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CUSTOMER ACQUISITION PLAN FOR A SMALL-SIZE ENTREPRENEUR

Case: Aventura Girona

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THESIS
ABSTRACT

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Aventura Girona is a nature activity company in Girona, Catalonia. This thesis project was written to help Aventura Girona to develop their marketing and customer acquisition in their area and on international markets. This project based thesis planning started in August 2013 and finished in the beginning of January 2014.

The aim of this thesis was to draw a customer acquisition plan and improve the marketing planning in the company. Therefore, the final result was the market research summary. Development of the marketing strategy planning was based on internal and external situation analyses.

This thesis is concentrated on a small-size operator's business and therefore the internet marketing was brought up with its profitable benefits and advantages. The thesis was written as an auxiliary guide to build up a customer acquisition plan, especially aimed to an entrepreneur who starting a new business and about to make challenging marketing decisions.

The research showed that the internet marketing is a cost-effective marketing communication channel that provides solid and low cost results for company on their marketing efforts. Furthermore, the internet marketing was found to be moderate attractive and a modern way of customer acquisition.

In conclusion, the final marketing plan forwards many new suggestions for business and it can be useful for any other entrepreneur who wants to enhance marketing strategies or acquire more customers from domestic or international markets.

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PREFACE

In 2013, this final project work was drawn up commissioned by Aventura Girona in Catalonia, Spain. The thesis is written for Kajaani University of Applied Sciences. Sections of the guidelines can be used when planning a customer acquisition plan for a small-size operator, or starting a business which is going to be operating in domestic or foreign markets.

Special emphasis is on SWOT analysis, which was discovered to be one of the most important factors in marketing planning. The topic of the thesis is very present and in these days it is very valuable information for a small operator for saving time and money and proceeding quickly once they have started their operating in the tourism industry.

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis writing process started in summer 2013 while author´s practical training at Aventura Girona in Catalonia. While accomplishing the training period, some important viewpoints were detected in the trainee tasks. Finally, an idea for the thesis topic arose from supervisor of the practical training place as the author was asked to co-operate with a few operators in Finland.

Trainee´s task in the company was to find a good simple and least time-eating manner to acquire more customer relationships. This was very important, especially as the operator is one-man business and working with a low budget. Disposable time used for marketing and customer acquisition is very limited and difficult to get in one-man company.

The topic of thesis is very present and in these days it is valuable information for a small operator when they are willing to save some time and money and want to act rapidly once they have started their operating in tourism industry.

1.1 The main focus of the thesis

The purpose of this thesis was to draw up a customer acquisition plan for a small company with a low cost budget, mainly by using internet services. Thesis is commissioned by Aventura Girona, which is one-man operation in Catalonia. It is a quite successful nature activity company, which provides different type of activities in its area Catalonia and France.

Two aims are formed in this thesis. First goal is to examine the theory of customer acquisition, which leads us to the studies of segmentation and how to assess to the right segments. First of all, we need to find out which are the most profitable segments to focus on. Then, we need to find out the strategy to reach those important markets and draw up an action plan to start an efficient marketing on the right markets.

Secondly, this thesis discusses about internet marketing. It has stated for the most profitable marketing tactic as it is used efficiently to the specific markets. The operator is going to con-

centrate on social media marketing such as Facebook and search engine optimization. Also implementation plan consist implementation usage of Tripadvisor in order to acquire more customers.

The content of this thesis is following. The first introduction chapter introduces the case company, Aventura Girona in detail and describes its values and goals and recent history of business operating. Finally in the end of the text it is explained how to understand the theoretical background for the construction of a customer acquisition plan and its means. The chapter starts with a theoretical discussion about what is the customer acquisition, why it is important for the operator and how it can be implemented into the practice.

Following chapter, number two, moves on to the market situation and its analysis and explains about its theory and implementation. Thesis discusses about how it can be measured and evaluated for an operator and the most important tools to measure it. In this chapter, factors such an internal and external are explained and analysed. Final result in its the basis focuses on target marketing gathering more contacts and customers to a small operator. In the end of this chapter the thesis proceeds to market segmentation, what is a quite important according to the operating on the markets and implementing customer acquisition.

Finally, the chapter number three, which is the last one, is based on the internet marketing. The chapter explains that what is the conclusion on this theory based research. This chapter is the most important in this thesis. In the beginning it introduces the internet marketing and its meaning and benefits. From this introduction chapter continues the internet marketing strategy and its meanings. Next follows the main customer acquisition plan: What are concepts such as search engine optimization, social media marketing, Facebook and Tripadvisor. The last chapter deals with the implementation and monitoring of all mentioned before.

1.2 Theory used

The analysis is done with the help of relevant literature. The most important sources were all the occurred observations during a five months practical training at Aventura Girona. Thesis

outline gives a theoretical basis for the construction of implementation on customer acquisition.

In author´s theoretical part has been used plenty of literature from the library in the University of Girona furthermore alongside has been used as lots of internet sources. The internet sources are used quite frequently as this thesis was written from a distance without an access to University's library in Finland.

1.2.1 Customer acquisition

In this case the customer acquisition is a process of persuading a customer to purchase company's products. It is an important measure of how valuable is a customer and how much value they typically bring into the business. It is very important for the business to evaluate their success constantly. When talking about a customer, it's an individual or a party who receives and consumes company's products and has an ability to choose between different products. (Saylor, 2004 & Aventura Girona 2013.)

Generally, the customers can be a group of colleagues in same workplace, a birthday party group or just a group of friends who adore trying something different and exciting. An individual customer can be such as a person who desires to buy a product for a present or just wants to try an exciting nature activity instead of a normal nature sport without professional guiding. (Aventura Girona, 2013.)

1.2.2 Customer segmentation

The setting of the company's mission is very important process to start building the marketing process and operations. Once the mission is stated it is to find the way to discover a comprehensive customer acquisition plan. When the markets of the company have been clarified, where they will be focused, they need to start figuring out the actual and potential buyers of products and services. Market segmentation is a process of dividing the market into the groups of similar customers who share similarities which can be used for more effi-

cient seller or buyer relationships. These groups are called subgroups, whereas target market is a subgroup of people that presents the greatest opportunity for targeting. (World Tourism Organization, 2007.)

Segmentation has been seen truly important as it increases the understanding of customer's wants and needs. Different products can be guided to the right subgroups and allowing business to avoid pointless work on the wrong market. While segmenting, the match can be better between customer wants and product benefits when targeting sufficient subgroups and finding a correct product for them. For instance it would be useless to provide extreme sport activities and challenging nature hiking trips to elder people. (Burke & Resnick, 2000.)

Customer segmentation is obligated for the business and it will maximize the use of available resources. It will help the business to focus on marketing expenditures and therefore all the unnecessary costs can be avoided. Segmentation has a competitive advantage. (World Tourism Organization, 2007.)

There is no single correct way to segment a market but a few common segments are documented often in a literature. In this thesis focus is on the four most important segmentation variables for consumer markets, which are:

-       Geographic

-       Demographic

-       Psychographic

-       Behavioural

Most of the markets can be too large for the organization to provide all the products and services needed by all the buyers in the market. The market must be subdivided into the groups of consumers with similar characteristics, which organization can target. These are known as target markets. (Burke & Resnick, 2000.)

In the market or marketing segment the marketer has three targeting options:

- Undifferentiated marketing: Introducing a product hoping to get as many people as wanted to buy. Mass market tour operators complete on a volume and offer products with the broadest appeal to attract as many people as possible. The organisation practising undifferentiated marketing often aims at one large segment on the market.

- Differential marketing: The organisation operates in two or more segments of the market but designs separate products and marketing programmes for each segment, for example the hotel serving the business market during the week has weekend packages to attract the leisure market. The aim of this type of marketing is to produce more total sales over the whole market. However the costs of doing this are greater than undifferentiated marketing. These costs are product modification costs; production costs, administrative costs, inventory control and promotion costs.

- Concentrated marketing: The organisation on one segment and develops the ideal product for the consumers of that segment. Instead of trying to cover the entire market, it concentrated on achieving a good market position in a few targeted segments by focusing on the segment's needs and acquiring a reputation for being a specialist. The marketer must be able to decide which is the most attractive segment on its markets. Attractive segments must be measurable, accessible, sustainable, unique and stable. (Frank et al., 1972, Thomas, 1980, Kotler, 1988.)

This thesis is focused on concentrated marketing as the operator is achieving the foreign markets through the search engines and has been planning to implement the customer acquisition plan. Especially, in the customer acquisition plan new customers from the foreign markets are wanted. As the commissioning company is a small business and its best option is to concentrate only on the right markets. Company is not yet able to invest a lot of money for the marketing.

1.2.3 Market

The concept of the market is discussed in the thesis frequently. The market for a product can be thought of being made up of four elements:

- People with a need or a desire for the product

- People with purchasing power

- A place where people buy the product – the marketplace

- People with willingness to purchase

Economic and socio-cultural factors must be taken into consideration before a company decides the foreign market strategy. It must be understood that the barriers to free trade may impede it from entering certain markets. (The International marketing of travel and tourism, 1999, 19.)

The business dictionary describes the market following: "Market is an actual or nominal place where forces of demand and supply operate, and where buyers and sellers interact to trade goods, services, or contracts or instruments, for money or barter. Markets include mechanisms or means for determining price of the traded item, communicating the price information, facilitating deals and transactions, and effecting distribution. The market for a particular item is made up of existing and potential customers who need it and have the ability and willingness to pay for it." (Business dictionary, 2013.)

1.3 Research questions

The main questions about internet marketing are:

- What is the internet marketing and its benefits?

- Who are the online customers and how will we reach them?

Once the customer analysis is done and the customers are targeted, this thesis discusses and examines where can we find the right target group and what do the customers want. In addition to all this, needs to know how and why the products will be purchased to achieve the knowledge how to tailor the sufficient channel to serve the product.

In brief, first thesis discusses about the mission and situation analysis as where is the company now. Then the theory explains about a strategic analysis and choices and finally is followed by the implementation plan. All this collected theory and data help and support Aventura Girona to find the tactical way to get operated to the right markets in efficient way. Finally, in the end of this work follows a conclusion chapter, where this study discusses how it could be measured if we got there where we planned to get and how the company will know if they have acquired all those customers they wanted to achieve.

This study is to be important to the business as can be used it in efficiently way in the future. This type of researches are needed in this particular moment and it will be very valuable material for the commissioning party. Commissioning party is willing to acquire new knowledge and creative ideas in order this thesis project.

In the customer acquisition plan of Aventura Girona, all the different types of customers should be analysed and profiled as well as their geographical characteristics should be well described. The plan is designed to get the best result by focusing the marketing to the certain kind of group of the customer to get the best result as possible. This thesis deals with the question:

- Which markets do we need to concentrate on?

Thesis focuses on the market segmentation and divides customers into subsets of consumers and then when this is done in theoretical plan implement strategies are designed to the targets using different strategies such as media channels and touch points to reach the markets. The biggest questions are:

- How much effort do we need to put on the marketing with a small budget?

- How can we reach the target markets?

- Which channels can we use to reach the targets?

Inevitably this thesis deals with the communication problem of customer acquisition, hence they will enter to the markets from another counties without good language awareness. The commissioning company Aventura Girona is a Spanish business and their language skills are

limited to Spanish, Catalan and English. This problem has been taken into account in the action plan of thesis and thesis discusses about the question:

- How can we retain the international customers?

This thesis is only an action plan so we won't see the final result before publishing. Customer acquisition is a long process and it requires time to find out the final result of its implementation's effects in substance.

The organization's corporate mission statement announces why the organization exists, what are the values, its strategy and its behaviour standards. It answers the question:

- What is it what we want?

- What do we stand for?

(The international marketing of travel and tourism, 1999,40.)

There are also many social and cultural difficulties facing firms entering the foreign market. Obviously an understanding of the language and of the culture is essential as well as the knowledge of the local conditions. One way around this is by employing local staff, but the skills need to be understood and operated to the firm's business as they are not always available locally. Then there is the problem of adverse discrimination in situations where customers, suppliers and/or the authorities favour local firms over the foreign firms. There are several ways to enter a foreign market:

- Direct investment; acquisition

- Licensing

- Joint venture

- Strategic alliances

- Exporting

(The international marketing of travel and tourism, 1999, 14.)

With all the questions, this thesis discovers new information for a small business to acquire more customers and enhance old customer relationships as well as customer insight. Focus on development will be among these problems mentioned above. These are the questions of every kind of business and entrepreneurship. (The international marketing of travel and tourism, 1999.)

1.4 Data and Methods

The project started in cooperation with Aventura Girona, in Catalonia. The main purpose of this thesis was to create an action plan and to develop a plan to acquire new customers for the company. Especially new customers hoped to be acquired from foreign countries. International environment is wanted to the company Aventura Girona, to enter on new markets and to create new services and product in other languages.

This process started during author´s practical training period in Aventura Girona. Important information was collected during this time documents for instance helping data and material for thesis writing process. The initial idea to start the process came from a practical training task, once supervisor came up with an idea to translate the webpage in Finnish. While translations work with the documents was notable how little the company has foreign customers to serve and wanted to be changed.

This is practice–based thesis and all the information is for the company to get it into practise. In practice-based thesis the information is rightly stated, cropped, developed, modernized and created for user's better services. In this type of research data is collected for the functional part's reasoned idea development. Framework is the sources and research findings dialogue. The functional part is produced by existing theoretical knowledge, using research and data collected from the target audience a user-orientated evaluation. (Vilkka & Airaksinen, 2003.)

In practice-based thesis the framework is concentrated on what kind of output will be implemented, for whom will be the output, where it will be implemented and what time of ne-

cessity, also, what is the professional point of view while accomplishing a practice-based the-sis. (Vilkka & Airaksinen, 2003.)

The implementation of this thesis started officially in August 2013, but it has been planned and refined from the summer 2013 with the commissioning. The aim is to accomplish the thesis before the spring 2014.

1.5 Aventura Girona

Aventura Girona is a small self-employed nature activity company in Catalonia. The entre-preneur is an experienced businessman and adventurer in Spain. He has a board range of customers in surrounding area, but has a small lack of international customers. The off-season in Catalonia starts from October and lasts until April and during this time the man-ager of Aventura Girona has to do a lot of work with his other operators because they don't have customers for the nature activities in the winter time. Aventura Girona is a well run-ning business especially in the summer, but something seems to be missing in winter ser-vices to balance the effectively running business. The winter season is very quiet in Catalonia and it reflects to the business. (Aventura Girona, 2013.)

There is a big volume on the markets especially for citizens of the Northern countries, even though the weather in Catalonia is getting colder in October. As an activity providing com-pany they have a broad market to work on and wider to and they have lots of possibilities to expand their business. The fact is that the nature of Catalonia is very beautiful all around the year, even there aren't so many sunny days after the summer, but still the weather is better than in the north besides some group of people think the weather is the best for the nature activities when is getting under 10 degrees. For Northern citizen the weather is alike their summer. There exists a strong believe that the company would get more operations in the winter if they develop their business and marketing plan. In addition to all this, these times of the economic crises it is a vast advantage to obtain more customers from other countries.

If there is was a change to ample the marketing to the other countries, the company would gather more profit during the off-season as well. (Aventura Girona, 2013)

1.5.1 Values of Aventura Girona

Guide of Aventura Girona is a professional who leads activities for an individual or a group, carries out sport teaching and training tasks and manages risks well during the outdoor activities. The company provides safety and security in the group and the guide works always well to prevent any subjective individual risk and minimise never disappearing mountain risks. (Aventura Girona, 2013.)

"All the guides have officially recognized certificates that authorise them to carry out their work as outdoor guides. The skills of the guides are guaranteed by the UIAGM (International Union of Associations of Mountain Guides) and the UIMLA (International Union of Mountain Companion Guides), associations to which AEGM belongs and which ensure the quality of training and professionalism of all the guides who belong to them." (Aventura Girona, 2013.)

"Expert knowledge is very important in our work as well as awareness of the environment, a good physique, an ample sports curriculum, social ability, the friendliness to make all the members of the group feel comfortable and to know how to cope with every situation and in relation to each participant, in order to achieve the desired objective." (Aventura Girona, 2013.)

Aventura Girona sets high level of quality in their action so the planned activities go through an in-company quality test. All the activities are well tested and they create the best programmes according to customer's needs or desires. (Aventura Girona, 2013.)

2 MARKETING RESEARCH

2.1 Customer acquisition

Customer acquisition is a vast process which consist different factors and issues. Also it is a process which includes two elements: How to acquire customers for the business and how to convent the existing prospects into new customers?

In this case the issue is how to acquire as many profitable customers as possible at less cost of invests for small operator. Commission Aventura Girona prefers to use internet as a marketing tool as it requires less costs from the entrepreneur and it is an easier tool to use in home office. This study shows how simple and efficient way it is to use internet as a customer acquisition tool. Sometimes also an impressive promotion can acquire more customers and creates conversation and curiosity about the business.

2.1.1 Introduction

First of all on customer acquisition needs to determine the customers by segmentation them to focus on their psychology how they sense and experience and then find proper product to be presented to them. Another consideration is to analyse customer behaviour and tendency while buying the products. (Management study guide, 2013.)

It is very important to possess the knowledge of surrounding environment for instance the business culture, technology and media. Whereas we are aware of all the action going all around our customers we can integrate to the markets they are active. Entrepreneur needs to study the customer's limitation of knowledge processing power which influence the decision making power. (Saylor, 2004.)

Finally to get all this into practice, needs to engage the best strategies for effectively convincing new customers and improving marketing campaigns, find the best ways to get the company and its products more known and acquire more customers. (Management study guide, 2013.)

Customer acquisition techniques change with technological changes. There is always a need to optimize and upgrade the traditional ways of available marketing channels. Exploring new methods to entertain customers is important to remain in competition and have high acquisition rate. Because of this it's important to stay with the newest technology inventions and follow the development of techniques and trends on the markets. (Buhalis, 2003.)

All the customer acquisition highly depends on how effectively the organization is able and willing to build a comprehensive relationship with the customer. Always the result of good customer relationship is to enhance the revenue and customers usually buy more and in the ideal case acquire more customers to the business. (Management study guide, 2013.)

During the time of acquiring customers need to provide some key aspects to create an impressive opinion in customer´s mindset. This means to possess the proper knowledge of company´s products and services such as to be aware of all the questions asked from the suppliers and have prompt, responsive and experienced executives to serve customers. (Management study guide, 2013.)

Critical approaches need to be identified to enhance customers acquisition power what means to acquire lots of customers with a low cost budget as possible. The studies show that the best strategies to acquire customers are planning and implementing promotional campaigns. They should be tailored according to customer´s needs taking into consideration their nature and target group hence the campaigns will be implemented efficiently. Customers need to feel satisfied and encouraged and the company gets a healthy relationship with customers. (Management study guide, 2013.)

2.1.2 Introduction and SWOT analysis

SWOT analysis is an excellent tool to measure company's abilities and possibilities. It guides to identify the positive and the negative factors inside the organization and on the business markets as well as on external area. In includes four main points Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Treats. There are three different type of SWOT analysis. In any case it is a very simple tool to use and it's recommended to complete in the beginning a business plan. When planning a business strategy, marketing plan or new products to the market should be clear and well-structured for the company. A stable plan can help with strategic planning and in decision-making. (World Tourism Organization & European Travel Commission, 2007.)

Normally, the creators and users of SWOT analysis might be team members and project managers who carry out the responsibility for decision-making and strategic planning. Nevertheless it doesn´t mean that an individual or a small group cannot develop a SWOT analysis. Normally it is the most effective if there are more members in developing the analysis as all the aspects will be on shown. Each member offers different perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses in the analysis as they have different experiences. (Community toolbox, 2013.)

SWOT Matrix

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

Figure 1 : Traditional matrix method. Swotmatrix.com, 20.09.2013

Generally speaking the SWOT analysis is presented as a grid of four squares. All of them hold a different word Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities or Treats. To do the easiest way to accomplish template it's recommendable to use questions for the words. In this thesis questions of each view point are going to be analysed. There is also one less used SWOT analysis model called 2x2 matrix method. According to its name, we use less squares in a grid, where are only two dimensions. First row includes Strengths and Weaknesses and the second row is for Opportunities and Threats. They are fighting against each other and in this case the first category is the internal environment which means the inner situation what is going on in the company for example the product factors which are tend to be in present. (Business balls, 2013.)

Whereas second category Opportunities and Treats is the situation analysis outside the company so called external environment. These factors tent to be in the future and they can be such as economic factors, technology, trends, markets, policies and so on.

INTERNAL		EXTERNAL	
Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats

Figure 2: 2x2 Matrix method. The community tool box, 20.09.2013

Simple template helps to structure positive and negative abilities and factors and it is easy to accomplish for example as a brainstorm. Positives and negatives can be grouped as below and it helps organization to think broadly as well as see better its external environment. (World Tourism Organization & European Travel Commission, 2007.)

Positives	Negatives
strengths	weaknesses
assets	limitations
resources	restrictions
opportunities	threats
prospects	challenges

Figure 3: Simple method. The community tool box, 20.09.2013

Basic SWOT analysis method with four squares is used in Aventura Girona´s case as it's recommended to do more specific analysis. It is the commonly used as well as traditional model, and the operator prefers the basic model as it seems trustable and more detailed option.

SWOT analysis is a versatile tool to use for developing. It can be used to plan its position in the market or commercial viability or for instance to develop a method of sales distribution. All new business ideas should be analysed by SWOT analysis to find out the best solution when starting to deal with it. In a strategic option it is a great tool when entering to a new market or launching a new product. While acquiring customers, can SWOT analysis help the organization to acquire potential partnerships and suppliers. It is a marvellous tool for planning a project and for management or an investment opportunity. (Business balls, 2013.)

2.1.3 Internal factors

Mostly Strengths and weaknesses are considered internal factors in the company's SWOT analysis. Human resources can be named strengths. The question is how human resources can be used properly and how does it help our organization to develop to be a better and more efficient business? Human resources can be named staff, volunteers, board members or target population. (World Tourism Organization and European Travel Commission, 2007.)

Physical resources are the things which are present and visible a location, building or equipment. Sources of incomes are financial factors of strengths such as grants, funding agencies or other sources. Also, strengths can be reputation, past experiences, programs or employed systems. (World Tourism Organization and European Travel Commission, 2004.)

Weaknesses are the factors which need to be addressed to run a successful business. Good example would be a lack of experience in the selected industry. This may be the most common weakness in SWOT analysis of a new running business. (World Tourism Organization and European Travel Commission, 2007.)

2.1.4 External factors

Opportunities and treats are considered external. There should be thinking about what kind of available possibilities can be acquired to the business. Also, mostly considered external and they from outside of the business will directly affect to it, but the runner of the business may have very little control over them. There might be some local regulations and negatively impact to the business. The major treat for the business is completion which means other organizations nearby. (World Tourism Organization and European Travel Commission, 2004.)

Some of the facts are impossible to control by the group or organization such as future trends or the culture such as demographic factors like age, race, gender, which are served in the area. Local, national or international economy are impossible to know in advance but

always it's good to be aware and make a plan in SWOT analysis how to deal with problematic situations. (Business balls, 2013.)

Also, external factors can be some funding sources as foundations, donors or legislatures cooperated with. Some factors around environment like a building or common transportation cutting routes are external. (Business balls, 2013.)

Legislation is an important factor in tourism and sometimes it can make a job harder as it is necessary to think about different laws and requirements. Very external and unpredictable factor is the weather which has to be anticipated and there is nothing what can be done about it, only reconsidering the clothing and safety conditions. Also all events for example locals, nationals and internationals make a big effect to business operating. (University of Kansas, Community Tool Box, 2013.)

2.2 Market segmentation

2.2.1 Introduction

When we are talking about market it is the actual or potential buyers of the products and services. Whereas the market segmentation it the process of dividing the market into subgroups of similar customers. In this study a market segment is called s subgroup of people who share similarities which can be used for more efficient buyer relationship whereas target market is the subgroup of people who present the greatest opportunity for targeting. (NTO, 2007.)

Market segmentation is an important factor and an element of marketing strategy. There are numerous ways for segmenting the customers and innovative ways for segmenting markets which are constantly being developed and each segment has its own distinct needs and/or patterns of response to varying marketing mixes. (NTO, 2007, 7.)

Therefore, when it is planned to make the effective and reliable target marketing, must the groups of people be identified. These groups are called segments and they must be analysed

whether these are the people who would help to fulfil the objectives. These target groups will be assessed whether they are realistically likely to consider the products and establish their motivations or triggers and buying habits. Once this all is achieved should find an appropriate tool to reach the target group from the marketing channels and finally evaluate the impact of the marketing on the segments which have been targeted. (NTO, 2007, 8.)

Rather than try to meet the needs of all travellers, companies generally choose to direct their products or services to a segment of the market, called a target market. A target market contains a sizable, yet manageable group of people who might be expected to purchase the same products and services. Target markets are based on a variety of factors such as purpose of the travel (business, vacation, visiting friends and relatives), age and marital status (young singles, senior citizens, parents with young children), economic status (upscale, middle-income, low-income), or interest (adventure, art and music, health). Target marketing involves developing products and promotional strategies to appeal to specific market segments. (Burke and Resnick, 2000, 7.)

Segmentation allows the business to make more cost-efficient choices. It would be very difficult to focus on the markets without specific knowledge of the target. There are a few major benefit of market segmentation for instance communication, understanding and maximizing marketing return on investment. (Burke and Resnick, 2000.)

There is now a single way to segment a market, but below is a list of a few common segmentation variables for consumer markets:

- Geographic

- Demographic

- Psychographic

- Behavioural

The travel market as whole is too large to reach efficiently and too diverse to communicate with any single way, so marketing professionals break it up into smaller, manageable parts. They develop travel product for specific groups of people who have things in common

which can influence to their travel decision. The process by which the total market is divided into groups of potential customers with scared characteristic is known as market segmentation, and the groups themselves are called market segments. (Burke & Resnick, 2000, 39.)

2.2.2 How to select segments for targeting

High-potential markets segments can become target markets. Useful market segments must be compose of individuals who will respond similarly to marketing messages and who share characteristics which differentiate them from other segments. This can be reacted effectively by communications media, which has sufficient revenue to focus worldwide. (Management Study Guide, 2013.)

When travel professionals make decisions on which market segments to target their travel products, they don't do in a vacuum. They investigate the market to gather facts which help them to make informed decisions. Acquiring information about the market in the systematic way is called market research.(Vindicia, 2013.)

Target market decisions aren't the only marketing decisions which depend on the research. Every stage of the marketing process –from product development to pricing –uses market research to provide the information necessary for good business decision. And nearly every component of the market –sellers and buyers, products and services, distribution and promotion –can be the focus of systematic market research. (Vindicia, 2013.)

When used intelligently, market research can also reduce business risks. It provides managers with information to avoid costly mistakes. Market research lets them know with certainly what their customers' attitudes and behaviours are, as well as their willingness to pay. It also provides information on the competition and on new developments within their industry. (Burke and Resnick, 2000, 48.)

Generally speaking a target market is a group of customers, who business operator has decided to aim its marketing efforts and ultimately its merchandise towards it have to be carefully considered witch of the targets we start finally to approach. Once the result has been discovered, starts the focusing on the right segment. (Mangement Study Guide, 2013.)

3 INTERNET MARKETING

This chapter is the most important to strategic business customer acquisition plan and it deals with the questions what is internet marketing and what benefits does the internet provide to the markets? All countries have their different cultures even on the markets and this thesis discusses about which factors affect the environment for online trading in a country.

3.1 Introduction to internet marketing

Internet is a massive database and it is very important to know how to distinguish what are the key strategic options for internet marketing and how the elements of marketing mix are varied online. (Buhalis, 2003.)

While creating the strategic marketing plan needs to know which are the activities involved in building a new site or updating already existing site. Finally, after creating the strategic plan of internet marketing needs to stay aware what kind of resources do we need to put into maintaining and monitoring the site and who are the online customers and what are their expectations for online business to consumer the services. (Buhalis, 2003.)

All different usage patterns are highly developed and they are changing rapidly. "In 2012, more than 1.4 billion people around the world use social networks, up 19% from 2011. But although the worldwide social network audience is enormous, it is by no means unified (E-Marketer). Many people use Facebook, but also many other social networks as well. All the social media is not concentrated only on Facebook, it's not enough. Social networks play a large role in several major markets. (E-marketer, 2013.)

In more mature markets, marketers are looking to use the social media presences they have already established to deliver relevant content to fans. Social networks are making easier for businesses to broadcast deals and recommendations across wider network of users in real time with improved location and mobile targeting. (Emarketing, 27.9.2013.)

3.1.1 Benefits

Organizations have even more powerful tools for enhancing their efficiency. A number of innovate small organizations led by determined entrepreneurs have demonstrated that with a minimal investment they can also compete on an equal footing with larger organizations. Also less wealthy regions and nations such as India and Malaysia are using Internet for education and learning resources economically privileged societies. (Buhalis, Etourism, 30.)

Countries such as India and Indonesia are rapidly becoming major usage centres for social networking, particularly via mobile phones, and will each see their user bases grow more than 50% in 2012. This phenomenon, combined with Facebook's staggering growth in the region, mean that in 2012, the Asia-Pacific region will, for the first time, be home to more Facebook users than North America is. (Emarketer, 27.9.2013.)

Also, it has been discovered how time and money saving way internet marketing is, once we know how to use it properly. Vast benefit is to use it and take all the advantage from possible free web sites what we can use for marketing. (EMarketer, 2013.)

3.1.2 Internet marketing strategy

When defining "the strategy", enormous assemblage of different information can be found from different authors. Mostly, it's defined as plans of top management to attain outcomes consistent with the organization's mission and goals. Also, it has been defined as a plan, pattern, a position or a perspective or even a ploy. Well-formulated strategic plan helps to assembly and allocate resources of organization. It's a direction or a scope of an organization through its configuration of resources within a changing environment and to meet all the desires and wills of stakeholders. (E-tourism, 43.)

Planning and management involves strategic issues for the organization. What is important, it that the top management will undertake the strategic planning process and the implementation. "it's about seeking and understanding the strategic position of the organizations, strategic choice, which is to do with the formulation of possible courses of action, their evalua-

tion and the choice between them and strategy implementation, which is concerned with both, planning how the choice of strategy can be put into effect and managing the changes required". (Johnson and Scholes, 1999 & Buhalis, 45, 2003.)

In addition to developing a marketing strategy a company should establish specific marketing objectives for each of its target markets. Marketing objectives are expressions of goals in relation to target markets. Marketing strategies are always developed in the context of meeting these stated goals. (Buhalis, 2003.)

To be meaningful, marketing objectives must be specific. This is important because the success of marketing strategies is measured by determining whether the marketing objectives were met when the strategies were implemented. To make the determinations possible, marketing objectives must always include the following information:

1. Why is to be changed or accomplished (desired result).

2. How will it be done (marketing activities).

3. To whom the activities are to be directed (target market).

4. When (time frame).

5. To what degree (measure of success).

Specific marketing tactics depend on product's current market position as well as the level of competition, so deciding which marketing tactics and activities to utilize may be difficult. However the goal of marketing strategy may be viewed quite simply: to effectively communicate with the target market that has been selected. (Marketing & Selling the Travel Product. 87-88.)

3.2 Search engine optimization

Search engine is a computer function that searched data available on the internet using keywords or other specified terms, or program containing this function. HTML is abbreviation

for HyperText Markup Language, a language used when describing web page documents. It denotes the basic elements of web pages, including the document text and any hyperlinks and images embedded within. Whereas head tag is an element, that indicates the header in an HTML document. The content of this element will not be displayed in a browser. While talking about search enquiry we mean a single or multiple terms which are input by the user when performing a search on search engines. (Searchenginesbook, 2013.)

Designing, writing, coding and programming the entire website is called search engine optimization if there will be a good change that the optimized website will appear easily the top of search engine queries while looking searching for selected keywords and key phrases. (Searchenginesbook, 2013.)

3.3 Social media marketing

The biggest mistake doing customer acquisition is to no having a social-media plan. Whereas it is recommended to have at least one well managed social media platform and maintain well. Social media is constantly changing and new engines and trends are coming up, therefore, well proceeding company needs to be ready to changes and adaption. It's not enough to just build an internet marketing strategy it's required to evaluate it constantly and refine the strategy. This can be done to a monthly habit whereas it helps to identify which tactics are working and which ones to ditch. (Beard, 2013: Emarketer, 2003.)
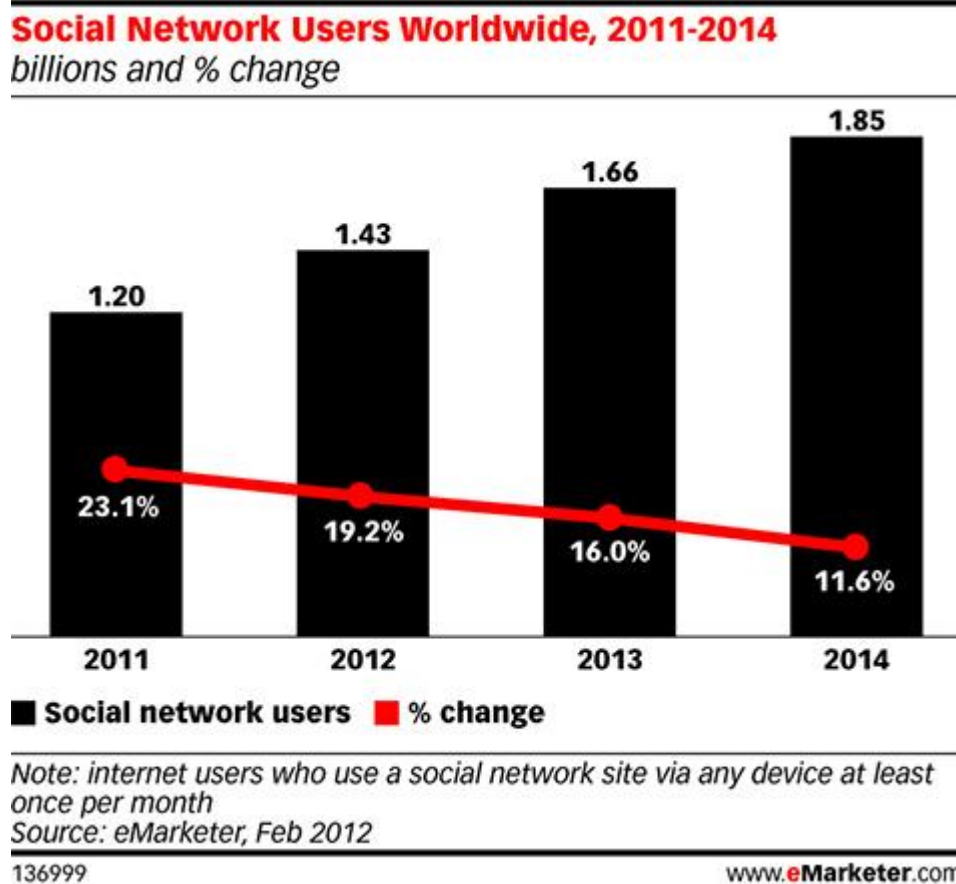
Figure 4: E marketer, 27.9.2013

According to the article in Economist written by Kim Lachance Shandrow is emphasized how important it is to create a detailed, goal-oriented social-media strategy and possess a rock solid business plan. To ideally convert social-media fans into customers by attracting them and finally engage social-media fans and followers you'll need to carefully draw a clear, effective social-media strategy. When building your company's social-marketing plan are following questions important to consider to it:

- What should company aim to achieve with social media?

- Who should set up and maintain my company's social media accounts?

- Should company have a presence on all of the popular social-media networks?

- What are the best social networks for small businesses?

- What types of content should I be posted on which social platforms?

- How often new content should be posted on social networks?

  - Should social media be used to provide customer service?

  - How social-media followers can be converted into customers?

  - How the success of my social-media marketing efforts can be measured?

  - . What is the biggest mistake to avoid?

Once creating the Social-Media marketing plan everything depends on the type of business the company is in. Social media can be used to gain exposure for its brand, or to directly interact with the customers or to promote specific products and services. (Dough Brogdon, 2013.)

It is very simple to create a Social-Media marketing plan. The most important step is creating your plan is to clearly identify all the goals. Next, understand goals of the customers, and then figure out how your social-media strategy will connect both. It is suggested first to define how social-media outreach marketing will provide value the customers. Specifically to think about how social media can be used to solve the customers' problems. Three steps are following:

1. Identify goals of the company.

2. Map out and understand goals of the customers.

3. Figure out the connection between the goals of the company and customers.

As a starting point it is recommendable for a small business to begin with a blog and a presence on just one social network, at least for the first few months. This helps the company to practise its use and as well concentrate to only one tool at time and manage its use well and properly. Network should be selected according to company's customer needs, which Social Media marketing tool they use most. (Beard, 2013.)

While company grows and earns more profit is it able to wider its marketing and start to focus on other marketing tools and maybe can be able to hire an extra person to work on the area of Social-Media marketing. It is better to make one excellent Social-Marketing engine than create a bad impression by distributing a lot of pathetic and trashy publications to internet. (Lachance Shandrow, 2013.)

Whether your company is large or small can consider having a Twitter account in its use. It's an easy platform to learn and use, and the company can be updated with other's news and posts and post important information itself. Also Google+ is essential to be on use and add all the customers into the circles. Also what is recommendable for B2B firms is to join LinkedIn and Slideshare to reach influencers within the industry as well as being on Facebook and Pinterest can be profitable and efficient. (Lachance Shandrow, 2013.)

According to the article in Economist written by Kim Lachance Shandrow, was advised to post on all of social networks from two to five times a day. Followers visit social-media sites at different times of the day. To reach more of your followers more often, stagger your posts consistently throughout the day. "One post a day simply isn't enough because most of your fans won't see it simply due to timing," (Lachance Shandrow, 2013.)

Certain types of content generally work better on certain social-media platforms, according to Odden. For example, Facebook, Pinterest, Google+ and Instagram are inherently visual, so striking memorable images of your products, company events and perhaps behind-the-scenes snapshots of employees at work can be effective choices for those particular platforms. Text-only status updates on Facebook without an accompanying link also trend well, especially when asking questions. (Lachance Shandrow, 2013.)

During the times is Social media the fastest becoming the most common way for current and potential customers to interact with business. All platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and other can instantly field and respond to customer questions, order status inquiries and complaints. Some of the tactics seem to work better that the others. For instance, Facebook ads can be an easy, inexpensive way to grow a big fan base, increase engagement and collect sales leads. (Lachance Shandrow, 2013.)

Implement a cross-platform contest that integrates several social channels, like Twitter, YouTube, Facebook and Pinterest. To drive consumers form the other platform to another can be good way for example if the company has an online store, they might send a tweet that describes a contest on its Facebook Page with a link to the rules and entry form found within your online store. It's important to continually track your social-media marketing metrics in order to gauge which tactics and types of posts work and which don't. (Lachance Shandrow, 2013.)

There are some useful metrics what can be used in Social Media operating. For instance Facebook gives page administrators access to Page Insights data for free. These will tell the number of people is interacting with the posts. Information can be useful for the future to plan post better and decide targeting differently or keep it same. LinkedIn provides similar analytics for company pages. Very recommendable is Google Analytics what can be used to see how effective are all social-media campaigns, working in driving traffic to main website or online store. (Lachance Shandrow, 2013.)

3.3.1 Facebook

In business operating has a big importance for Facebook. Nowadays it is important to sing in on Facebook, in the other words to have an account there. There has been a dramatically big change over the last year and new domains have started to operate on internet. Notable network giants such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn have done an impact for the business life and marketing as they have star creating a platform where small businesses can reach internationally a global target group. For a small company a suitable place to start marketing is Facebook as it's quite effective to catch the audience. All is up to matter of seconds and after a few clicks. The most important click is the Like button on Facebook. The goal of small business owners should be generate as many Likes as possible on the status updated of their Facebook fan pages. In order to get the visibility the company needs to be listed as top news on the homepage of all the users, contacts and fried so it's important to post commends, publications and pictures. (McDunnigan, 2013.)

Facebook can be used as a new opportunity for business to consumer marketing campaigns. Businesses are realizing that with the right tactics, social networking campaigns effectively augment business to business marketing efforts too. Facebook plays an important role in these new efforts because of its popularity, content capabilities, and advertisement targeting tools. (McDunnigan, 2013.)

"The debate unfortunately masks a much more important and productive discussion. Businesses confuse Facebook as a utility or service that's there to help broadcast messages a lot. In the same way, businesses pay wire services to distribute press releases or brands and buy advertisements on TV or radio to reach as many people as possible. Facebook is a social network to help people to communicate, share, and discover. With over one billion people calling Facebook one of their digital homes, a social economy is a natural byproduct. Therefore, businesses must learn that relationships are earned and earned again and communities are built upon a foundation of mutual value, entertainment, and empowerment." (Solis, 2010.)

Company needs to create an account on Facebook, especially when it wants to incorporate social media tactics into its marketing strategy. Businesses which use social media as a part of their consumer advertising strategy have accounts with this service. Many of their employees have Facebook pages. Facebook is one of the most popular social networking platform on the Internet, what means it's quite impossible to launch a serious social network marketing campaign without an account Facebook. (McDunningan, 22.10.2013.)

While doing a marketing campaign, the last and final goal is to influence to the decision makers in a prospective client company to get them to buy goods and services. However, targeting these decision makers directly is not the only way to win them over. The final decision may be theirs, but they are certainly influenced by the opinions of their rank and file employees. A Facebook gives a change to market directly to the business tried to turn into a client and its employees who have Facebook pages. By marketing to regular employees, can indirect support be built for the products. (McDunningan, 22.10.2013.)

Today, none of all the social networking platforms on the Internet has the same targeted advertising capabilities than Facebook. Facebook collects more details about its members

than other services. Advertisers are allowed to create advertisements by profession, interests and social connections and marketing efforts can be targeted at specific businesses, their employees or professionals. These can be simple ads or material to lure these professionals to start looking at the content on your Facebook presence. If the customers find the content interesting, then they can start following the page. This gets for more direct marketing efforts to them business. (McDunningan, 22.10.2013.)

3.3.2 Twitter and LikedIn sharing

LinkedIn is developed to share news of the company within others and also there all the willing business owners can lead themselves to the others to start networking together. Aim of Twitter is to share news and information with friends, business partners and industry influencers. Productive thoughts and tips can be easily shared vie these websites. (Lachance Shandrow Kim, 2013.)

It is recommended to use it to publish photos, short videos, useful links, helpful tips, thoughtful question and so on. Across company's social-media platforms should be kept things interesting and fresh so its followers will come back for more. (Lachance Shandrow Kim, 2013.)

3.4 Tripadvisor

Online marketing on internet via social media is very profitable and useful for the company. Normally it's free and trustable. Services as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Flickr and Tripadvicor are used by millions of people and most of them decide their travel destination according to opinions and ads in social media. (Tourism e-kit, 2013.)

What is important, is to stay updated on Social media and update own profile frequently enough. Tripadvisor is a good dealer in this as all the left comments and reviews are on show for the travellers and customers and they are able to read the opinions. The company should answer to all the comments and reviews and thank them for their messages and ex-

perienced services. It's not self-serving at all to ask for a comment afterwards the experienced activity with the operator. This kind of webpages can be a clear picture for the company itself of its character for the others and what is more the company can be updated about its reputation. (Aventura Girona, 2013.)

Approximately 80% of all the internet users who are looking for the target to travel or go for are using some kind of search engine to find sufficient travel destination. Normally if the customer cannot find the company through the search engine in the order they he doesn't make the reservation either. Customers are more aware of the quality of today's services and they are expecting a rapid answer for their questions too. Finally the most important thing is to be able to assess to make the reservation easily and simply. (Tourism e-kit,2013.)

Customer is an important marketing tool. Once the customer has visited at the company and tied the product or service he will tell about this experience to his friends and the family. Perhaps the customers might posts pictures on Facebook or Instagram and write a review on Tripadvisor. Anyway the company's own webpage is the most trustable and updated source of information. This can be compared of the voice in the phone conversation while talking with the customer on the phone. This is not enough marketing the company and its services and products. Also, it's important to use other marketing channels and sources as well as search engine optimization to get reputation. (Aventura Girona, 2013.)

Tripadvisor has been said to been globally most popular tourism web-services. There are about 200 million visitors monthly. It has been recommended to every tourism operator and it is important to add the information of the company on the webpage and create a profile there. All the companies can't be accepted to have a profile there for example the travel agencies cannot have a profile. (Tripadvisor, 2013.)

Registration and singing in is quite easy. Later on it's possible to edit the details and information again, but of course instead of this is important to create a trustable accurate and clear profile already in the beginning. Once registered on Tripadvisor can profile be updated and advertised with pictures and paragraphs of text. Tripadvisor sends newsletters and informs of the left comments and they are being to answer. (Tripadvisor, 2013.)

The service is easy to assess and easily findable as well as it can be uploaded to phone as an application. Conveniently used application can find rapidly all the services from surrounding area and the most important destinations and attractions which fit in customer's interest. (Tripadvisor, 2013.)

Tripadvisor is a recommending service and services can be easily published at the website. Once a customer is looking for a right destination on Tripadvisor, he might run into a wide range of tourism operation due to this they will get free visibility as well. (Tripadvisor, 2013.)

Website offers highly efficient graphical banners, sponsor possibility and the website is active hence there happening movements has immediate reaction. Tripadvisor is an unique forum for customers which can reach the wanted target group. Therefore, there are lots of benefits for the signed company as it intensifies knowledge, sales and recall for the company. (Tripadvisor, 2013.

Feedback from the customers is important to gather from the customers. Especially good feedback is wanted. Customers can leave a comment and pictures from the services to the profile. Widgets service works with the same principles that it allows linking to the websites from Tripadvisor and shows its last recommendations. Customers should be asked to leave a comment to site for example by using the review –link in email after the transaction. (Tripavisor, 2013.)

According to the latest Tripadvisor's investigation 87 % of the bookers decide their travel destination based on other opinions from the formal customers (PhoCusWright's Social Media in Travel, 2010). The content is authentic, fresh and trustable. All the products and services on Tripadvisor are able to get as widget form, which is easy and rapid to keep own marketing (Tripadvisor, 2013.).

3.5 Implementation and monitoring

The most important marketing channel of today is social media, which has got a high-speed traffic and it is the most trustable tool for the customers to get reliable information from the products and services of the company. (Rogers, 2013.)

Social media can boost the infection of the internet and linking to the other website users. Operators have to create interesting information on their site and share it with others. Blogs are very usable as well as other tool in web. Linking is today's trend and the information navigates from the site to the other. For example on Facebook can "like" button clicked by several users and from this can be linked to own site. Social proofs as testimonials and operating experiences and quantity of "likers" can measure and enhance the conversion on the website. With social media can measure all the visitors, experiences and be updated with the opinions and find new trend orientations. (Beard, 2013.)

Strategic tactical roles of information technology for strategic tourism management tour operations need constantly interact with the all their partners, including accommodation and transportation principals, travel agencies and consumers. Coordinating the simultaneous movements of large numbers of travellers, often in many different countries and continents, represent a major operational management challenge in with ICTs have a crucial role. (Rogers, 2013.)

Traditionally tour operators distribute their products by displaying brochures of their packages in travel agencies in order to request a holiday from tour operator. Travel agencies search tour operators' database and make bookings through videotext booking systems. The introduction of the internet as well as intranets and extranets as strategic tools have a number of critical benefits four tour operators. The emergence of extranets and intranets has introduced a wide range of great opportunities and perhaps threats to tour operators. They have facilitated the distribution of electronic brochures and booking forms to both travel trade partners and consumers taking advantage of multimedia presentations about tourism destinations and packages. (E-tourism, 244.)

The internet also provides unparalleled opportunities for tour operators to research destinations and develop their products on-line. Using the Internet as a database, tour operators can assess information on local products, design packages and provide much better information for product managers and contracting employees. In addition they can enrich their products by offering a whole range of additional value-added services such as financial and loan facilities, weather forecasts, shopping opportunities etc. (Marcusse, 2000, E-tourism, 250.)

In addition, being able to interact closely with consumers, tour operators have the opportunity to understand the needs of their clients and to alter elements of the marketing mix according to the market conditions and to improve the level of flexibility they offer. In addition, they can demonstrate pictures and videos of accommodation and they can offer opinions of previous customers as well as many more added-value services. (E-tourism, 251.)

4 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion since it was determined to bring a comprehensive customer acquisition plan for Aventura Girona the research time data was collected from theoretical framework and operator. It is very important to have a solid marketing plan strategy and in order to accomplish that needs to know the customers of the market. This is the reason why market segmentation plays such a big role in marketing planning strategy to provoke new customer relationships.

In fact, in Aventura Girona´s case the customer acquisition was the subject of research and this accomplished customer acquisition plan will help company to distinguish customers in to their subgroups in the future and find then a proper way to provoke and maintain customer relationships.

In addition we observed how important marketing tool internet is and how we can consider the company's website as its business card. Our final conclusion in this research is to use low cost marketing strategy such as internet, websites, advertising and what is more – Social media.

Nevertheless, the aims of the action plan were achieved successfully theoretical foundation of this study was researched and a lot of new useful information was researched and added in topics of the study.

The practical part of study wasn't accomplished yet as aimed in the beginning of this thesis, this was only an action plan. Nevertheless all necessary theoretical information was collected on time and analyzed in thesis. This valuable information will be a helpful tool in the near future for Aventura Girona and other small entrepreneurs to find out the simple and easy way to acquire more customers and conduct new relationships.

I am grateful for Aventura Girona for providing me the opportunity to make this thesis. Customer acquisition is a present topic in today's business life especially in Spain. I hope reading this thesis is beneficial for the reader and it introduces some new concepts and provides new information. I feel this thesis will be useful for my future career as well.

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