

# A Marketing Plan for Case Company X

Vahlman, Noora

2015 Leppävaara



Laurea University of Applied Sciences  
Leppävaara

## A Marketing Plan for Case Company X

Noora Vahlman  
Degree Programme in Business  
Management  
Bachelor's Thesis  
May, 2015

Noora Vahlman

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Year	2015	Pages	26
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The main objective of this thesis was to create a simple and functional marketing plan for Company X, a small car paint shop located in Southern Finland. The company has never had a marketing plan, as they have relied on word of mouth marketing, which made it clear that there was a definite need for an actual marketing plan in order for the company to increase their sales and gain more visibility.

The theoretical framework of this thesis focused on relevant marketing theories and concepts related to the creation of a marketing plan. This information was utilized in support of the suggestions provided in the actual plan. A market analysis was also conducted in order to clarify the company's position in the market. The entire plan was made in close cooperation with the company's owner, and all possible marketing channels were discussed with him in order to make the plan as useful to him as possible.

The actual marketing plan focuses heavily on the use of social media and internet marketing, in general, as those marketing channels suit the company's intentions of keeping the marketing budget close to zero. As a result, the company now has a concise marketing plan that they can use as a framework when starting their first marketing efforts.

**Keywords**      marketing, social media, marketing plan.

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## 1 Introduction

The thesis will act as a suggestive marketing plan for a small car painting company in Southern Finland. The case company will be referred to as Company X. First I will be talking about the theoretical background of the thesis, explaining briefly all of the marketing theories used in my research. I will continue by introducing the case company as well as conducting a market analysis, which will help determine the current situation and identify the elements that could be improved. After introducing the theoretical background, I will present the actual marketing plan and make suggestions towards a more solid marketing strategy. Finally the report will end with conclusions summarizing briefly the findings of the research.

### 1.1 Objectives

The main objective of this thesis is to create a functional marketing plan, which can actually be utilized by the case company. With a good marketing strategy the company will be able to get more visibility and strengthen their brand, which will eventually also increase their sales. As for the company itself, the marketing plan will provide a clear reference point for planning various activities while helping the company keep in line with their strategies and business objectives.

## 2 Theoretical background

In this section I will be introducing the main theories I used as a basis for the marketing plan. I chose reliable sources that focus on the basics of marketing which will help justify the use of these particular theories in the actual marketing plan. The purpose of the theoretical background is to help the reader to understand the chosen theories and inform them about the central concepts regarding marketing.

### 2.1 Marketing mix

The marketing mix is a business tool used in marketing and it includes the theory of the 4P's: product, price, place and promotion. When creating a marketing plan, it is important to maintain consistency with all of the elements of the marketing mix. This ensures that all of the marketing instruments are working in the same direction without conflicting each other. Also creating interaction between the 4Ps of the marketing mix can be beneficial, as they will reinforce each other. As an example, distribution will be more effective when it is being supported by proper advertising and in-store communications. (De Pelsmacker et al. 2001, 3) Some of the main points of the marketing mix can be seen from Figure 1 below.



Figure 1: Marketing mix - 4Ps

### 2.1.1 Product

This element can either be a tangible product or an intangible service that the company in question is offering. In order to create a working marketing plan, the company should understand the benefits of the product and the needs it satisfies in the customer. Describing the product's features and its quality, as well as the way it is differentiated from its competitors are all important points when utilizing the marketing mix. Also the positioning of the product and the potential benefits gained from the existing brand should be considered. (Mind Tools, 1996-2015)

### 2.1.2 Price

The way a product is priced can have an enormous effect on its demand and therefore sales, as well, which is why it is important to consider the pricing strategy even when completing a marketing plan. Having discounts and other price-based incentives such as payment periods with low interest rates can increase sales drastically, but they will also decrease the profit margin. Lower prices can also have the customers get used to discounts, which will decrease the brand's position in the market when the prices are back to normal. (De Pelsmacker et al. 2001, 3)

### 2.1.3 Place

Place or distribution means the process of bringing the product to the customer, involving the transportation, inventory and any possible retailers. The marketers will have to think about the places where the customer might find the product and try to improve them in order to increase sales. This includes also attending trade fairs and using sales force, as well as changing the product's location on the retailer's shelves. (Mind Tools, 1996-2015)

### 2.1.4 Promotion

Promotion includes all of the marketing communications and activities that are made in order to make the product or service known by the customers. The marketers will have to consider where, when and how to advertise the product, without forgetting to differentiate from the competitors. Some of the potential marketing channels to consider are direct marketing, TV or the internet, public relations and various trade shows. Also the use of sales force should be thoroughly planned, as the need for it can vary between different companies and even from one selling location to another. (Mind Tools, 1996-2015)

## 2.2 Branding

With the increasing amount of competition, a company's branding is becoming more and more important. A brand can be a name, sign or a symbol that is used to identify the company or a product, but at its best, a brand is a promise of the company's products and service. A strong brand confirms the company's credibility, helps deliver the brand's message, as well as increases customer loyalty by creating emotional ties between the customer and the company. (Lake 2015)

Building a strong brand is even more important in the service industry, as they are selling intangible commodities. According to Beckwith (1997, 149), almost nothing beats a strong brand in service marketing. If two companies offer the same service, most of the time the company with the stronger brand image will get the sale, even if the lesser-known company would excel in quality. This happens especially if the customer is low on time and has to make the decision quickly. Well-known brands can often spend less time and money in order to get more sales, as the customers will not have to procrastinate when choosing a trusted brand. Word of mouth marketing will also work better for branded companies, as the customers are more likely to remember the company's name. (Beckwith 1997, 141)



## 2.3 Internet marketing

Internet has changed the way people share and search for information, which is why marketers are focusing more and more on online advertising. Internet marketing can be roughly divided into three different categories: web marketing, email marketing and social media marketing, all of which are useful ways of sharing information with potential customers. (Internet marketing 2015) The digital revolution has been the main reason for the current fragmentation of media. Nowadays there are thousands of different channels through which a company can contact their target audiences, making it difficult to find just one major channel reaching a mass audience. This is why a company should conduct a thorough research in order to figure out the channels mainly used by their target customers and have their marketing strategy include multiple channels instead of just one. (Sheehan 2010, 19)

### 2.3.1 Website

A good website will not only provide more information to the target customers, but also make the company more reliable and trustworthy in the consumer's eyes. An engaging website will help strengthen the company's brand which in turn acts as a competitive advantage. One of the most important factors when designing a website is its functionality; if the site is not easy to navigate, customers will most likely lose interest. The website should also contain all of the information that the consumer could want to know about the company, without forgetting to include contact details. (Sheehan 2010, 58)

### 2.3.2 Search optimization

According to studies, search was the largest revenue generator in advertising on the internet in 2009, so search optimization should not be overlooked. It has also been proven that whether a consumer knows the URL address or not, 90% of them will use search engines to go to the desired website. In order to generate more traffic to a company's website it is crucial to use search optimization as a marketing tool, ensuring that the website is listed in the top results when using a search engine. (Sheehan 2010, 37)

Search engines work by finding websites that are perceived as relevant according to the keywords input by the user. This entire process is free to the owner of the website, so increasing the possibilities of the search engine to find their website can create huge benefits for the company. The main idea is to link as many relevant keywords as possible to the website, without forgetting to think creatively and adding even the least obvious ones. The consumers might not know what they are specifically looking for, but if the website appears in the top

results, they are very likely to click on it and find a solution they did not necessarily even know existed. (Sheehan 2010, 37)

## 2.4 Social media marketing

### 2.4.1 Facebook

With over a billion users from all walks of life, Facebook is one of the most comprehensive marketing channels on the internet. The simplest way of utilizing it for marketing, is to create a Facebook business page. This works as a second website for the company, bringing it closer to its customers and making it easier to reach their target audience. On Facebook it is possible to send both private messages and general updates, which improves a company's customer service when taken care of properly. Any feedback or requests can be dealt with through Facebook. (Facebook basics 2015) Besides its networking possibilities, Facebook also has a page showing the statistics revealing, for example, the number of people visiting the site, as well as the visitors' ages, home countries and other demographics. (Drell 2012)

Facebook does provide proper advertising called Facebook Ads. This service is also a viable option when thinking about a company's marketing plan, but it can be costly, especially if the marketing budget is small. The same goes with Facebook's new feature called Promoted Posts, which increases the chosen Facebook post's visibility by having it show up for a longer time period and placing it on a better place on people's news feeds. (Murphy Kelly 2012)

### 2.4.2 Instagram

Instagram is a free photo- and video-sharing mobile application owned by Facebook and it has over 300 million active users. As with Facebook, Instagram also provides a service for businesses, which makes it a good marketing opportunity for a company of any size, and the company can also link their Facebook profile with their Instagram account. Posting pictures on Instagram makes them available for current and potential customers worldwide. In addition to the picture, the uploader can also add specific captions called hashtags, which are used as keywords when searching for pictures on the application. This way people with similar interests can find the pictures with only a few clicks. A company can also have their customers upload pictures of their purchases on Instagram and again connect them to the company with appropriate hashtags, acting as a modern alternative to word of mouth marketing. The application allows the company to engage with its customers by commenting on their pictures, as well as mentioning them in the company's posts, which again will link to the customers own profile and show appreciation. (Bunskoek 2015)

## 2.5 Sponsorships

A sponsorship is an investment in an activity, with the intention of gaining commercial return by generating awareness of the brand amongst both actual and potential customers. Sponsorship deals are most common in sports, arts and the entertainment industry, but sometimes they are seen also in cause related marketing. By choosing the sponsorship carefully, both the sponsor and the sponsoree can decide what kind of a message they would like to send to the customers about themselves. This is why choosing for example a famous athlete to use a certain product is very popular, as it creates a positive image which often will be linked to the brand in the customer's memory. In addition to altering the perception of the brand, the sponsorship can also help identify the brand with a desired market segment. (De Pelsmacker et al., 2001, 303)

Besides assisting with achieving the company's marketing objectives, sponsorship deals can help with its corporate communication objectives, as well. By increasing the media attention, sponsoring can reassure stockholders and assist with staff recruitment. Many studies also indicate that increasing goodwill with various target groups, as well as promoting corporate image are extremely important and should not be forgotten when planning the company's objectives regarding a sponsorship. (De Pelsmacker et al., 2001, 312)

## 2.6 Exhibitions and trade fairs

An exhibition is a place where retailers and manufacturers are gathered in one place to present their products, make sales, network and exchange ideas. Usually exhibitions are limited to a certain field or a product category, so the target market can be defined more clearly. Public fairs attempt to attract as many people as possible, as they are open to the general public. The broader the product range, the bigger the target audience, which means more potential customers are attending the fair. In special interest fairs, there are companies only from a specific field of work, making the target audience smaller, which means more focus can be put on presenting the product and informing the customer. (De Pelsmacker et al., 2001, 420)

Trade fairs are usually meant for people working in a specific industry, so the companies are utilizing B2B strategies with their sales. There are two types of trade fairs: vertical and horizontal. In vertical trade fairs companies from one field are presenting their products to a target group consisting on people from many different industries, while in horizontal trade fairs there are companies from multiple industries presenting their products to people from one specific target group. (De Pelsmacker et al., 2001, 420)

The main benefits of exhibitions and trade fairs are gaining more visibility and informing the customer about the products. Trade show exposure brings the company closer to the customers, which can improve the brand image and make the company more approachable in the customers' eyes. Studies also show that due to trade shows causing a cost reduction regarding any follow-up sales efforts, the return-on-sales figures are higher on companies that are attending trade shows regularly. (De Pelsmacker et al., 2001, 420)

## 2.7 Market analysis

Investopedia defines a market as “a medium that allows buyers and sellers of a specific good or service to interact in order to facilitate an exchange.” (2015) A reliable market analysis provides vital information regarding the decision making in companies, which is why it should be one of the first steps in a marketing planning process. By conducting a market analysis and determining its target market and competitors, a company is able to better define its current and future market conditions by conducting a thorough SWOT analysis, which in turn increases its chances of creating a profitable marketing plan. Market analyses should also be renewed on a regular basis, as market conditions are constantly changing and being able to react to these changes in time can be crucial for the company's success. (De Pelsmacker et al., 2001, 108)

Market size and growth are some of the most important parts of a market analysis, especially if it is being used in order to convince investors. By looking at government or commercial statistics regarding the sales numbers of the industry in question, a company can roughly forecast what the upcoming year will be like. For small companies that have the intention of creating an internal plan, analyzing the sales numbers is not as necessary, although it is always useful. In these cases it is more important to focus on getting to know the target market and the competitors, in order to differentiate from others and gaining competitive advantages. (Kerr, 1996-2015)

### 2.7.1 Target market and segmentation

A target market is the group of consumers the business wants to sell its products or services to. Defining the company's target market is one of the most important steps in creating a functional marketing plan, as it also reveals the customers to whom the company wants to direct its marketing efforts. Having a small enough target market is often more effective than trying to be ambitious and targeting too broadly. With a narrow enough target audience, the company will be able to market their products more directly, thus having a bigger percentage of customers actually making the purchase. If the company is too ambitious, the marketing strategy can end up being less effective, so it does not reach even the people in the narrower

target market. These kinds of marketing plans often end up being more expensive, as well. (Porta, 2010)

The customers within the target market should share similar wants and needs that are related to the company in question. This can be achieved by effective segmentation. The main idea of segmentation is to divide consumers into subgroups based on different criteria, with the intention of having all of the people in a certain segment react to the same kind of marketing stimuli. In addition to that, the reaction to the stimuli should also differ from that of another segment, because otherwise there would be no reason to distinguish between them. By doing this, the company will be able to plan their marketing with the customer in mind, which makes the marketing plan more effective and increases the likelihood that the marketing will reach the right customers. (De Pelsmacker et al., 2001, 108)

The most ideal situation would be to segment the customers according to their buying behavior, but since that is not possible, it is done by using different characteristics that predict the consumer's buying behavior. The customers can be divided by, for example, geographical or cultural attributes, or simply by demographics, all of which reveal something about the customer making it easier to market directly towards them. Psychographic segmentation measures the activities, interests and opinions of customers, revealing the lifestyle of the potential customer, while behavioral segmentation divides people according to their response to a certain product. (De Pelsmacker et al., 2001, 110)

After segmentation, the company should decide what segments they are targeting, and whether they will be using a different marketing strategy for different target groups. Focusing on just one segment has its benefits, as it allows the company to build expertise and try to be the market leader in that segment, but by using for example selective or product specialization, multiple segments can also be chosen. Positioning is another effective tool, which helps the company to differentiate their product or service of its competitors. The main idea is to create a positive impression of the product into the customer's mind, so that it will outshine any of the competing products. This can be done by various ways, some of which include focusing on the product's attributes, price, quality, or a specific use or application. (De Pelsmacker et al., 2001, 123)

### 2.7.2 Competition

Determining the strengths and weaknesses of any competitors is crucial in order to differentiate the company in question, which in turn creates a competitive advantage. Identifying the competitor's marketing strategy and target market, their product's features and pricing, as well as their market share are all important factors when conducting a competitor analysis.

Also, inspecting the competitors from the customer's point of view can be useful, as it may reveal some key assets that otherwise would have been left unnoticed. By carefully analyzing its competitors, a company can improve their own marketing strategy, and even help estimate any future competitive threats. (Entrepreneur, 2015)

### 2.7.3 SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis is a tool which can help a company take better advantage of its strengths and abilities, while taking into consideration its biggest shortcomings that need to be overcome in order to achieve the company's objectives. As the name suggests, a SWOT analysis identifies the company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats by conducting an environmental analysis. These factors can be divided into internal issues revealing what the company can and cannot do right now, and external issues, that give insight into the company's possibilities in the future. (SWOT Analysis 1996-2015)

When conducting a SWOT analysis, the case company's competitors should always be taken into account. This ensures that the internal and external issues analyzed are as realistic as possible, as it also changes the strengths and weaknesses into advantages and disadvantages in relation to other companies. Identifying these competitive advantages is a big benefit for a company when creating a marketing plan. Regardless of that, the information provided by a SWOT analysis is most of the time subjective, which means that the results are better used as a guideline when making important decisions. (SWOT Analysis 1996-2015)

## 3 Company introduction

### 3.1 Business concept

Company X is a small car paint shop in Southern Finland specializing in airbrushing. In addition to airbrushing and regular paint jobs, they also do basic body work repairs for cars, which widens their target audience. On demand, they also paint different accessories, such as motorbike helmets and subwoofer cases. Currently the business has only one employee, who is also the owner of the company. In previous years the company has employed a few students who have been completing their job placements, but mainly all of the work is done by the company's owner. (Owner, interview 5 Mar 2015)

### 3.2 Current marketing strategy

Currently Company X does not have a proper marketing strategy, so they are not maximizing their sales and gaining more visibility through advertising. The company is relying mainly on

word of mouth marketing where previous customers are spreading the word and eventually bringing in more customers, but this has proven to be insufficient regarding the company's objectives. Company X also has a Facebook page, but it is being updated very rarely and the information provided is extremely limited.

The most effective marketing channels for Company X are various trade shows they started attending in 2014. Some of these special interest fairs include Taitaja and ACS, and in 2015 the company's owner will be traveling to Estonia for some car painting trade shows, as well. Company X has also had a sponsorship deal with a car paint company, which has provided Company X with some airbrushing paint to showcase in the trade fairs with the condition of having their brand name shown.

Company X is also gaining more coverage from car painting and tuning magazines, such as GTI, Tuning.fi and Autosound, where the company's work is sometimes being showcased. These magazines are directed specifically to Company X's target group, which is a big benefit considering that the target market for airbrushing cars is very small, as it is such a niche market. This is also a completely free marketing tool, as the cars' owners are the ones signing up for the photo shoots. (Owner, interview 5 Mar 2015)

### 3.3 Objectives

As the company is very small, they do not have a large amount of money to spend on advertising, which is why the objective is to create an affordable marketing plan and keep the marketing budget close to zero. For the same reason, the marketing plan should consist of steps that are simple and easy to follow, without being too time-consuming. Doing this also increases the likelihood of the marketing plan actually being implemented in the long term.

The main objective of this marketing plan is to help the company gain more visibility, and therefore increase their market share by being able to reach more customers. In Finland, there are only few companies that do airbrushing, which makes this a great opportunity for Company X to become a leader in its own field. Currently the owner does not have any intention of hiring more employees and increasing the size of the company, but it is a possibility in the future. With this in mind, the marketing plan should not be too ambitious, as there is only one person doing all of the work, so the objective is to increase the profits with the least amount of working hours possible. Another important goal for this plan is to increase customer loyalty and retaining the current customer base. (Owner, interview 5 Mar 2015)

## 4 Market analysis for Company X

### 4.1 Competitors

Company X's situation is relatively good when it comes to its competitors, as there are roughly under 20 airbrush artists in Finland. It is also an industry in which there is no competition online, as the service cannot be sold through the internet. The competition between the paint shops is not as tough as in other industries, as the criteria by which the customer chooses the company consists mainly of the company's location and the airbrush painters skills, in general. Pertti Papunen, the owner of PP Design and Art, is the most famous airbrush artist in Finland, so he also has the largest market share. Often the biggest job offers also go to him, as having a truck painted by a famous artist is a way of advertising in itself.

In addition to other airbrush artists, also the companies doing car wrapping are competing with Company X. Nowadays car wrapping is becoming more and more popular, as it is a faster and most of the time cheaper way of getting the desired design on the vehicle. The wrappings can also be removed from the car's surface without damaging any of the paint job or other structures underneath. Company X does have a big benefit regarding these kinds of competitors, as it has great connections to a car wrapping company and therefore they can work together and also recommend each other to their customers.

### 4.2 Target market

In general, the company's target market includes every car owner in Finland, but as this would be a too wide target group to advertise to, it needs to be divided into segments. One of the segments includes car owners that either need their entire car painted, or have had some minor damage to their car's body, which needs to be repaired and repainted. Often car owners go for large and well-known car paint shops with these kinds of issues, especially as it is often reimbursed by their insurance company, which makes it a difficult target group for Company X to reach. The same goes for entrepreneurs that wish to have their company's cars painted or wrapped as an advertisement for the company.

The main target group consists of people, often men, anywhere between the ages of 18-35, who are interested in tuning cars and motorbikes. For some of them it is a hobby or even a lifestyle, while others just like to have their vehicles painted in a bit more interesting fashion. As tuning cars can be very expensive, the target customer's income level should be reasonable, although even young students do invest all of the extra money they have on their cars. Many of them like to attend car tuning trade shows and some even go to the private races for tuned cars that are arranged all over Finland. Another channel that reaches a big



portion of the target market is the car tuning magazines that are sold even in regular grocery stores.

#### 4.3 Partners

Currently Company X does not have any ongoing partnerships, but in the past they have had a partnership deal with a paint company who provided them with paints to use and showcase in a trade show. There are many potential partners for Company X, as there are numerous car paint manufacturers, as well as specialty paint stores that could start either a sponsorship deal or a partnership with the company.

#### 4.4 SWOT-analysis

As shown below in Figure 2, one of Company X's biggest strengths include that they specialize in airbrushing, which in itself is a way of differentiating the company from a regular paint shop. The fact that the company does basic body work and regular paintjobs in addition to its main specialty can also be seen as an advantage, as some airbrush artists are limiting their services to just airbrushing. In addition to that, the company's ease of internal communication is a big benefit, as they will not have to deal with any difficult and time-consuming negotiations when making decisions.

As Company X is operated by only one person, they have only little workforce as well as limited ideas and innovations. The owner can easily end up making things the way he is used to, instead of thinking outside of the box and coming up with new creative solutions. Because of the size, the company also has very limited budget and resources. Another considerable weakness is the lack of marketing, as well as their narrow target market.

As there are many paint stores that are often willing and able to sponsor other businesses, creating new partnerships would be a significant opportunity for Company X, as it would help considerably with the company's budget and resource limitations. Also entering the car wrapping business could be a big opportunity for the future, as it goes well with airbrushing and painting cars in general, and as people are becoming more aware of it, it is gaining market share with the expense of small paint shops. Overall quality development regarding the end products is another way of strengthening the company's position in the market place in the future.

New competitors entering the market pose a considerable threat for Company X. Due to the nature of the business, new companies can easily gain market share and steal customers from Company X's customer base, which should be taken into consideration when creating the

marketing plan. Also the probable increase in the popularity of car wrapping should be taken into account, without forgetting the possible changes in Finland's economy.

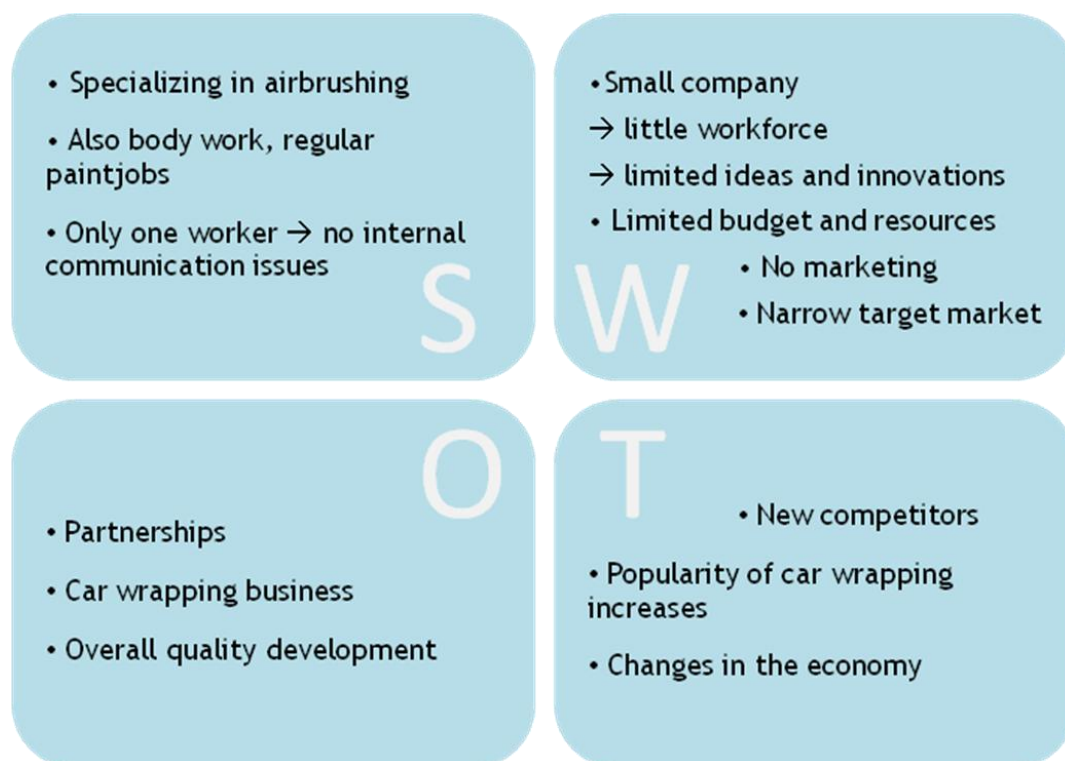


Figure 2: SWOT analysis for Company X

## 5 Marketing plan

This plan will serve as a suggestion regarding Company X's marketing strategies. First I will be going through the general objectives and strategies, after which I will be introducing the actual marketing channels and giving suggestions on how they should be used. The purpose of this plan is to be concise yet informative, so all of the objectives and marketing actions are clear and understandable.

The entire plan has been made in collaboration with Company X's owner and the information is based on both the interviews with the owner, as well as the theory presented earlier in this report. I will not be giving a precise budget or a schedule for this plan, as it is only a suggestion and the owner of the company will eventually be deciding on the actions he wants to execute. Another reason for not giving a specific budget is the fact that the objective is to keep this plan as affordable as possible, so most of the suggestions are free for the company, so the only investment needed is time.

## 5.1 Objectives

There are two types of objectives, qualitative and quantitative, both of which are important to keep in mind when creating a marketing plan. Qualitative objectives cannot be measured, so they include things such as customer satisfaction and their overall impression of the company, whereas quantitative objectives are measurable things, such as an increase in sales or market share. As the company has only one employee, the intention is to not set any precise quantitative objectives, but focus more on the qualitative ones that create customer loyalty. Of course the eventual reason is to increase sales, but as right now there is no intention to increase the size of the company by hiring more employees, quantitative goals are not as relevant, as the monthly workload cannot grow too extensively. The overall intention is to set realistic yet challenging goals for the company to work towards.

The main objective is to create more visibility for the company, which, in turn, will increase the target market's awareness of the company and eventually bring more sales. As this plan focuses heavily on the use of social media, another important objective is to create trust and loyalty between the customer and the company, and overall bring the company closer to its target customers. By doing this the company will experience stronger customer loyalty and people are more likely to become repeat customers, who often bring more clients to the company by word of mouth marketing. A strong marketing plan also works as a competitive advantage.

## 5.2 Marketing channels

This section introduces the actual plan regarding the various marketing channels and their use. As Company X's target market consists mostly of the younger generation, the focus will be strongly on internet marketing and social media channels, as they are most likely to reach a large portion of the target group. As already mentioned, the purpose is to keep the costs of the implementation of this plan as low as possible, which is another reason to rely strongly on internet marketing.

This plan utilizes both the theoretical framework from the beginning of this report and the information given to me by the owner of Company X. Most of the conclusions and suggestions provided here are generally based on the marketing mix theory of the 4Ps as it makes it possible to look at the company's marketing from many different angles. The first step is to determine what customer needs the company's service satisfies. As the company airbrushes cars, it can be seen as a commodity that satisfies people who simply are interested in cars and want their vehicles to stand out from the crowd and be unique. Sometimes it can also be a tool for the customer to improve their social status within his or her group of acquaintanc-

es. Branding and differentiation of the company go hand in hand, as Company X's brand image is greatly defined by the factors that differentiate it from its competitors, perhaps the most important factor being the overall quality of work. As there is only little competition and the work's quality as well as the company's location shape the customers' buying behavior so greatly, this plan will not focus on branding in too much detail.

Company X has very competitive prices, as they are a bit lower than those of its closest competitors. The pricing also reflects the overall value of the service, and regarding the nature of the business, no special pricing strategies, such as discounts or special campaigns are needed. The owner of the company negotiates the pricing with every customer in person beforehand. The company also has no need for a big inventory or complicated logistics, as they order most of the parts when they are needed, instead of having many parts and utensils in stock for no specific reason. The paint shop itself is located in a quiet area where people will not find it unless they are aware of its existence. This makes the marketing all that more important, as there are no big signs and billboards to create awareness of the company.

#### 5.2.1 Website

Currently Company X does not have a website, and as most people nowadays are searching for information about companies online, having a website can be crucial regarding a company's success. The suggestion is to invest a bit of the company's time and money into designing and creating a functional and informative website. This way the target customers would find the company more easily, and all of the essential information would be clearly available. Some examples of these pieces of information can be seen from Figure 3 below. Although being active on social media and having, for example, a Facebook page can seem like enough, many people trust an actual website much more, as it creates a more professional image of the company. This is also why it is important to pay attention to the website's visual appearance, especially as Company X is an art-related company.

When creating the website, Company X should also think about search engine optimization, as that can be one of the most important ways of gaining visibility and getting more customers through the internet. This can be done by simply planning carefully all of the text portions of the website. By inserting in clever keywords that people most likely write in the search bar when looking for a car paint shop, the search engine finds Company X more easily and places it in the top results, which means customers are finding the company, and it is gaining competitive advantages over its competitors. As mentioned in chapter 2.3.2., it can be beneficial for the company to come up with innovative keywords that are not the first to come to mind. This way some customers might find the webpage without even knowing about the solution provided by the company.



Figure 3: Basic website features

#### 5.2.2 Social media marketing

As already mentioned in section 2.4., the use of social media in marketing has drastically increased, as has the number of different social media platforms. The competition is fierce and by being active in social media a company can get closer to its customers and target market, while being more approachable, which, in turn, will create a trusting bond between the customer and the company, and improve the company's overall image. Here we will be focusing on Facebook and Instagram, as they are the most relevant regarding the case company. The main suggestions can also be seen from Figure 4 below.

Company X already has a Facebook page, but it is being updated very rarely. The main suggestion is to start updating the page frequently and adding there updates and pictures on any ongoing projects and finished paintjobs. This way the company's followers are reminded of the company on a regular basis, and they can even showcase the company's work to their friends by sharing the pictures. Also posting updates on any upcoming events the company will be attending can be beneficial, as any interested customers can come and see the work and meet the owner, or even make purchases and other work-related deals. Sharing related news on the Facebook page is another way of spreading awareness to the followers. By sharing, for example, car tuning or airbrushing related news, the customers interested in those notice the company and it can even spark a conversation about the news in question, which, again, brings the company closer to its customers. In case Company X decides to get any partners or sponsorship deals, Facebook is also a great way of tagging those companies into the updates, thus getting a wider audience.

Instagram, a photo sharing application, is another great way of being involved and active in social media. Currently Company X is completely new to Instagram, so all they have to do is create an account for the company, which only takes minutes. Uploading images from paint-jobs and related events act as a reminder and an advertisement for any potential customers. Adding related hashtags increases the number of people seeing the photos, which makes it useful to add as many hashtags as possible, without it being excessive and annoying in the customer's point of view. Adding hashtags of any possible partner companies, events and even product brands is recommended, as the audience grows by each hashtag. Tagging customers or active followers can also act as a way of paying tribute to them, which is a clever way of increasing customer loyalty. The Instagram account should also be linked to the company's Facebook page, in order for all of the pictures uploaded in Instagram show up on Facebook, as well.

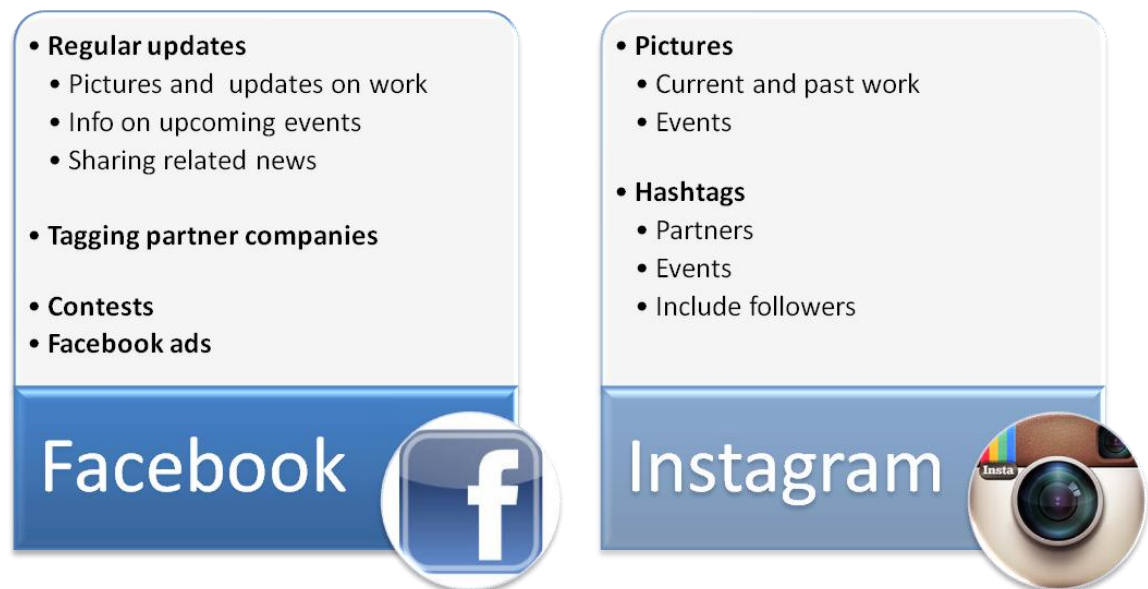


Figure 4: Facebook and Instagram as marketing tools

### 5.2.3 Partners and sponsorships

There are a lot of potential partners for Company X, and by having one, the company could gain more visibility and reduce its costs. Some of the potential partner companies include various car paint manufacturers and painting supply sellers. Company X should definitely try to find a company that would be willing to work in collaboration with it, and then negotiate the terms so that they are fair and beneficial for both companies. Having a partner company provide Company X with some paints or other supplies can save money noticeably. In addition to that, attending trade fairs and painting there with the partner company's products both of

the companies gain visibility and can see the benefits. This is something that Company X has begun doing in the past, but they should definitely pursue it a bit further so they can gain the best possible benefits from a partnership deal.

#### 5.2.4 Trade fairs and magazines

Some of the popular car tuning trade fairs organized in Finland include American car show and Xtreme car show, both of which Company X can greatly benefit from. The expos have often hundreds of cars, but the best will always stand out and get both the media's as well as the general audience's attention. Also, the people coming to the trade shows are generally very interested in car tuning, which means they are included in Company X's target market. This is why trade shows would be an extremely important way of networking and reaching new customers for Company X. Having its own selling booth in the fair might not even be necessary, and sometimes they could even be a waste of money. As having an own booth can be very expensive depending on the expo, Company X should always carefully deliberate whether the desired benefits will be gained from getting the booth or not. Often simply presenting an airbrushed car in the expo can be enough to get the desired results, which again saves a lot of money. In addition to attending trade fairs itself, Company X could entice some of its best customers to attend the expos themselves, as well. This way the company would only have to paint the car while the customer would deal with the rest.

The same goes for car tuning magazines, such as GTI, Tuning.fi and Autosound. Having a car done by Company X presented in the magazine can create huge visibility and increase the demand. The readers also belong to Company X's target group due to their big interest in tuned cars, which, again, means that the company's message would reach its target audience. As with trade shows and having the customers bring their own cars to the show, the same could be done with magazines. This way Company X's workload would be much smaller, yet it would still gain all of the benefits from having an airbrushed car presented and photographed on the cover of the magazine.

## 6 Conclusions

The subject for the thesis was to create a functional marketing plan for Company X, as they have never previously had a marketing plan of any kind. The intention was to keep the plan as simple and straightforward as possible, so it would be easy to understand and the chances of the company actually utilizing it would increase. At first, the thesis introduces the main theory that was used as a basis for the marketing suggestions, after which a market analysis was conducted. After determining the market conditions, the actual marketing plan was written. The main focus was clearly on social media marketing, as the company has an extremely low

budget for their marketing functions and social media tends to be a cheap if not a completely free channel regarding a company's marketing.

As for this marketing plan's reliability, almost all of the sources used can be considered very reliable. All of the book sources used have plenty of theoretical studies backing up the theories presented, and almost all of the information used here could be found from multiple other sources, as well. The same goes for the electric sources, as I attempted to choose only the most reliable and professional websites that had information that could be backed up by some information or studies found from other sources. Regarding the reliability of the marketing plan itself, all of the suggestions are based on the information found in the theoretical background at the beginning of this thesis. Because of this, it can be considered a safe and trustworthy plan for the company to utilize and start their venture into the world of marketing.



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