needs mentioned in the customer satisfaction research done in 2017. (Kantar TNS Agri 2017.)

## **2.2 Objectives**

The objective of this thesis is to give recommendations for future development of external communication and customer relationship by implementing a new digital marketing method. Other objective is to increase the purchase power and the conspicuousness of the brand. The objectives of this development project will create recommendations for the company to use in the future. The project will function as a ground plan for further development of external communication in the company for example with consumers.

## **2.3 Research questions**

The following research questions are guidelines through the research that are aimed to be answered in the conclusion section of this study. Determining specific research questions is essential in qualitative research. The answer to the questions will be researched through recent literature regarding digital marketing and communication as well as qualitative interviews. The research questions are shared into one main question (MQ) and two sub-questions (SQ) as follows:



**MQ:** *“How to improve Tamminen’s external communication?”*

**SQ1:** *“How would the customers benefit from a new digital marketing tool?”*

**SQ2:** *“What should the new digital marketing tool contain?”*

The purpose is to help the case company to improve its communication with customers by utilizing digital marketing and create starting outlines for launching a new marketing tool. This marketing tool would function as an informative method for customers to be updated about the company and the industry. The research questions are to be answered through qualitative interviews with the customers and Tamminen employees to find the benefits and the preferred content of the new digital marketing tool.

## **2.4 Concepts**

This thesis will focus on different concepts related to digital marketing. In this chapter the author will explain all important concepts and theories related to communication and digital marketing. This literature review will show the readers an overview of used sources during the research. It will give the readers a better understanding how the research fits to a larger field of study.

The following concepts and marketing theories are defined in this chapter: marketing, digital marketing, business-to-business marketing, communication strategy, customer journey and email marketing. These concepts and theories will conclude the theoretical framework for this thesis.

### **2.4.1 Marketing**

According to Silk (2006, 3) marketing can be described as the actions what organisation must do to “create and exchange value with customers”. Value is achieved when the organisation meets the customer needs. Marketing plays a major role in an organisation’s business strategy and is not only just a matter of a certain department inside a company. Marketing insight is needed in any organisation to achieve profitability. (Silk 2006, 3.)

Silk (2006, 6) stresses that marketing strategy focuses on the customers' needs. When beginning marketing strategy development, the company must acknowledge the target market they strive to serve. The process of determining the certain potential buyers is called segmentation. (Silk 2020, 6.)

Kotler, Armstrong, Harris and He (2020, 1) agrees that marketing is engaging customers and sustaining that relationship profitably. The aim is to create value for customers in order to capture value from customers in return. To maintain and grow current customers, value needs to be delivered. As Kotler et al. (2020, 6,7) puts it, marketing is not only selling and advertising. The current era of marketing focuses on satisfying the customer needs on all sections of the marketing mix. (Kotler et al. 2020, 1,6,7.)

#### **2.4.2 Digital marketing**

Digital marketing is the main concept of this study and a crucial part of modern marketing strategy. Digital media channels today are the digital equivalents of traditional media such as TV, radio and print media.

American Marketing Association (AMA) describes digital marketing in their article "What is Digital Marketing?" as any marketing methods through electronic devices. Digital marketing can utilize different marketing methods such as websites, search engines, blogs, social media or email. Over time, digital marketing has won over most traditional marketing methods because it can reach more consumers. (American Marketing Association 2022.)

DigitalMarketer's report "The Ultimate Guide to Digital Marketing" (2018) describes digital marketing as "the act of promoting and selling products and services by leveraging online marketing tactics such as social media marketing, search marketing and email marketing." DigitalMarketer argues that most purchasing decisions begin online, which makes digital marketing actions crucial for a company to sell anything. (DigitalMarketer 2018.)

Digital marketing campaigns are usually shared into 3 categories: acquisition, monetization and engagement campaigns. Choosing a digital marketing campaign depends on the goals the company plans to achieve. Acquisition campaigns receives new prospects and customers and is an important campaign if a company does not yet have a customer base or wants to increase awareness. (Deiss & Henneberry 2020, 31, 32.)

Deiss & Henneberry (2020, 32) describes monetization campaigns as a way to gain revenue from existing customers. Engagement campaigns are made to build engagement and is used when a company wants to gain new customers and create a community around the company (Deiss & Henneberry 2020, 33). These previous marketing campaigns are used to lead the way of a customer from one step in the customer journey to the next.

The benefits of utilizing digital marketing in a company's marketing strategy are powerful. Having an online presence will create awareness and social sharing, leads new buyers into loyal fans and will shorten the customer journey. AMA (2022) agrees that digital marketing will build and strengthen relationships with customers and improve targeting. The key behind a good digital marketing is to make the right offer at the right time and in the right place (DigitalMarketer 2018, 4).

Westergaard (2016) states that internet, social media and digitalization has changed marketing for good. They now show the way how on company should build the brand and execute their marketing actions.

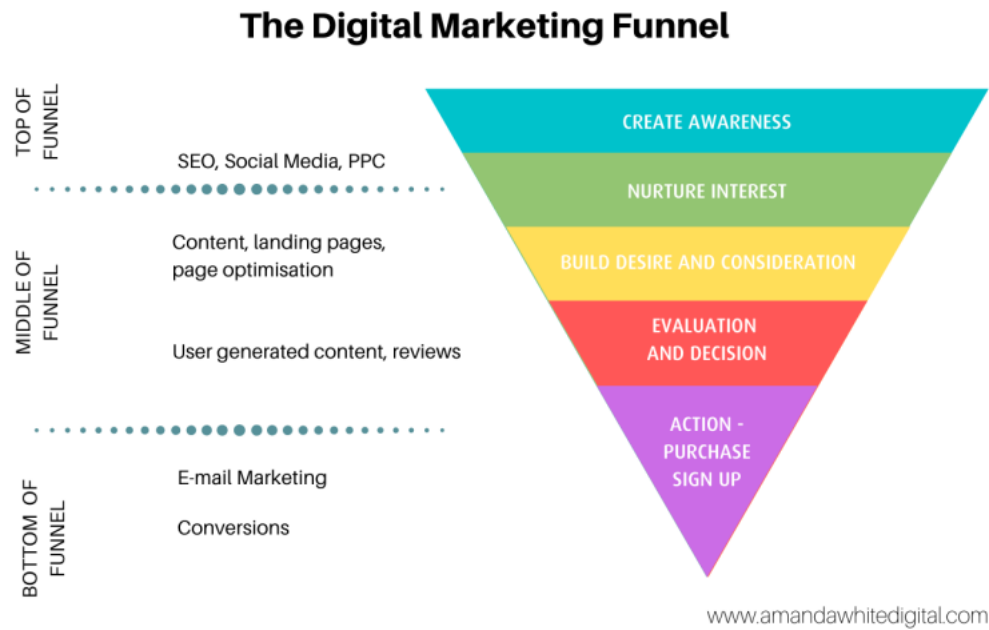


FIGURE 1. Digital marketing funnel model (White 2020.)

### 2.4.3 Business to business marketing

Marketing to businesses is different from marketing to consumers. According to a blogpost by Allie Decker “The Ultimate Guide to B2B Marketing in 2022”, B2B marketing method is any marketing action directed towards another business or organization. B2B marketing focuses on the needs of individuals who make the decisions inside their organization whereas business to consumer (B2C) marketing focuses on the needs of individual customers who usually are the end user of the product or service. Companies that sell products or services to other businesses utilize B2B marketing strategies. The purpose is to create more meaningful relationships with the customers and familiarize them with the brand and its values. (Decker 2022.)



FIGURE 2. B2B and B2C marketing strategies compared (LOCALiQ 2022.)

To start a B2B marketing strategy a company needs to be fully aware of the brand positioning, how the brand is perceived by the customer. For any company that is doing marketing actions, determining the target audience is a fundamental part of the marketing strategy. This means to find the people who are looking for the products that the company can offer. Next steps are to run a competitive analysis and explore the possible marketing channels that are going to be used. (Decker 2022.)

Decker (2022) says that 93% of B2B marketers use email as a digital marketing method and 83% use newsletter as part of their content marketing to share the content and the brand. 40% of B2B marketers say that newsletters are most critical form of marketing to their success (Decker 2022).

According to Taylor (2017, 4) digitalization has changed marketing in a way that it cannot be compared to what it was before anymore. The purpose for all marketing actions is generating leads and every organization should implement a marketing strategy to achieve that. Taylor (2017, 5) stresses the importance of B2B marketing that is about engaging customers in consequential ways that will make a difference when compared to the competitors. A functioning B2B marketing strategy should focus on delivering value to the customer and thus creating a positive outcome for the company.

Taylor (2017, 9) finds that in today's marketing, the customers are in control and by reaching the customer through multi-way engagement channels an organization can get to the "hearts and minds of the customers". She sees that companies are focusing on the wrong parts such as all different tools and technicalities but are forgetting their relevance and effect to marketing. All digital marketing tools should be used in consideration and find the best possible way to communicate and engage with the customers, to understand the situation through customer's eyes. In digitalized B2B marketing, the customer journey has already started before the first contact by being able to find any information online that affects the buying decision. (Taylor 2017, 9-11.)

B2B marketing is heavily customer relationship driven. The customer is an employee within an organization that is in a decision-making role inside the leadership team. The relationship with the supplier organization can be left to the service or delivery team and their actions will affect the future buying. The customer is not only buying the product, but they are also buying the company and their values. (Taylor 2017, 15,17.)

Taylor (2017, 18) agrees that face to face and email marketing, both being traditional ways to do marketing, have the most effect in B2B marketing.

## **2.5 Theories**

In this section the author will introduce some theories that are applicable for the theme of this thesis.

### **2.5.1 Customer journey**

What marketing is all about is developing mutually beneficial relationship with prospects, leads and customers. Deiss & Henneberry (2020, 23) call this the customer journey, also known as customer value journey. The role of digital marketing in customer journey is to lead the customer, lead or prospect to the next stage to finally reach the stage of purchasing.

Customer journey starts by defining the customer persona. Customers differ and it is important that the company makes the customer persona as specific as possible. By doing so, it is easier to create personalized content specifically for that customer. (Deiss & Henneberry 2020, 16-23.)

Morgan (n.d.) stresses that more companies are starting to understand that the customers are their biggest asset. In order to plan good customer experiences, it is important to understand the current situation. (Morgan n.d.)

The process of making a customer persona has many variables. The company must think about the values, sources of information, demographics, challenges and possible objections. In email marketing, making a customer persona can help to design the content of the email and ensuring the right receiver. Most importantly, the aim of a great defined customer persona can move the person from an initial thought to an action. (Deiss & Henneberry 2020, 16-22.)

According to Deiss & Henneberry (2020, 23) Customer journey follows these eight steps:

1. Generating awareness
2. Driving engagement
3. Building subscribers
4. Increasing conversions
5. Building excitement
6. Making the core offer sale
7. Developing brand advocates
8. Growing brand promoters

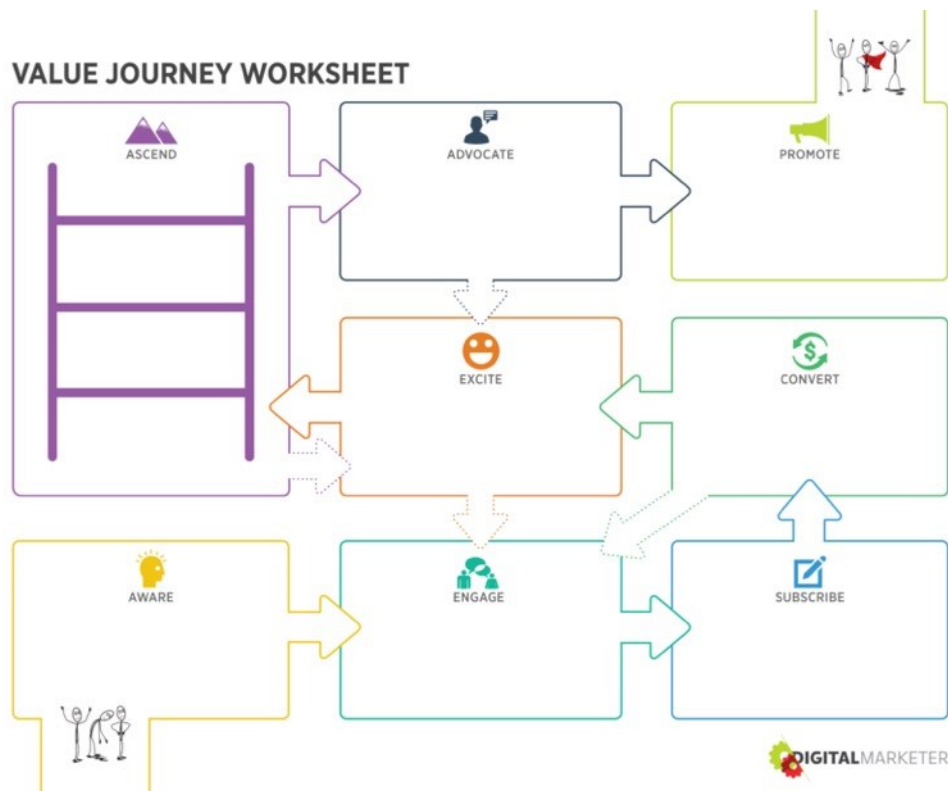


FIGURE 3. Customer value journey (DigitalMarketer 2018.)

In B2B marketing, customer journey can be described as buyer's journey, and it can be shorter than the usual customer journey. According to Decker (2022) it has 3 stages, awareness, consideration and decision.

Making a customer journey leads the customers from one step to the next. A company will plan this journey with certain goals and thus will create an ideal customer journey that will be supported by smart and influential digital marketing methods and campaigns.



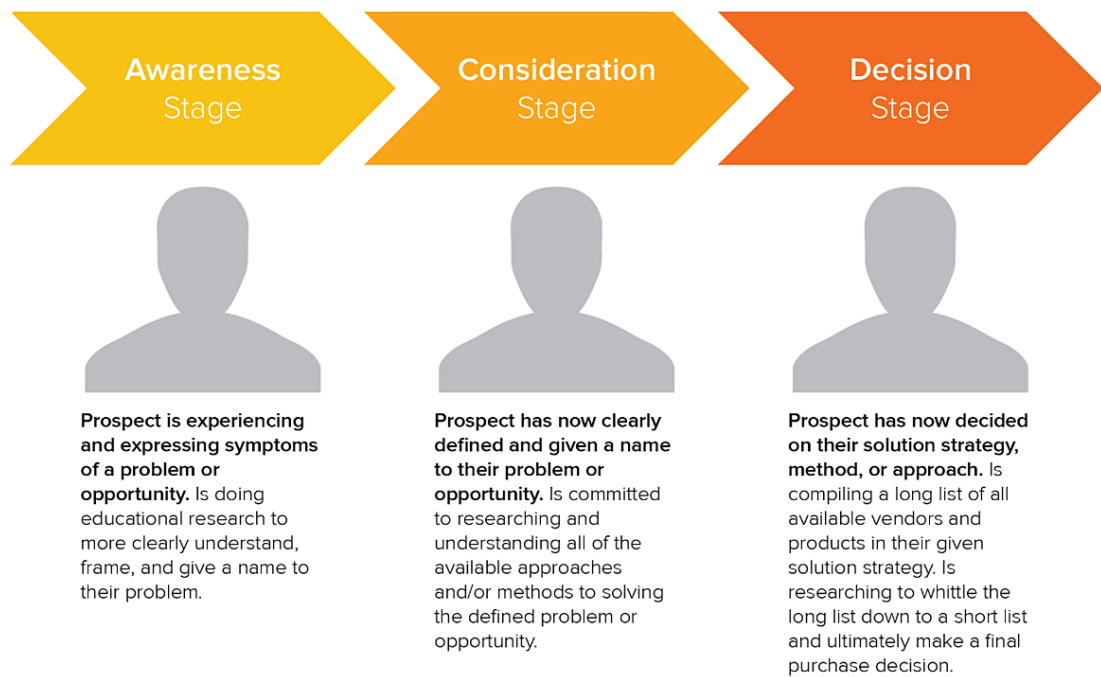


FIGURE 4. B2B buyer's journey (Decker 2022.)

### 2.5.2 Email marketing and newsletter as digital marketing tools

Deiss & Henneberry (2020, 6) state email marketing one of the strongest marketing methods as “the Holy Grail of lead generation”. It is also the cheapest and highest-converting method. DigitalMarketer (2018, 11) states that a study from DMA and Demand Metric have found that email marketing had a median ROI of 122%.

Main things to remember in email marketing tactics are making sure that the email finds its right recipient, it will be opened, it will generate engagement and it will preferably be an automatised process. Gunelius (2018) says that the power is in the email marketing list. Email marketing works for both small and large enterprises because email reaches almost everyone. (Gunelius 2018.)

Email marketing has many advantages such as being both cost-effective and time-effective and it can be measured and personalized. By utilizing email marketing company can do segmentation and create valuable relationships and build trust with the customers (Gunelius 2018).

Deiss & Henneberry (2020, 220) name three types of emails of which a company should pick one that fits their business goals: promotional, relational and transactional emails. Promotional emails are found the most popular email marketing method and Deiss & Henneberry claim that 66% of consumers had made a purchase in result of a promotional email. Promotional emails should not be used as the only digital marketing tool because it doesn't always create a meaningful relationship with the customers.

Transactional emails are sent as a response to an action that the customer has made with the company. These can be for example order confirmations, coupons or password reminders. They are used to give the customer the overview how the company does business and possibly lead to reengagement. (Zebra 2018.)

Relational emails focus on delivering value to the customers through free informative content about the company. Relational emails include newsletters, blog articles, surveys, announcements and more. Relational emails do not focus on making sales offers, however they are designed to build the relationship with the customer. (Zebra 2018.)

When a company chooses an email service provider (ESP), it will allow send emails in two ways: broadcast or autoresponders. Broadcast emails are sent manually to the whole list of recipients or some part of the list. Autoresponders are designed to be sent when a person makes a triggering action. By segmenting and automating the company is more likely to reach the right customers. (DigitalMarketer 2018, 168.)

There are different campaigns in email marketing that company can implement. In this thesis the author will focus on segmentation campaign because it will benefit the commissioner company and its customers the most. Segmentation campaign is a manual promotional campaign that is sent to the entire customer subscription list. (DigitalMarketer 2018, 175.)

Email newsletter is digital communication tool sent from a company to a list of subscribers. In B2B marketing, newsletter is one of the best marketing tools.

When creating an efficient newsletter, Taylor (2017) reminds that it is good to write enticing subject lines, stick to one call to action per email and segment the email to reach the most relevant audience. A company must make sure that the designs of the email are responsive when creating the right email can convert to a sale. As mentioned before, B2B marketers say that newsletters are the most critical marketing tool to gain revenue. The fundamental of effective email marketing is to send effective and creative content. (Taylor 2017.)

The desired outcome of email marketing is profit and growth, but the idea is to move the customer from one step of the customer journey to the next.

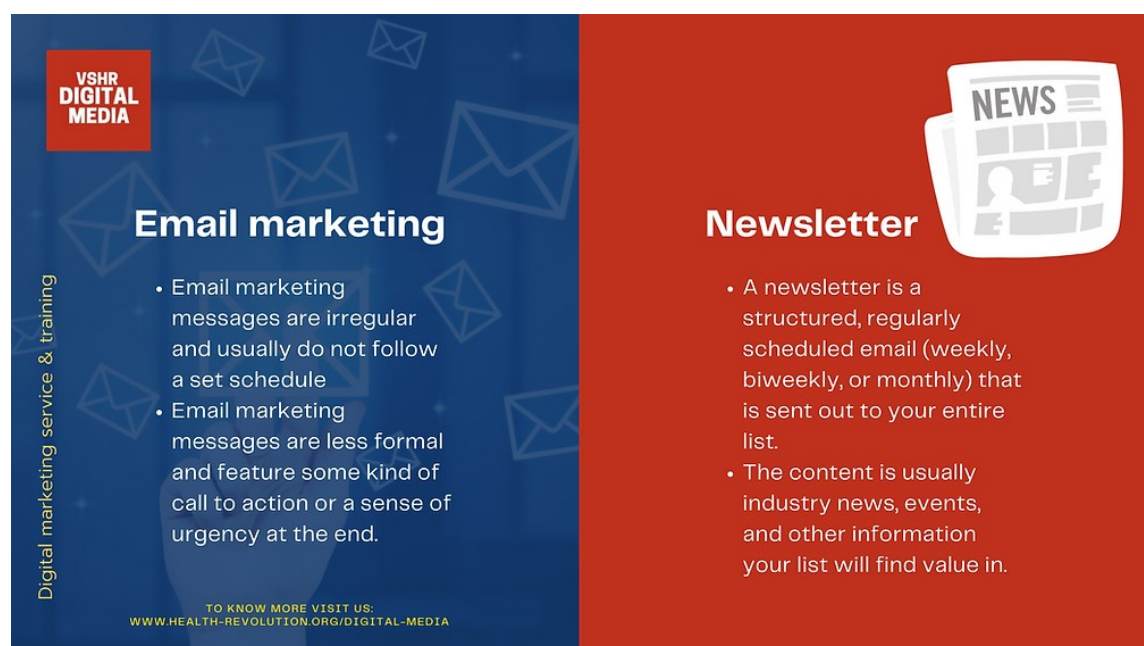


FIGURE 5. Email marketing and newsletter compared (Pham 2021.)

### 2.5.3 Communication strategy

Communication strategy is a framework for a company on how they should communicate with their staff, customers, investors and everyone in the supply chain. Cuofano (2022) points out that investing in communication strategy is an investment to success. Success in a company is heavily dependent on the individuals within the company and how they communicate with internal and external stakeholders (Cuofano 2022). Communication with the customers is mandatory to truly

understand their needs. Communication strategy will reflect the company vision and should be planned around that.

Communication is a big part of a business's daily practices and fundamental part of their success. A company's management should have great communication skills in order to communicate effectively to the subordinates. They are then responsible of the performance of the employees, and it depends how the communication has been executed. (Toppr n.d.)

Internal communication (IC) is the transmission of information within an organisation. The purpose is to maintain effective flow of information between departments, employees and management of the company. The goal is to improve the performance of the employees. (Toppr n.d.) This transmission of information can be done verbally or electronically, and it can be informal or formal. This depends on the relationship between the people communicating. Examples of internal communicating are group meetings, company intranet, staff communication and emails within a company.

External communication is the transmission of information between two organisations or between the business and another person outside the company. These persons include customers and government officials. A company should invest to improving external communication because it affects their image.

Common methods of external communication are advertisements, response to a customer through email, press conference, annual reports and letters, print media, face-to-face meetings, tender documents, brochures, feedbacks and questionnaires. Organizations invest a lot of time and money to improve their external communication to deliver an impressive image. (Vecchiato 2022.)

Vecchiato describes external communication in his article "What Are External Communications?" (2022) as the "processes responsible for communicating with people and entities outside your organisation." External communication should have formal approach and it should promote company's values and culture.

What comes to marketing communication (MarCom), it is a fundamental part of company's marketing efforts. It includes for example advertising, direct marketing, branding, online presence, printed materials and sponsorships. Marketing communication is the communication between a company and the customer that is the end user of the product or service. The objectives of MarCom are to "create and sustain demand and preference for the product" and "shorten the sales cycle." (MaRS n.d.)

Businesses must develop both internal and external communication for better performance and information exchange (Vecchiato 2022).

## **2.6 Working methods and data**

The primary data for this thesis will be collected in the form of interviews. The author will be interviewing 9 customers of Tamminen which are Finnish grocery retail stores under the retail trade enterprise K Group. These stores include grocery stores in different sizes and locations. The people participating in the customer interviews are the persons responsible for the buying and selection of the store's meat department.

Also, the author interviews the employees of the case company in order to understand more about the situation of external communication in the company. These interviewees are employees in the marketing and sales department who have more insight in customer relations from the day-to-day basis.

Secondary data was gathered from recent literature in the field of digital marketing and other online sources. Another source of secondary data used was pre-existing customer satisfaction research made within the company in 2017 (Kantar TNS Agri). The author used the results of this research to understand the customer needs for implementing a new marketing tool. The answers from the research were clearly indicating for developing the communication with the customers.

In this research, the author is using individual one-to-one interviews as a qualitative data collection method. Through this qualitative data collection method, the author can join the discussion and follow-up on answers in real time.

According to Edwards & Holland (2013, 3), interviews can be shared into 3 different types: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Edwards & Holland (2013, 3) mention that structured interviews are following a particular questionnaire with questions asked in the same order from every interviewee, leaving the interviewer less space to be flexible.

The qualitative interviews done in this study are semi-structured which means that the interviewer has the possibility to make decisions more freely, for example change the structure of the interview within different contexts and interactions. Nevertheless, semi-structured interview follows a list of questions and focuses on certain theme around the research questions that the researcher wants to find answers to (Edwards & Holland 2013, 29).

The data collected from the interviews of customers will be analysed together with the data of the interviews from the employees of Tamminen. The theory of email marketing will be used when interviewing the customers. The theory of SOSTAC will be used in the interviews with Tamminen employees to understand better how they see situation now and in the future. The data is analysed later using thematic analysis to find out patterns that came up in the interviews.

## **2.7 Thesis process**

This chapter will include the thesis process and how it will go forward throughout the study.

The first chapter is introduction, that will introduce the topic of the thesis briefly. Chapter two is the thesis plan that includes sections such as topic, objectives and data collection method. Chapter three will introduce the case company in detail as well as the food and grocery retail industries in Finland. The fourth chapter is called literature review where the author will go through all significant literature used in the research to understand the theories and explain the concepts.

Fifth chapter will focus on the research objectives and data gathering. It will also analyse the data and talk about the findings. The data will be also used in chapter six, where the author will introduce the action plan for improving external communication. Finally, the seventh chapter is the conclusion where the author goes through the recommendations for the commissioner.

### 3 THE CASE COMPANY

The following chapter introduces more thoroughly the commissioning company and the grocery retail industry. Introduction into company functions is crucial to understand the current situation and why the research project is needed.

#### 3.1 Tamminen

Lihatukku Harri Tamminen Oy (Tamminen) is a Finnish medium-sized meat production company. It is a dedicated family business founded in 1994, now running in the second generation. The business operations include cutting, packing and refining Finnish beef, pork and lamb. Tamminen is a subsidiary of HKScan Finland. (Tamminen 2022.)



FIGURE 6. Tamminen logo (Tamminen 2022).

Almost 30 years in business, the company has grown to be a nationwide supplier with approximately 200 employees in all branches in Vantaa, Espoo, Talma and Luumäki. The main office and original premises are located in Vantaa. All branches are located close to the main roads, near big logistic centers in the capital city area and therefore are practical for all business connections.

All branches have different responsibilities with Vantaa being the starting point of the process by cutting the meat raw material to then distribute further. Espoo branch specializes in producing special fresh meat products, raw sausages and hand-cut beef cattle for restaurant and service counter use. Talma branch is specialized in smoked products with their traditional smokery and Luumäki specializes in air-drying. (Tamminen 2022.)



Tamminen products consist of different product families with personalized logos to appear more distinct for customers. The product families include smokery products, organic products, beef cattle products and their original products with the simplified company logo. Smoked products are either made by curing in a smoke sauna or using the alder smoke method. Organic product family emphasizes organic, ethically and GMO-free produced quality beef, pork and lamb.

Beef cattle (Rotukarja in Finnish) is the prime product family under Tamminen brand that stresses high-quality, antibiotic-free, GMO-free and tenderness of cattle breed beef. Beef cattle is reared ethically, allowing the animals to graze and move freely. These dedications guarantee the unique texture and flavor in the meat. (Tamminen 2022.) Products with the plain Tamminen logo are focused on the traditionally reared, tasty beef and pork products that are adapted for enjoying during different seasons.

The customers of Tamminen consists of retail, Foodservice (previously HoReCa) and industrial businesses. The retail customers represent grocery retail stores in Finland, and it is their largest customer group. The largest establishments in the retail customer group are S Group, K Group and Lidl.

### **3.1.1 Strategy**

Tamminen is striving to increase profitable sales and cashflow by developing innovative concepts and expanding their selection of offered products. They are improving performance, efficiency and sincerity in business processes by active leadership and open communication. Every action is based on sustainable development and accountability which delivers more value for the stakeholders and consumers. (Tamminen 2022.)

The strategy at Tamminen consists of six guidelines that show direction in everyday practices at the company. These pillars are customer-oriented approach, products, personnel, excellence, development and investments. Customer-oriented approach means their dedication for customers and consumers by always fulfilling their needs and expectations. One of their strengths is the high-quality and responsibly produced meat products including organic product selection and

beef cattle that differs them from the competitors and brings more value to their customers. (Tamminen 2022.)

Personnel being one of the supporting factors of a business, Tamminen promises to guarantee their employees a safe and motivating working environment with regularly executed opportunities for further training. The company is continuously developing their policies to improve the well-being at the workplace by emphasizing values such as equality, justice and safety. Tamminen names one of their goals to be the most desired employer. (Tamminen 2022.)

At Tamminen, emphasizing excellence means actions in production methods as well as in product development. To achieve excellence and the most efficient production process, Tamminen highlights the importance of modern, secure and cost-effective production control system. Combining the company's precious handicraft culture and professional employees creates excellence.

Development in leadership and communication is important when striving to be the forerunner in responsibly bred meat in the industry. Tamminen is continuously working on their policies taking responsibility and environmental matters in great consideration. Tamminen invests to cost-effective and sustainable growth to keep up with demand and increase productivity and efficiency.

The vision at the company is to be the most wanted partner in quality meat products. Their mission is described as: "quality meat with handicraft's label." (Tamminen 2022.)

The purpose for the business's existence is to fulfill the needs and expectations of the consumers and customers. Tamminen is aiming to be the most sought-after partner in the market by offering personal and customer-oriented cooperation. The strengths in their business strategy are agility, quick reaction time, trendiness and continuous development. (Tamminen 2022.)

### 3.1.2 Responsibility

According to Reckmann (2022) corporate social responsibility (CSR) is described as “a form of self-regulation that reflects a business’s accountability and commitment to contributing to the well-being of communities and society through various environmental and social measures.” Today, CSR plays an important role in a company’s brand perception and both society and customers are demanding companies to have accountability and action plans. CSR practices are a way to show consumers and stakeholders the business’s stance on the matter. (Reckmann 2022.)

Tamminen (2022) states responsibility for the company means accountability in everyday actions and choices from primary production to the final product. The aim is to create a carbon neutral supply chain. All products offer 100% Finnish, responsibly produced quality meat for consumers and commercial kitchens. By supporting domestic labor, Tamminen produces safe and pure food for everyone. (Tamminen 2022.)

Responsibility at the company is shared into 4 categories that include product safety, environment, community and animal well-being. Tamminen is part of the meat industry, which makes animal well-being crucial to include in the company’s responsibility actions.

Product safety means safe packaging materials and that the products are made only of 100% Finnish, ethically and responsibly produced meat feedstock. To achieve the immaculate finished product, the quality is monitored and developed by for example, researching and improving the product preservation. The production process focuses on valuing the feedstock and minimizing the additives.

Environment aspect at the company focuses on reducing plastic in packaging and actively working on to decrease the carbon footprint to have carbon neutral food production in the future. For example, carbon colored packaging has been discontinued and there has been a 71% decline in plastic use in volume product packaging (Tamminen 2022). All Tamminen product packages are recyclable, and they are continuously working towards minimal water use and food waste.

The community consists of 200 employees and is important value at Tamminen. Feedstock is primarily purchased from domestic contract farms. Employees are appreciated by investing in different advantages such as well-being benefits and optional insurances to achieve accident-free workplace. All partners in the chain are domestic from the breeder to material suppliers.

Protecting animal well-being starts from the contract farms, where the farmers are committed to take care of the health and wellness of the animals. The healthcare and wellness criteria of the production animals in Finland are strictly defined and monitored. Wellness criteria include for example, taking care of the overall cleanliness of the farm, providing comfortable and soft place for sleeping and resting and not using hormones for breeding.

Today, consumers might choose a company's service or product over another based on their accountability actions. Tamminen agrees that responsibility is one of their strengths that creates a clear competitive advantage in the market.

### **3.2 Food industry and grocery retail trade in Finland**

Tamminen is a part of the food industry in Finland. Their main field of operation is production of foodstuff and subindustry is butchery, meat preservation handling and manufacturing of meat products. Food industry is the fourth largest segment of industries in Finland. It employs approx. 38 000 people and has 1800 establishments. In addition, there is approximately 1000 local food companies in Finland. Almost 80% of raw material used in the industry is domestic. (Ruokatieto Yhdistys ry 2022.)

According to Statistics Finland's 2018 report, the biggest subindustries by revenue are meat and dairy industries that together make up almost half (46%) of the revenue of the food industry. There are approximately 214 companies in the meat industry. (Statistics Finland 2018.) On average, a Finnish person eats 40kg boneless meat per year (Luonnonvarakeskus 2021).

As previously mentioned in the chapter 3.1.2, in Finland meat rearing is responsible and strictly monitored. The production chain can be tracked from the beginning and is transparent to consumers. Antibiotic-free and salmonella-free breeding is self-evident. All cows and pigs have their own system for tracking the well-being of the animal, which is unique from the rest of the world. Responsibly and sustainably produced food is ecologically, economically, socially and culturally beneficial. To achieve responsible meat production, surrounding nature should retain its diversity and carrying capacity. (MTK 2020.)

According to Clausnitzer (2021) the grocery retail industry in Finland is “characterized by an oligopostic market operated by two retail trade groups: S Group and K Group.” In 2020, S Group held the largest market share with 46% of Finnish grocery retail and the share of K Group, also known as Kesko, was 36.9%.

The third largest company in the sector is the German supermarket chain, Lidl. Lidl entered the Finnish grocery retail market in 2002 and had 9.5% market share in 2020. (Clausnitzer 2021.)

The two largest grocery retailers’ businesses function differently. In this thesis, the author focuses on K Group because of its flexibility and the K-retailers’ authority in the purchase process. Kesko in Finland follows the chain business model, where independent K-retailers carry on retail trade in chains that are managed by Kesko. K-retailers are independent entrepreneurs and are solely responsible for the store including customer satisfaction, personnel and business profitability. K-retailers can affect on store-specific business ideas and selection. In the beginning of 2022, there were 1083 K-retailers in Finland. (Kesko 2022.)

Kesko operations does not limit only to grocery trade but has functions also in building and technical trade and car trade and has around 1800 stores in chain operations also in Sweden, Norway, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. K Group’s retail sales in 2021 was around 15 billion euros. (Kesko 2022.)

Kesko grocery store chains are K-Citymarket, K-Supermarket, K-Market and Neste K. These stores also can be found online and makes K Group the market leader in online grocery in Finland. Kespro is the leading foodservice wholesale provider in Finland. In grocery trade sector, Kesko is known for their customer-

orientation, quality and wide selection. They invest in store-specific business ideas to improve customer experiences. (Kesko 2022.)

## **4 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

In this chapter the author will go through the objectives of the research and the research methods used. This chapter includes the structure and design of the research. The results of the data collected from the interviews will be reviewed. Previously mentioned theories will be used to analyse the interviews. The interview questions can be found in Appendices.

### **4.1 Research objectives**

The objective of this thesis is to find out how to improve the case company's external communication. Through the research, the author wanted to find out the current communication strategies at the company and what they could improve or add to get the most benefit for the customers and increase sales.

Before starting the research project, the commissioner company had already planned to launch a new digital marketing tool in the form of email newsletter but not had made any actions towards that. According to previous research made in the company (Kantar TNS Agri 2017), the customers have mentioned that they lack consistent information about the company products and the industry. Decided together with the commissioner, this thesis would find out if the newsletter is something that the customers would really benefit from and if so, what the newsletter should contain.

The author interviewed both the customers and sales and marketing employees of Tamminen to get an understanding what the commissioner wants to reach in their digital communication and what the customers could benefit from.

To reach the right interviewees, the author needed to interview the right person in the buying process. This person in K Group grocery store chains is the meat department representative, store manager or the K-retailer depending on the type or size of the store. The digital marketing tool would be designed and aimed for that person because they are the ones communicating with Tamminen and deciding the purchases.

## 4.2 Research method

Choosing either qualitative or quantitative data collection method depends on what is desired to find out within the research. In this research, the author wants to find answers to the research questions by finding out thoughts and ideas of the customers and employees of Tamminen, which is qualitative data. Qualitative research wants to find content including words, concepts and ideas. Compared to quantitative data, qualitative data is not numerical and cannot be measured. (Warren 2020.)

After doing research on qualitative data collection, the author decided to use phone interviews for customers and face to face interviews for the Tamminen employees. Using interviews as the primary data collection method, the author can get great and accurate results in the most practical way.

Warren (2011) says interviewing is an efficient method for gathering qualitative data. Qualitative interviewing is similar to casual conversation with the researcher asking questions and respondent answering. The interviews have previously conducted list of questions but unlike surveys, the questions are open and don't have alternative responses. (Warren 2011.)

Ikonen (2017) states that interviewing on the phone gives the respondent privacy and anonymity. The respondent can choose the location and time for the interview and rescheduling is easier. Ikonen (2017) argues that phone interviewing breaks the authority between the participants and is a way to confront a person more easily. (Ikonen 2017.)

The most common type of qualitative interviews is semi-structured interviews, which the author has chosen to utilize in this thesis (DeJonckheere & Vaughn 2019). In semi-structured interviews all respondents do not have to be asked the same questions in the same order. The questions are more open-ended, and the researcher has the freedom to alternate questions and ask additional questions depending on the atmosphere of the situation and how the respondent answers (Doyle 2022).



#### Key characteristics of semistructured interviews

- ✓ Loose, flexible structure
- ✓ Iterative
- ✓ Groups or individual participants
- ✓ Scheduled in advance
- ✓ Gathers information from key informants who can inform the topic
- ✓ Insight into participant perspectives
- ✓ Deep exploration of participant thoughts and experiences
- ✓ Often the sole data source for a qualitative study

FIGURE 7. Semi-structured interviews (DeJonckheere & Vaughn 2019).

### 4.3 Designing the research

After defining the objectives of the research, the research needs to be planned. The research tries to find the answers to the research questions that were previously stated. The main research question for this thesis was “How to improve the company’s external communication?” The interview questions were designed around this theme, to gather answers to the research questions.

The author wanted to find out information in qualitative matter and found out qualitative interview the most appropriate research method for this thesis. In qualitative research method, the research focuses on the quality of the data and not primarily on the numerical data.

The main group that the author interviewed was the customers of Tamminen. Like previously mentioned, the thesis focuses on the communication between Tamminen and one of their customer groups, K Group customers. These customers are the persons responsible for purchasing Tamminen products in K Group grocery store’s meat department. The interviews for the customers followed a certain list of questions that the author wanted to find answers to.

Other interviewees were the employees of Tamminen that included the marketing manager and the commercial director. These interviews were done individually

and included different questions because of their role in the company and different view on the relationship with the customers.

The phone sales executive at Tamminen is in contact with the K Group customers daily via phone and assisted collecting the customer interviewees. After coming up with a list of nine customers, they were informed in advance about the research, its topic and a possible time and a date for the interview. The interviewees included customers from all three different types of K Group grocery stores: K-Market, K-Supermarket and K-Citymarket, to gather diverse data.

Before conducting the interviews, the author familiarized herself with how to implement an interview, to be ready to encounter the respondents professionally. The customer interviews were done via phone calls and the employee interviews were done face to face on Tamminen premises. Both were scheduled in advance and interview questions were designed clearly.

Interview questions were designed to best find out the answers to the research questions. The author wanted to know how the customers see their current communication with Tamminen and what they think could improve it. By interviewing the employees of Tamminen the author wanted to find out what can be improved in their external communication and what they want to achieve by doing so.

When designing interviews, one of the main things is to design them accordingly to the respondent's profession and think how they should be approached. The language should be formal but kept casual with having not too many fancy words, so that the respondent feels confident in answering and understand the questions correctly.

The author chose to interview two persons at the commissioner company who know most about their marketing strategy and is familiar with their communication practices with K Group customers. The employee interviews were designed to be more open style so that the respondents could immerse to certain subjects if they prefer.

The interviews were first transcribed and translated to English and then analysed by differentiating the interviews by their role: customers, the marketing manager and the commercial director. Vital part of interview data analysis to maintain the reliability is transcribing, where the author writes down the interview answers precisely. (Rev 2021.)

Rev's (2022) blogpost argues that there are two main approaches when analysing qualitative data: inductive and deductive. In inductive qualitative analysis are divided to thematic content analysis and narrative analysis. Both are applicable for unstructured interview analysis.

The qualitative data from the interviews is analysed later in this chapter using the inductive approach and thematic content analysis as the qualitative data analysis (QDA) method. Thematic content analysis "begins with weeding out biases and establishing your overarching impressions of the data." In thematic analysis, the data is confronted by searching patterns (themes) in the materials rather than with predetermined framework. (Rev 2021.)

In this research the author wanted to find out the customer's and employees experiences and opinions, which can be found easier by utilizing the thematic content analysis which tries to find similarities in the respondents' answers. These similarities will be later identified and put together to see which themes can be found repeatedly in the data. (Warren 2020.)

Even after planning an interview to detail and according to the respondent, it can turn out somewhat unexpected.

#### **4.4 Validity, reliability & limitations**

Mohajan (2017) states reliability and validity the two most important features in the evaluation of a good research. Validity focuses on how the research measures the subject and how well it is done. Reliability focuses on the reliability of the data and data gathering method and possible errors. (Mohajan 2017.)

The aim of the research was to find out how Tamminen can improve their communication with their customers, which made it clear that the customers must be interviewed to find out the answers. Phone interviews were the most practical method for the qualitative interview in this research because of the geographical location of the customers. In person interviews might have given more wide responds and could not be cancelled as easy as phone interviews. The Tamminen employees were also interviewed to find out their opinions what they would want to achieve in communication in the future.

The customers are located around Finland so in person interviews were not possible to implement. Tamminen's customers are contacted daily via phone, which made it easier to approach them and get them participate in the interview. The grocery store industry is busy and therefore, phone interviews were chosen as an efficient and quick method to gather answers to not bother the respondents too much during their working hours.

First, it was designed to have about ten customer interviews but ended up having seven customer interviews and two interviews with Tamminen employees. The author decided that would be enough to have needed information, because the interviews gathered a good amount of data. The short time frame and schedule of the thesis also impacted that not more interviews could be implemented.

Most efficient way to reach the customers was via phone because that is the communication channel the customers utilize the most. There are some downsides to phone interviews due to that they are faceless. The distance makes it harder to analyse words and the voice emphasis, faces and body language. The identity cannot be verified in phone interviews, especially if the respondent is not familiar.

#### **4.5 Interviews with customers**

The objective of interviewing the customers of Tamminen was to understand the current communication situation, what they might be lacking in external communication and would they benefit from a new digital communication tool to improve the communication. Theories of SOSTAC and email marketing strategy were

used as a background in these interviews to find out what the current situation is and what they want in the future and to sense if they would benefit from email communication.

The commissioner helped gather a list of customers from different K Group grocery stores by calling them a week in advance to decide a possible time and date for the interview and inform them about the thesis topic and research objectives.

Even though the date and time for the phone interview was decided the author acknowledged that the interview can be delayed or changed to another date due to the busyness and fast-paced work environment in the grocery retail industry. The phone interviews were done at the commissioner company premises over two days, because the author could then call them again next day if they were not able to answer on the first day. Nine customer interviews were designed however seven customers were reached.

The interviews followed a semi-structured interview method that has the freedom of adding questions or changing order of the questions according to the situation. The interview was formed as a thematic interview that follows themes in the interview questions to make it more structural. The first theme in the interview focused on the current situation of the communication, then moved on to the possible improvement areas and lastly talking about digital communication and email communication tool.

According to Deiss & Henneberry (2020, 6) email has been found the most effective marketing tool. Nevertheless, email is not commonly used in grocery retail business neither as a marketing nor a communication method. All respondents mentioned that phone communication is the main communication tool and found the most efficient in the fast-paced business and quick reaction required situations that are confronted daily in all grocery stores.

Many respondents mentioned that they rarely utilize any digital communication channels Tamminen offers when they are lacking information for example about a product. When respondents were asked if there is enough communication at the moment between the store and Tamminen, most of them said yes, but there

could be something digital included. Especially after the Covid-19 pandemic, face-to-face meetings have been found less necessary and do not bring much value to the store or in the relationship. Few respondents mentioned that the material delivered in these meetings such as paper catalogues, could be delivered digitally.

TABLE 1. Newsletter ideas by customers

Prices	Price changes, prices clearly indicated
Campaigns	Weekly or monthly campaigns in advance
Offers	Limited time offers
Catalogues	Paper catalogues could be modified to digital
Special products	Detailed information regarding special cut products, English name products
Recipes	Cooking instructions and recipe ideas around products and themes
Seasons	Newsletter could be sent according to seasons
Themes	Newsletter should be planned around a theme for example Oktoberfest
Additional material	Additional information that could be printed out, for example pictures and posters
Industry	Insight to the meat industry, farmers, carvers, breeding
Responsibility	Emphasis on Tamminen values and responsibility

The respondents were asked what Tamminen could add in their digital communication and what topics they would want them to emphasize in that. It can be seen in the Table 1 that the customers would want weekly or monthly campaign and price information, which is something Tamminen does not yet do. Some mentioned that they get that kind of information from the competitors, and it is very beneficial when planning ahead. More information the customers would like to get about special products with English names, special cut products and new seasonal products. In addition, recipes, and cooking instructions around them, that the store could then utilize by informing customers or print out in the store.

They would appreciate Tamminen adding something digital to support their other activities and stress not to get rid of phone communication. This indicates that digital communication tools alone would not benefit the customers but would work as a supporting activity to the main channel of communication that is phone communication. Some respondents don't see digital communication beneficial in the industry or in their role.

Regarding information sent via digital communication channels, the customers would like to know about responsibility in the company, insight about carvers and farmers, company values and breeders, more detailed information about beef cattle, trends and most mentioned, prices and campaigns. As mentioned earlier, responsibility is one of the main competitive advantages at Tamminen and it should be more emphasized through the communication channels. In the Table 1 shown above, it can be seen content ideas the customers would prefer in the digital newsletter to make it beneficial.

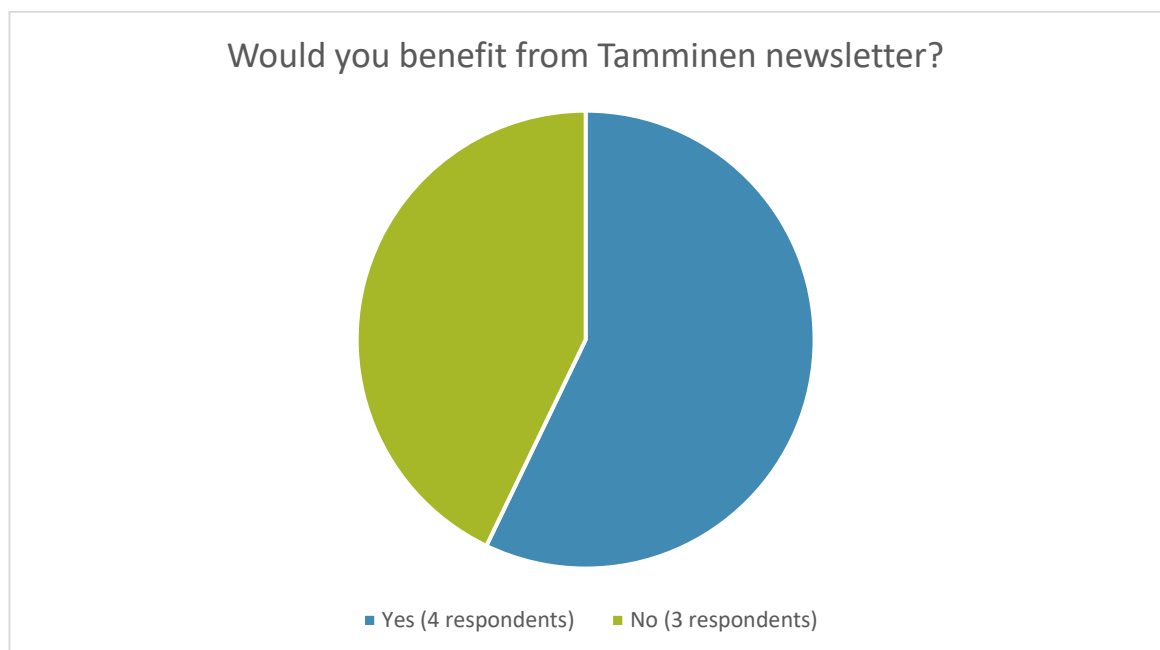


FIGURE 8. Benefit from Tamminen newsletter

Later part of the interview focused on the theme of a possible digital newsletter to be sent and the customers' thoughts about its efficiency. Deiss & Henneberry (2022, 219) state that email marketing grows the business through effective relationship-based marketing. As shown in Figure 8, four customers mentioned they

would benefit from the newsletter in case it contains important and interesting information. Three customers said that they would not subscribe the newsletter because it would not give additional value compared to current situation. This could indicate that some stores buy more of their products, different size of stores or are too busy.

In B2B marketing, newsletter has been found one of the best marketing tools (Taylor 2017). Respondents were asked what beneficial newsletter should contain and they mentioned things such as new products, themes for example octoberfest, recipe ideas for that season, offers and prices and changes in the company. A good newsletter should be anticipating, personalized and themed.

The respondents were asked about how much a digital newsletter would affect their purchase decision and they agreed that it would affect. They emphasized that Tamminen should still have phone communication and remind them about the newsletter sent. Some said that it would affect in a way that when they see an interesting theme there, they could then implement that theme in their own department and plan it around those Tamminen products. If seen new products or good campaigns there more often, they would be reminded about them and are more likely to buy them.

Based on the gathered data from the customer interviews, it was found out that the customers would appreciate digital communication that would support their main channel of communication, phone communication. The newsletter should be informative including campaigns and prices with reflections on company insights, responsibility and themes.

#### **4.6 Interviews with Tamminen employees**

The main objective of the interviews for the Tamminen employees was to understand the current marketing activities, strategy and the future goals regarding external communication with their customers. The employees who participated in the interviews were the marketing manager and the commercial director. The two



employees were chosen because they are best familiar with the marketing and communication practices and the K Group customership. They can also understand the bigger picture, strategy and sales goals. Each respondent has slightly different point of views, other overlooking from the marketing perspective and other from the sales point of view.

The respondents were asked about future goals regarding external communication and both stated that Tamminen wants to be the most desired partner in the meat industry and most desired partner especially in the capital area. The commercial director stressed that the capital city area is their main focus due to the location of the company, history and the sales volumes compared to other parts in Finland.

Their main tool in external communication is phone contact that is done by the phone sales representatives. The customers who are more difficult to reach face-to-face, are contacted via phone. For this reason, digital communication tools would be appreciated at the company. The commercial director sees that more material is needed when communicating with customers. Both respondents understand that their digital communication is lacking, the company is not delivering full potential and the customers should be encouraged more.

One of their external communication tools is a K Group's net portal where the customer can find the supplier's information regarding selections and prices. In addition, the Tamminen sales representative meetings at the store are valued and works as a supportive activity to inform the customer about prices, updates, new products, news and information regarding the season and its campaigns.

When asked thoughts about digital newsletter, the commercial director mentioned that digital offer letters should be implemented so that they would be easy and quick to create and would inform the customers about upcoming offers. The industry is fast-paced due to fresh ingredients; therefore, the offer letters should be easy to create because Tamminen needs to track their inventory and plan then the newsletters accordingly.

As step backs regarding the digital newsletter, the respondents mentioned that the customers receive a lot of digital marketing material from other suppliers. When creating the newsletter, it must be figured out how to capture a bit of their time, make them stop for a moment and how to be clearly distinguished from the competitors. Another issue would be how to manage the prices and campaigns, how long they would be available, for who and by what conditions.

The commercial director mentioned that the digital newsletter must be implemented so that there is a way how the customer would make the actual purchase after reading it. The customers must be more active regarding digital communication, which is at the moment hard for the reason that they prefer phone communication. The goal through any digital communication tools would be to be informative and deliver needed information. Ideally, the newsletter would function as the main tool of informative communication that could then be supported through phone communication, where the actual purchase is made. The newsletter would enable the customers to plan ahead and think the purchases before they get a call from Tamminen. The challenge is to get the customers active in digital communication which is something that they are not used to.

By implementing a digital newsletter, the employees would want to deliver more insight on their responsibility and accountability actions, not only product focused content. The marketing manager states that the main goal is to keep up with what the competitors are doing despite of the size of the competitors, Tamminen needs to be on the same level regarding all communication. They must develop their external communications continuously to find new ways to reach the customers better and create conversations. They want to increase conspicuousness as a responsible operator and by that achieve more sales volume.

#### **4.7 Ethics**

Qualitative interviews require the researcher to work with humans and personal information, therefore a certain ethical code must be followed. In this thesis, the author has agreed to follow the guidelines for research ethics issued by the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics. Following General Data Protection

Regulation (GDPR), personal data can be only collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes and may not be further processed. The thesis is conducted with good scientific practice and the author is responsible to follow these guidelines throughout the thesis process. The author is responsible for following data protection laws and protecting the research subjects. (TENK 2012.)

Informed consent is based on that the respondent understands the reason for the research and that the participation in the interview is voluntary (Arene 2020). According to Oxford University (2021), informed consent consists of two stages that include giving information and obtaining consent. First, the respondent is informed about the research topic and then the researcher reflects the terms of the research and talks about the structure of the research. Then the respondent “agrees to each term (giving explicit consent) before agreeing to take part in the project as a whole.” (Oxford University 2021.)

The interviews and all data gathered are confidential. The data from the interviews was anonymized before processing because it was not necessary to know the identity of the subject in this research. The personal information of the respondent and the store would not be able to be recognized in the thesis.

The phone interviews with the customers were done via phone in the commissioner company premises in a private room and the author decided not to record them to protect the respondents and give them more freedom and flexibility in answering. The interviews with the Tamminen employees were done privately at the commissioner company and the data protection follows the same regulations as the phone interviews.

It is important to store data securely while it is being analyzed because the data must be kept confidential (Princeton University 2022). The data was stored in a personal digital file in the author’s computer only accessible to the author. All research data and material will be disposed after the thesis is published.

Before starting the interviews, the respondents were informed about the data protection guidelines. All participants have accepted these rights and guidelines including both the respondent and the author regarding interviews, data storage and publication of the thesis.

## **5 EMAIL MARKETING PLAN FOR TAMMINEN**

This section is the final plan gathered from the findings of the research and solutions. This chapter introduces an email marketing plan that is created as a solution based on the findings from the research. Analysing the interview data and literature on the topic, it is now possible to create an effective email marketing plan.

### **5.1 Current communication practices at Tamminen**

In this chapter the author will go through the communication practices, its current state and objectives in the case company. Communication at the commissioner company is shared into internal, external and marketing communication. More detailed information regarding the commissioner company's current situation can be found in the chapter 3.

Tamminen is closely operating with different customer groups by responding quickly to customers' desires and communicating openly about improvement ideas. All products and services are developed to fill customers' demands. Customer relations are mainly maintained by customer visits and contacts via phone calls. Foodservice-sector's customership is run and developed together with the parent company's sales organisation. What comes to logistics, the company is working actively together with their logistic partner to achieve 100% certainty in delivery. (Tamminen 2022.)

Internal communication within Tamminen is focused on the company's intranet. In addition, the organization utilises email communication and SharePoint for announcements, news, product launching and human resources activities. The purpose of internal communication is to provide effective flow of information between departments and employees within the company in order to employees to perform better (Herman 2022).

Other digital communication activities internally are info screens on the office premises including break rooms and hallways. They are located visibly to inform about important matters, news and other content. Any department can use these

channels to announce about anything for example research, enquiries, quality control, events or results. Every employee should be able to follow the company's communication practices and be available through the company email. (Tamminen 2022.)

External communication is used to exchange information with people outside the organization and it should have more formal approach and it should reflect the company strategy and culture (Vecchiato 2022). Tamminen website functions as one of the main methods in their external communication. On the website, people can find all products and ingredients, releases, contact information, product catalogues and prices. Consumers can track the origin of a meat product and contact the organization via contact form.

Tamminen focuses on regularly implemented face-to-face meetings with the customers in which the customer will be informed about prices and new products. The customers are contacted daily via email and phone calls. The main daily function of the phone sales department is to be responsible for all customers' needs and take care of the comprehensive selection of products including the availability of new products in the individual shops.

A vital external communication method used at Tamminen are their product catalogues. The catalogues are used as additional material for sales, and they inform about the coming season and include all the products and prices. (Oinonen 2022.)

Marketing communications includes advertising, direct marketing, branding, online presence, printed materials and more (MaRS n.d). Marketing communication in the organization is focused on B2C marketing such as social media marketing that is aimed to consumers. All main social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook are used to communicate with consumers about season's products and recipes. Other marketing communication methods used at Tamminen are radio and tv commercials, digital advertisements such as banners, printed advertisements and search engine marketing. (Tamminen 2022.)

All currently available marketing channels are used for marketing communication. Tamminen has centralized their marketing actions to one influential and large multi-media company to achieve maximum accessibility and cost-efficiency. Through all marketing channels, Tamminen aims to educate consumers about their company culture and values. The goal is to expand conspicuousness of the brand and increase the purchase power. (Tamminen 2022.)

## **5.2 SWOT analysis**

SWOT analysis functions as a method for organisations to “quickly identify both its internal factors linked to internal functioning and external factors that depend on the environment in which it is evolving.” SWOT is an acronym for words strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. (Speth 2015.)

### **Strengths**

The strengths of Tamminen are focused on the great responsibility actions they have executed for a long time. The 100% high-quality Finnish products, responsible breeding, supporting local farmers and animal well-being gives Tamminen a clear competitive advantage in the market that should be taken advantage of. Tamminen functions as a customer-orientated, flexible company that tries to fill customer demands by quick reaction time. With these strengths being developed over the years, they have managed to create trust and valuable relationships with their customers.

### **Weaknesses**

As came up in the employee interviews, Tamminen’s marketing manager mentioned that one of their challenges is to keep up with what the competitors are doing. To be on the same level, Tamminen should for example execute all same marketing activities. This is challenging due to the difference in business size and resources. Tamminen employees mentioned in the interviews that it can be hard to follow marketing and sales desires simultaneously. Sometimes they differ so that marketing would like to market a certain product related a season but there is a lack of the product, so it cannot be advertised. In customer interviews, some

mentioned that they are not interested in digital communication so it can be harder to engage them in those kinds of activities.

## **Opportunities**

As mentioned by the customers in the interviews, they would like to see Tamminen emphasize responsibility more in their external communication and marketing actions. Tamminen is open to everything new, possess great skills in digital marketing and have ambitious goals regarding future and strategy. They have stated that they desire to be the most wanted partner in fresh meat products in Finland.

## **Threats**

When creating something new the results does not always show immediately. Also, the world of digital marketing is developing and changing all the time so it might be hard to keep up with new trends and trying to follow them. In addition, when marketing activities grow, more resources are needed in time and in employment. European Data Protection Guidelines (GDPR) are already strict and don't give much freedom for example when gathering customer information.



# SWOT ANALYSIS

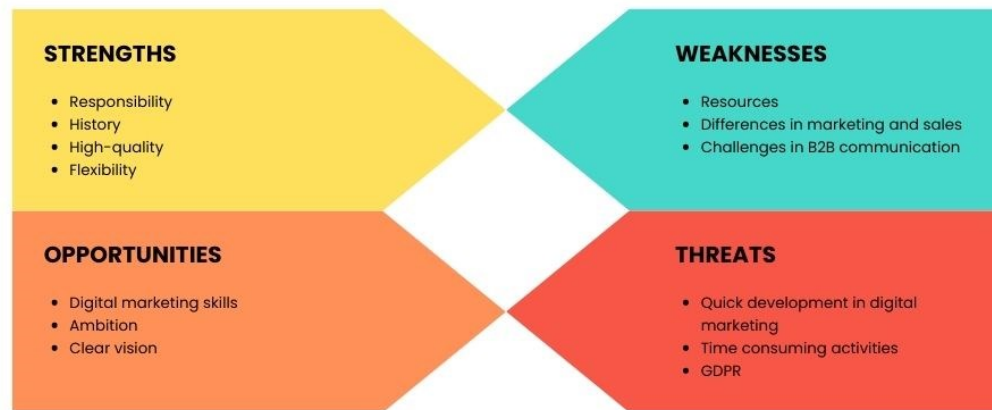


FIGURE 9. SWOT Analysis

## 5.3 Action plan

The purpose of the action plan is to create recommendations for the company on how to improve their external communication with K Group customers. This plan can be used as a framework for implementing a new digital marketing tool Tamminen would like to be launched in early 2023.

This plan can function as a base to future projects regarding marketing, for example when targeting consumers. The action plan shows concrete steps on how to execute the email marketing plan. This plan is built based on the data gathered from the interviews with the customers and Tamminen employees as well as the theoretical framework introduced in the chapter two. This email marketing plan focuses on newsletter which is a broadcast and relational email marketing method (Deiss & Henneberry 2020, 221).

The process of creating a digital newsletter has many steps. Gunelius (2018) argues that the power of email marketing relies on the recipient list. She thinks

email marketing should be a part of every company's marketing actions due to its efficiency, easy approach and most preferable channel for communication for many its users. Other perks of email marketing are its around clock access, low monthly subscription fees, easy to use and professional look. The main thing when creating an effective newsletter is to create an effective list, find the right respondents and personalize it according to them. (Gunelius 2018.)

Email service provider (ESP) helps the company to send email messages to lists of people at specific times. A great ESP should provide tools that are easy to use and professional looking that adapt the look of the brand. As Tamminen have stressed in their responsibility actions, they value domestic partners and breeders in the different steps in the production process. Also, in the case of external digital newsletter, Tamminen would appreciate a domestic partner. The newsletter provider should be able to offer customer support and have the possibility to offer other digital marketing tools for example marketing automation tools or CRM. (Tamminen 2022.)

When working with email marketing it is crucial to obey the laws regarding customer base and deliverability. EU's Data Protection Guidelines don't allow sending email messages to anyone without their permission and the respondent must be able to unsubscribe it at any time (Office of Data Protection Ombudsman n.d). The newsletter must be delivered to the right recipient to achieve the maximum efficiency. Usually, the ESP provider helps to achieve the best deliverability.

First step when creating an email marketing plan is to identify the audience and the recipients. This newsletter would be aimed towards Tamminen customers who are at the middle or bottom of the marketing funnel, in other words, in the final steps of the customer buying cycle (Gunelius 2015). There are few ways how Tamminen could collect the recipient list and customers' email addresses. The fastest way to collect email addresses would probably be by calling the customers and asking permission to send a newsletter. Another way would be through their website where the customers could click a pop-up to receive a newsletter and submit their email information. Tamminen has access to a customer database, but they must ask permission first.

As came up in the customer interviews in chapter 4.5, the newsletter must be personalized according to different customers. Tamminen customers are located around Finland, which means that they buy different products, have different preferences, and might want to see different things or themes. According to Gunelius (2018) the “email marketing tool must make it easy to segment the list”. It should be easy to change the content such as pictures and colours fast. Also, the email should be seamlessly read on mobile devices that the customers use more in their work. (Gunelius 2018.)

According to Fadeke Adegbuyi’s (2022) blogpost “How to Create a Newsletter That Grows Your Business” the next step when implementing a newsletter is to design the template and theme of the newsletter as well as the content in more detail. The newsletter should strongly follow the brand and company values (Adegbuyi 2022). Many ideas according to the newsletter content came up in the primary data collection interviews.

Customers would like to receive practical and needed information such as prices, campaigns and offers. This would help them to buy more since they would be reminded and updated about the products more frequently. It also helps the customers to plan ahead their selection in the store. The author recommends that the newsletter includes detailed information about special products, their origin (farm), recipes and theme around that product could be designed.

The newsletter could include an informative poster about the product that the customers could print out for customers to see in the store. In the employee interview, the marketing manager mentioned that the customers could benefit from picture bank to be sent to them that they could utilize in their own marketing actions or inside the store.

This digital newsletter should follow a certain theme, include pictures according to season, insight to the industry and to the farms and animals but most importantly emphasis their comprehensive responsibility actions. The content should follow a certain structure having clear Tamminen brand look, its colours and high-quality pictures as well as short texts. There should be emphasis on the contact information and easy approach for making purchases.

After designing the content and personalized aspects of the newsletter, delivery schedule can be decided. The delivery schedule depends on how often they want to send the newsletter. When knowing more about the content and what the newsletter should include, they can decide how often it is sent. The author recommends a general newsletter to be sent for all customers once a month at early morning on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday since most people are checking their email during those times (Marrs 2022). By sending the newsletter once a month, it suits also to those customers who mentioned they don't want to receive newsletters too often and see it as a spam. When deciding the date to send newsletter that could include campaign or price information it should be sent according to those days when the customers order the products the most.

When all aspects have been decided the actual newsletter can be sent through the ESP. One of the most important aspects in email marketing is to follow the results and efficiency through analytics by using the reporting tools the ESP provides. By understanding how well the newsletter has reached the audience, it can be developed.

The goal of implementing the newsletter is to improve the relationship with the customers, educate them more about Tamminen as a company, their values and products, inspire them with themes and interesting news as well as give them actual information regarding purchases including prices and campaign information. Through the newsletter it is hoped that the sales volume will increase, and the conspicuousness grow.

Creating an Email Newsletter	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Figure out the goal of the newsletter
<input type="checkbox"/>	Choose an appropriate ESP
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify the audience
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gather the recipient list
<input type="checkbox"/>	Choose a template
<input type="checkbox"/>	Plan the content and design
<input type="checkbox"/>	Add personalized features
<input type="checkbox"/>	Decide the time and frequency of sending the newsletter
<input type="checkbox"/>	Send the newsletter
<input type="checkbox"/>	Analyze

FIGURE 10. Steps of creating a newsletter

## 6 CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes the thesis and determines the findings and recommendations from the research. In addition, this chapter answers to the research questions and analyses the validity and reliability of the thesis.

The objective of this thesis was to create recommendations for Tamminen to improve their external communication with their customers by implementing a new digital marketing tool. The customers were asked about their impressions regarding digital marketing tools in communication and through their answers an email marketing plan was constructed. The objective of the email marketing plan was to implement a beneficial newsletter to improve the customer relationship, increase the quality and flow of information and gain turnover.

The research main research question of this thesis was *“How to improve Tamminen’s external communication?”* and it was answered by creating an email marketing plan in the form of digital newsletter for Tamminen in the fifth chapter. The sub-questions *“How would the customers benefit from a new digital marketing tool?”* and *“What should the new digital marketing tool contain?”* were researched by gathering data from the customer interviews and answered in the fifth chapter. Through these answers the author recommends the company to implement the newsletter as a supporting tool to their other external communication activities.

The benefit this thesis has for the commissioner company is a step-to-step guide how to improve the external communication in an effective and beneficial way. A digital newsletter will deliver the customers more information about products, seasons, the industry and company values as well as keep them updated frequently thus maintaining more personal relationship and making more purchases. This guide can be utilized in the future projects when creating a newsletter for another target group for example consumers.

The author recommends Tamminen to follow the action plan stated in the fifth chapter to create a newsletter to communicate more efficiently with their customers. Briefly, the action plan recommends Tamminen to invest to an email service provider that would assist them creating a personalized and brand appropriate

newsletter. The digital communication tool alone would not benefit the customers due to the importance of fast phone communication in the industry.

The validity and reliability have been considered through the thesis and some enhancements could have been done in the process. The grocery retail industry being very busy and time efficient, it affected the nature of the phone interviews with the customers. Some respondents did not have time to answer properly or were not interested in the subject which made the answers more concise. Implementing face to face interviews would have given more wide results but due to time management from both the respondents and the author, those were not implemented. Also, the customers are located around Finland which made reaching some of the customers almost impossible if wanting to counter them in person.

Being the first and the largest project and research the author has ever participated, it has given the author a lot to learn from. In addition, the possibility to write a thesis for a company that they will utilize in their business has taught the author more independency and trust in their own written and analysis skills.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. Interview questions for the customers of Tamminen

1. What is your role in the store? Are you responsible for the purchasing from Tamminen?
2. How do you communicate with Tamminen?
3. Do you think there is enough communication?
4. Is there something Tamminen could develop or add in their communication?
5. Would you like to get more information on something?
6. Is there something they could develop or add regarding digital communication?
7. Is there some things Tamminen should emphasize in communication?
8. Would you benefit from a digital newsletter sent from Tamminen?
9. What should this newsletter contain?
10. What would make the newsletter beneficial?
11. Would you subscribe this newsletter?
12. How much would this digital newsletter affect your purchase decision?
13. Do you want to say any additional comments or feedback about Tamminen's communication or marketing?

## Appendix 2. Interview questions for the employees of Tamminen

1. What is your position at Tamminen?
2. What kind of marketing activities do you have?
3. What kind of digital marketing activities do you have?
4. What is your marketing strategy?
5. How do you communicate with the customers?
6. What challenges there are in communication with the customers?
7. What goals do you have in marketing or communication?
8. What can be done that the external communication would be better?