SeAMK

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Marketing and communication of the SeAMK Cooperative

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Opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli tutkia digitaalisen markkinoinnin ja yritysviestinnän teoreettista taustaa, jotta tätä tietämystä voitaisiin hyödyntää työn käytännön osassa. Tämä tehtiin perehtymällä olemassa olevaan kirjallisuuteen ja tutkimukseen näistä aiheista sekä kilpailijoiden markkinointisisältöjä analysoimalla. Opinnäytetyön käytännön osuus oli SeAMK Osuuskunnan tilaama, joka koostui markkinointimateriaalien tuottamisesta ja osuuskunnan käsikirjan kääntämisestä englannin kielelle.

Tavoitteena oli löytää keinoja, joilla SeAMK Osuuskunta voi kehittää markkinointiaan, viestintäänsä ja edistää paremmin jäsentensä hyvinvointia tulevaisuudessa. Tästä syystä opinnäytetyössä käsitellään myös osuuskuntiin ja kevytyrittäjyyteen liittyvää teoriaa ja käsitteistöä. Tavoitteena oli myös vastata kysymykseen, kuinka markkinointi ja viestintä tässä nimenomaisessa projektissa tulisi tehdä, jotta SeAMK Osuuskunta koettaisiin tämän kohderyhmien keskuudessa parhaaksi vaihtoehdoksi kilpailijoihin nähden.

Tilatut materiaalit valmistuivat tämän tutkimuksen seurauksena, ja SeAMK Osuuskunta hyväksyi nämä. Tulevaisuuden kehityskohteita käsitellään myös tämän opinnäytetyön lopussa. Käsikirja ja kaikki markkinointimateriaalit eivät sisälly liitteisiin, sillä käsikirja on tarkoitettu sisäiseen käyttöön, eivätkä kaikki markkinointivideot myöskään ole julkisia.

[1] Asiasanat: osuuskunnat, markkinointi, video, viestintä, kansainvälisyys

SEINÄJOKI UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Thesis abstract

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The aim of this thesis was to research the theoretical background for digital marketing and business communication, so that knowledge of these subjects could be applied in the practical part of the thesis. This was done by reading existing literature and research on these subjects and by conducting analysis of the competitors' marketing content. The practical part of the thesis was commissioned by the SeAMK Cooperative and consisted of the production of marketing materials, and the translation of the Cooperative's handbook into English.

The aim was to find ways how the SeAMK Cooperative could improve its marketing, communication and better benefit the wellbeing of its members in the future. For this reason, concepts and theory related to cooperatives and light entrepreneurship are dealt with, too. The aim was also to answer the question how the marketing and communication in this particular case should be done, so that the SeAMK Cooperative would be considered by the target audiences to be the best option compared to its competitors.

The commissioned materials were completed as a result of this study and approved by the commissioner. Future targets for improvement are also considered in the conclusion of the thesis. The handbook and some of the marketing materials are not included in the appendices or bibliography of the thesis because the handbook is only for internal use, and the marketing materials consist of videos, of which all are not public.

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Pictures, Figures and Tables

Terms and Abbreviations

SeAMK   Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences

NKI-project   New Knowledge Interface project

Cooperative   Cooperatives are an association of people or communities the purpose of which is to serve the benefit of its members' livelihoods.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Goal and purpose

The goal of this thesis is to explain in-depth the theoretical background for the practical part commissioned by the SeAMK Cooperative, which was the production of marketing materials for SeAMK Cooperative and the translation of the cooperative's handbook. The purpose is to create a guide which could be used as aid with similar projects related to marketing and of launching a service on a new language, were they for SeAMK Cooperative or any other business. I also aim to find ways how SeAMK Cooperative can improve its marketing, communication and how it can better benefit the wellbeing of its members in the future. I'll explain concepts and theory related to cooperatives and light entrepreneurship as well for this reason.

The case of SeAMK Cooperative is relatively unique for a marketing project because of the exclusive target demographic. Only the students and staff of SeAMK can join the cooperative and because of that, the aim was to produce marketing material mostly for this internal audience. The same applies to the handbooks translation because it is not meant to be public and can only be found in the SeAMK intranet.

The internal audience for which all this is for is still numerous and there are many competitors on the market offering similar services as the ones provided by the SeAMK Cooperative. I aim in this thesis to answer also the question how the marketing and communications in this case are to be done, so that the SeAMK Cooperative is considered by the target audiences to be the superior option among its competitors.

1.2 Structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of the commissioned production of the marketing materials and translation of SeAMK Cooperatives handbook. In this theoretical part, I begin with the introduction of the commissioner and after that theory related to the project is explained. I also explain the theoretical side of the process of doing the thesis as a practice-based thesis. Lastly the results of the project are analysed, and future development areas are considered.

2   Introduction to SeAMK Cooperative

2.1   What is a Cooperative?

In Finland many people are members of different cooperatives, but the number of them in is still relatively low. In the trade register the amount is 3300 in the year 2023 and has not grown in the recent years (Yrityksen perustaminen.net, 2023).

Moilanen et al. (2014, p.17) write that cooperatives are a communion of persons or communities of which's purpose is to serve the benefit of its members livelihood and wellbeing. What differentiates cooperatives from other forms of business is that the decision-making works with the principle of one vote per member, meaning that every member of the cooperative has as much decisive power as other. Instead of aiming for as big profit as possible the aim of cooperatives is usually more in the side of member wellbeing and societal influencing. There is no one specific description of what a cooperative can be. Cooperatives are essentially of democratically led business communities organized in a variety of different ways.

Because the SeAMK Cooperative is defined as a billing cooperative, the focus will be on that here. The term billing cooperative refers to a company that takes care of work-related invoices, taxes and payments on behalf of the employee, in which case the person can do entrepreneurial work without his own company. The contractor does the work, and the cooperative takes care of the invoicing. There is no contractual relationship between the billing cooperative and the commissioner of the work, the contract is between the light entrepreneur and his/her client. In other types of cooperatives, the nature of the contracts can differ, and the contract can be between the cooperative and the client (Louhelainen, 2013).

In a cooperative, the biggest decision-making power is of the cooperatives meeting, where members can vote on the decisions to be made and choose the new board is chosen (Pellervo, 2023). SeAMK Cooperative has this meeting once a year.

2.2   Introduction to SeAMK Cooperative

The SeAMK Cooperative was founded in 2020 as part of the New Knowledge Interface-project, of which aim was to build an innovation ecosystem that would be also internationally

significant (Ojala, 2023). The project was done as collaboration of the unit of Tampere university operating in the university centre of Seinäjoki, and Seinäjoki university of applied sciences.

The purpose of the cooperative was sought out to be to promote the opportunity to try light entrepreneurship for the students and staff of SeAMK, its student union or the student unions subsidiary (Ojala, 2023). The entrepreneurial work could be done during studies or beside work. Seinäjoki university of applied sciences is known for its strong emphasis on promoting entrepreneurial thinking and this is no exception. Various concepts in SeAMK focusing on entrepreneurship and the cultivation of business ideas have existed before the SeAMK Cooperative; these continue to exist beside it and ideally, they all benefit each other and supplement each other's services. The main hub for all this is the Y-zone located in the Frami F building of SeAMK, in which also the office of the SeAMK Cooperative is located.

What differentiates the SeAMK Cooperative from other businesses offering similar services and possibilities for light entrepreneurship is the exclusivity of the target demographic. The services offered have been designed for precisely for this demographic, which makes the cooperative easier to be approached by them. The office is located in the campus of SeAMK, so it is easy to come and ask about joining or for peer-support for your business. Because SeAMK Cooperative is a cooperative within an educational institution, its services have been built to be able to be integrated with the studies of its student members. Project work done through SeAMK Cooperative can be turned into study credits and it is possible in some cases practical training can be done by doing entrepreneurial work in the cooperative. Even though SeAMK Cooperative is an independent business beside Seinäjoki university of applied sciences, the cooperation between these two is an important factor in making them both more successful.

2.3   The services of the SeAMK Cooperative

The services offered to the members of the SeAMK Cooperative include the access to the Netvisor invoicing program, peer support for the entrepreneurial work and the member also gets insurances which cover accidents and other possible mishaps which could happen during doing the entrepreneurial work. The accountant of the cooperative does all the accounting related work and makes the payouts of the entrepreneurial salaries.

Occasionally when other businesses approach SeAMK Cooperative asking if the members would be interested in doing a project for them, the cooperatives coordinator shares this assignment to them. It is important to note though that the entrepreneurial work is intended to be done by the light entrepreneur with their own incentive, so the members are to find their customers and invoice them by themselves. In the cases where the work is offered to the members, it is still up to them to send their offers to the client.

2.4   Introduction of the SeAMK Cooperatives handbook

The most comprehensive understanding of the SeAMK Cooperative can be gained by reading the cooperatives handbook, which can be found in the SeAMK intranet. In it all the inner workings of the cooperative are explained in detail and the answers to all the questions one could have related to the cooperative should be found. It is to be noted however that the handbook is intended to be only available internally to the SeAMK students and staff. It will not be publicly available in the appendices of this thesis for this reason.

The work on the handbook started during the first year of the cooperatives existence and continues indefinitely. Multiple people have done work in writing it, starting in the phase related to the NKI project and after that, it has been updated by the boards of the SeAMK Cooperative.

3 DIGITAL MARKETING

3.1 Planning of digital marketing communication

According to Karjaluoto (2010, pp. 20), many organizations forget to do proper result-oriented planning for their marketing communications. It is often preferred to do same things in marketing which have been done in the years before instead of planning it with clear goals in mind and analyse the successfulness of the marketing in relation to the set goals. Proper planning is the most important factor differentiating the good marketing communicators form the bad ones.

Karjaluoto (2010, pp. 20–21) writes that the starting point for planning should be to ask why the marketing communication is to be done. The process should begin from defining the goals of the marketing and how they are connected to the marketing strategies. When the strategic goals of marketing are clear, the meaning of the marketing communication can be considered. This means thinking about the goal of what it is that is wanted to be communicated. From the possible goals of communication, the most common is the aim of affecting the amount of sales. There are however other indirect goals beside this which can be affected with marketing communication. These include for example rising awareness of the brand, affecting attitudes of possible customers, building trust, enhancing customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. It is to be noted though that the goal of these is also in the end to increase sales.

3.2 What is digital marketing?

According to Chaffey (2016, p. 11), digital marketing can be defined as achieving marketing objectives through applying digital technologies and media. Internet and related digital technologies are applied in conjunction with traditional communication to achieve marketing objectives of the business. Digital marketing includes the management of the online company presence, for example in the form of websites and social media content. Digital marketing techniques support the aim of acquiring new customers and providing services to the existing ones.

Rindfleisch and Malter (2019, p. 26) state that the revolution of digital marketing has already impacted nearly every corner of our modern life. The digital technologies have significantly altered marketing and consumption and this transformation will continue for years to come. The digital world is constantly updated and changed by the businesses and consumers using it and innovations are efficiently shared and adopted around the world with astonishing speed. This fast development can also cause challenges for marketers to keep up with it all.

3.3 Social media

Chan (2011, p. 2) writes that the convention of marketing is changing so that consumers are not giving their attention to the self-serving proclamations of businesses as much as they used to instead of basing their purchase decisions on information, which they find themselves mostly on the internet. Social media represents a shift in how marketers and consumers deliver and receive information. Digital tools are opening new opportunities for interaction like the ability to comment, share, vote and much more on any topic present. Customers have now come to expect companies to use online connectivity to reach and engage their markets.

According to Dollarhide (2023) more than 2.7 billion people use social media, which is equal roughly to 60% of the world's population. Social media participation grew significantly after the entry of Facebook and Twitter. Businesses came to these platforms to reach audiences globally faster than ever before. Currently the largest social media platforms worldwide are Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, and WeChat. This is however constantly changing and apps such as TikTok, Signal and Clubhouse are joining among the sphere of established social media networks. Users in the range of age 16 to 64 worldwide spend average of 2 and 31 minutes daily social media, according to research made by DataReportal (Kemp, 2023).

3.4 Digital marketing channels

In this section I further introduce the digital marketing channels for which the commissioned marketing materials were produced. It is to be noted that creating content for Instagram, for example, can easily be also used on other social media platforms like FaceBook or TikTok. The marketing channels essentially used in this project were the following:

Instagram

According to Brian Frederick (2022) in his article in *Search Engine Journal*, Instagram is a marketing channel of vast potential for growing your audience and reaching new customers. It is more than a platform for sharing photos and videos with the people close to you; it is with its visual format a useful part of many digital marketing strategies. Instagram is an efficient way to build visual presence and show the services offered by the business, were it by usage of organic content, paid advertisement or a hybrid of both. Instagram also enables many ways for user engagement, which other social media platforms don't have.

Frederick (2022) also explains in the article about the types of content which can be posted on the Instagram platform. Organic content on Instagram can be photos, videos, Stories and Reels. The Stories are short clips which can appear on the follower's feeds, they disappear after 24 hours and can be up to one minute in length. Reels are similar to the format of content shared in the popular TikTok social media platform and can be up to 90 seconds in length.

YouTube

Greg Jarboe (2023) writes on his article for Search Engine Journal about how different types of marketing can be done on the YouTube platform. These include producing videos for the brand about wide range of topics, using paid advertising which would be shown for audiences watching videos on YouTube or working with influencers. Benefits of YouTube include that a global audience can be reached, content of high quality can be posted and the analytic tools available enable marketers to analyse the efficiency or the marketing campaigns with ease.

3.5 Current trends in digital marketing

Tony Pec (2023) writes about some of the key trends which are shaping the future of digital marketing. Among these he mentions the following:

Virtual and augmented reality enable marketers to craft immersive experiences that transport viewers to alternate realms or seamlessly overlay digital content onto the physical world (Pec, 2023). These cutting-edge tools are increasingly leveraged to present products

and services in innovative and captivating ways. For instance, they can be used for virtual tours of diverse locations or to enable customers to virtually try on clothing.

Artificial intelligence is developing rapidly to become more sophisticated and is being integrated into many digital marketing tools (Pec, 2023). By using AI, data can be analysed and valuable insights about customer behaviour and preferences can be found. These insights can then be used to create more effective marketing campaigns. Ai can also be used to automate repetitive tasks.

Voice search became popular after the entry of smart speakers like Amazon Alexa and Google Home (Pec, 2023). For a business to be findable on these devices, the website must be optimized for voice search. This also includes ensuring it to be mobile friendly. Long-tail keywords and natural language is to be also preferred on the website content, because when people use voice search, they are more likely use natural, conversational speech instead of short specific keywords.

Personalization is becoming more important in digital marketing because by providing personalized experiences, a stronger relationship with the customer can be made, which leads the business to stand out from the competition (Pec, 2023). Data and AI can be leveraged to create personalized content and offers which are made for the individual customers preferences. This can be done for example by using machine learning algorithms to analyse customer data, so patterns and trends can be identified, which then can be used to make more informed decisions about content creation and offers.

Influencer marketing presents an effective strategy to amplify a brand's exposure (Pec, 2023). Collaborations, particularly with micro-influencers, can yield significant benefits. Despite their smaller audience size, the impact isn't solely determined by numbers. Micro-influencers often engage niche audiences that exhibit higher levels of engagement and trust. This characteristic proves more advantageous for certain brands. The key lies in identifying the most suitable influencers for the brand and cultivating genuine, enduring relationships. It transcends mere promotion, emphasizing co-creation and collaborative efforts.

Transparency and authenticity should be focused on because in today's market, customers have unprecedented access to information and a multitude of brand choices (Pec, 2023). Gaining their attention and trust has become increasingly challenging for brands. Therefore,

embracing openness, honesty, and authenticity in digital marketing is crucial to foster trust among customers. This entails being transparent about offered products and services, the company's values and mission, and its support for social or environmental initiatives. Such practices not only differentiate the brand from competitors but also cultivate a loyal customer base. One effective approach to transparency and community-building involves sharing user-generated content showcasing authentic experiences with products or services. Additionally, utilizing social media platforms to offer glimpses behind the scenes into the company's culture and values aids in forming connections and fostering trust.

The rise of short-form video gained momentum with TikTok's rise among younger demographics (Pec, 2023). Subsequently, this format found its way onto platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, gaining popularity. Businesses leverage this format to effectively captivate their audiences. Creating engaging videos necessitates creativity and relatability, such as crafting how-to guides or offering behind-the-scenes insights.

3.6   Motion design

Mika Yösärä (2023) writes on his article on the website of ERA marketing agency about the rising trend of what is defined as motion design. The term refers to promoting a brand with the means of motion graphics and design; it can be simplified as the animated look of the brand. Motion branding consists of digital materials which move in recognizable ways. It defines how a logo is animated and for example how appearing of text is animated. The purpose of the materials is to enforce the brand image. The aim is to make an animated look for the brand which is in line with its tone of voice and visual identity. Wide range of feelings and other attributes can be expressed with motion graphics so important part of the work is to define what these are for the brand.

Jasper Tempel from Resoluut digital design agency writes his blog post about the subject as well (Tempel, 2019). He states our brains are just wired so that anything that moves catches the eye right away; it possibly has its roots in some primal instinct meant originally for sensing danger. Ignoring motion is many ways impossible. Motion contributes to a brands recognizability just as sound or visual looks do. Motion design of a brand could be metaphorically be said to be its body language. It is important to not overdo it, so keeping it from being too distracting and ensuring the content is properly readable is key.

3.7 Software for content production

In this section I aim to give short introductions to available software which could be used in marketing content production. Some of these were used in the practical part of the thesis and the rest are mentioned because of their potential usefulness for creating engaging marketing content for digital platforms.

Adobe Creative Cloud

Christopher Smith (2022) describes Adobe Creative Cloud. It is a set of applications by Adobe for Windows and Mac Os operating systems, which you can get with a monthly payment. The applications are used by many marketing and design professionals and are considered to be one of the industry standards on many fields. Hollywood movies have been cut with the video editing software Adobe Premiere. Creative cloud also offers many programs for print and graphic design, many newspapers and magazines utilise the Adobe InDesign software for this purpose. Programs like Lightroom and Photoshop are widely used among photographers for editing photos. Adobe After effects motion graphics and compositing suite and Adobe Illustrator vector drawing application were utilised on the practical part of this thesis.

DaVinci Resolve 18

On the Black Magic Design website (n.d.) they describe their DaVinci Resolve 18 software to be the world's only application which combines editing, colour correction, visual effects, motion graphics and audio post production all in one program. The interface is modern and relatively fast to learn. The software includes many cutting-edge features like efficient GPU-utilisation in rendering and usage of neural networks and machine learning for variety of effects and utilities. Resolve is used by many professionals working with video and has been also used to edit many Hollywood movies. Besides the paid version a free version is available for download and can be used for quite extensive edits. DaVinci Resolve 18 was used in the practical part of this thesis to adjust the audio on some of the videos produced.

Canva

Abigail Abesamis Demarest (2020) describes the features of Canva. It is a graphic design platform which offers free and paid subscriptions. It allows the user to easily create a wide range of designs with professional made templates or by using the drag-and-drop style editor to create fully original content were it for print or social media. According to Niekerk's article on Medium (Niekerk, 2023), Canva is one of the most popular platforms for graphic design worldwide with over 457 million visitors on their website monthly.

AI tools

Bryan Grover (2023) writes about the impact of the emergent AI technology and some of the new tools available for marketers. AI tools today still have vast potential for improvement but the ones available already help in many ways to save time on complex tasks. AI can be used to generate content for social media posts, articles, marketing messaging and much more. AI can be used for automation repetitive tasks or for data analytics and to track industry trends for example. When used properly and ethically AI can be a valuable tool for any business. According to Bernard Marrs article for Forbes (Marr, 2023) AI has become an asset for any business to revolutionize the way work or number of day-to-day activities are to be done.

Website builders

Carney and Willet (2023) state that with these tools anyone can produce professional looking websites without the need of years of design or coding experience. They tested multiple of these and according to them the best three are Wix, Squarespace and Shopify. Wix an beginner friendly platform, which gives the user total control of the site and offers also good SEO tools. Squarespace offers similar editor for building websites and has a lot of template designs to choose from. Shopify is among the best options when building an online store.

4 COMMUNICATION

As SeAMK Cooperatives begins to offer its services in English to the demographic of the international students of SeAMK, studying literature and online sources about the subject of communication can provide insights which can help in this change. Understanding cross cultural communication is key in this new phase for the cooperative. In this section the researched findings about these matters are discussed.

4.1 Reasons of miscommunication

Barry Maude (2011, p. 58) writes that there are approximately 6 000 languages existing in the world today, of which most exist only in spoken form. Words, grammar and unique expressions of each language reflect the experiential dimension of the underlying cultures. For this reason, each language has its strengths and weaknesses. Some languages have more words for explaining certain things than others, leading to usage of metaphors on these cases. The way in which emotion and social status is conveyed by language differs a lot among the world's languages. For example, English can be experienced to be functional and unemotional in contrast to Japanese. Because of these fundamental differences in cultures and languages, when people engage on cross-cultural communication the risk of misunderstandings can be high. Maude (2011, p. 64–65) explains that miscommunication can be attributed to the mismatch of the interpretation of the intentions and meanings of the words among the persons having the conversation. To decrease the risk of miscommunication in cross-cultural communication some shared knowledge and beliefs should be shared between the people communicating.

Thill and Bovée (2008, pp. 73–75) write about challenges of intercultural communication that the increasingly diverse workforce because of its wide range of backgrounds and cultural differences faces many of these challenges which if overcome can create big strategic advantages. Communication between different cultures is much more than just matching the spoken language. It is the combined whole of the verbal and nonverbal parts of it and much more. Culture can be defined as the shared system of symbols, beliefs, attitudes, values, expectations and behavioural norms; this system effects on a fundamental level how people interact with others. It is important to avoid assumptions, judgements and to also acknowledge the distinct differences between cultures while still abstaining from thinking too much through stereotypes.

4.2   Lingua franca

Maude (2011, p. 19) writes that the rising popularity of the English language is to be strongly associated with the international culture. Some see it as cultural imperialism of Britain and the United States, but it is nonetheless in many parts of the world the status language; lingua franca. English has become the basic international language for technology, commerce, computers, finance, science, and travel. It has become the language used to access the modern way of life. Choice of communicating in English can be perceived to show ones aim to be more international. Ability to speak English also these days a widely common among young educated people.

4.3   Memetics

According to Maude (2011, pp. 23–25), the concept of memes offers a profound perspective on cultural change. Much like biological evolution relies on the natural selection of adaptive genes, meme theory posits that cultural changes occur through the selection of adaptive memes. Memes are described as units of cultural transmission, passed from one mind to another through speech, gestures, or other imitable phenomena. Cultural entities like new ideas, fashion trends, popular music, and skills spread by exposure to human beings, embodying these replicable units. Additionally, groups of memes can form meme complexes, which can shape ideologies or even birth new religions. The internet can be compared to a reservoir of rapidly evolving memes, where their evolution often operates beyond complete human control. Expanding upon meme theory, the logical extension of it is the theory of cultural evolution, borrowing methodologies and theories from biology to study cultural change.

4.4   How target audiences perceive business communication

Thill and Bovée (2008, pp. 15–17) write about how audiences decode messages they receive. Even if the target demographic receives the message or marketing content intended for them, it doesn't mean much before they have decoded it for themselves and assigned the same meaning you intended for it. This is a stage where even well-crafted and intended content can fail, because the assigning of meaning is highly personal and ties a lot to the recipient's culture as well. There is also a tendency among audiences to perceive the message which they expect to get instead of the one originally intended. This selective perception happens when people consciously or unconsciously ignore or distort information they receive so

it would fit their pre-existing notions about reality. Audiences will more likely react to messages which they remember and to which they are able and properly motivated to. It is important to form a memory for the recipient to which they react to when they know they need the particular service or product offered. Therefore, it is important to explain to the target audiences how doing this will benefit them. Keeping the audiences needs in mind is important for creating successful messages. Going for an audience-cantered approach means caring about the target demographics needs and making effort in communicating this to them.

4.5   Business translation

Loie Favre (2023) writes on about the processes related to translating variety of documents of businesses. The term business translation is used to refer to the translation of documents like marketing materials, contracts, email messages or other documents or the translation of websites. Content should be translated in a way that it is appropriate and relevant to the target audience. The terminology has to be translated right and cultural differences are to be considered. A successful translation ensures effective communication on the new language and increases trust within this new demographic. It is important to translate the documents related to legal and compliance matters so understanding of these is also equal within the users of the service.

Bernardine Racomas (2017) writes about the importance of business translation. Understanding customer sensitivities is important because without proper localisation they can feel like second-class clients. Companies able to communicate on multiple languages are also better equipped to meet the expectations of their shareholders. Also, if the business operations grow bigger and goals are set for globalization, it is crucial to be able to communicate with the global workforce.

Racomas (2017) states that by translation of the brands name, product information, marketing materials and other written documents to the language of the target demographics, the brand becomes more internationalized. It is important to invest to proper translations because if done wrong the consequences for the business can be dire. For example, it is crucial for text related to law to be properly translated for this reason.

5 PRACTICE BASED THESIS

This thesis is considered to be a practice-based thesis because it was done as a production commissioned by the SeAMK Cooperative. The research was conducted by using qualitative methods including discussions with the commissioner about their wishes for the resulting materials and by analysing the competitors offering similar services.

The resulting production consists of the cooperatives handbook and its appendices, translated from Finnish to English and the marketing materials. The marketing materials include vertical video content for social media use and short and longer vertical videos introducing the cooperative with varying depth of describing.

5.1 Qualitative research conducted

Seldana (2011, pp. 3–4) describes qualitative research as a term meaning variety of methods and approaches for studying natural social life. Data analysed in qualitative research primarily consist of nonquantitative contents such as textual materials like interview transcriptions, notes, documents or visual materials like photographs or videos to mention a few. The goals of qualitative research much depend on the purpose of the particular project. The aim often is to find novel insights and understanding of the researched matters.

In this thesis I conducted qualitative research on topics related to business communication and digital marketing, so these could be applied in the practical part of the work. The resulting productions are also analysed qualitatively in this thesis. Besides literary sources like books, in this thesis a lot of online materials like articles and blog posts were studied because of the fast developments in digital marketing trends many of the books are left behind in their content. Qualitative methods were also used for analysing competitors of SeAMK Cooperative so insights about the intricacies of similar marketing campaigns could be utilised in this project.

6   PRODUCTION OF THE COMMISSIONED WORK AND ANALYSIS

The journey from the initial phases of this project to the current situation has been long and not short of challenges. Besides the theoretical research conducted, I had to also learn a lot about the functionality of the different software used. I had used the programs included in the Adobe Creative Cloud before to some extent but for this project I had to deepen my understanding of them further. The tutorials for these however are really good and with the aid of them I got the gained more understanding of some of the more advanced features. The production of the marketing materials took multiple weeks during which different things were tried and tested. Opinions and feedback were asked from the commissioner, which then affected the next changes made. The complete set of marketing materials consist of a longer animated video both in Finnish and English where the SeAMK Cooperative is introduced in depth narrated by me, a shorter minute and half video also both in Finnish and English which has no narration but text shortly describing the cooperative is presented, this video also can be looped seamlessly and lastly there is the vertical clips based on this shorter video meant for social media. The commissioner was happy with the results and approved.

The translation was also more time-consuming process than I initially expected. There were words in the Finnish version which had no standardised translation yet in English like for the concept of studification, which means the process of gaining study credits by doing work through the cooperative for example. Some figures of speech in Finnish were also complicated to translate to English without affecting the meaning supposed to convey with them. The appendices of the handbook were somewhat challenging to translate because of the legal text included in them. Also, during the translation process content was added to the Finnish version, which I had to translate in addition to the text initially set to be translated. However, in the end the translation turned out quite good and was approved by the commissioner. It is also to be noted that the improvement of the handbook is a continuing process and the current version of both the Finnish and English versions will most certainly not be the last. The latest version of the handbook is available to read only in the SeAMK intranet.

In the next sections I will describe in more detail how the production of these commissioned works was completed. Let's start by examining the initial conditions set for the project by the commissioner.

6.1   Initial conditions for the project

At the beginning of the project, discussions with the commissioner were held and the initial conditions and expectations for the results were set. Regarding the marketing materials, these included the following:

Graphic look of the marketing materials should be in line with the already established one of SeAMK Cooperative and to some extent with the one of SeAMK as well. The original graphical look was designed by Sini Karjalainen for the cooperative and had been utilised before in print brochures, templates for PowerPoint presentations and in a roll-up.

Accessibility features had to be implemented in the produced content. The content would be posted on the official Instagram account of SeAMK, so the materials had to comply to the set standards. Beside that accessibility is always important and enables wider audience to experience the content presented to them.

Marketing channels, on which the content was to be presented had to be considered in their design. As mentioned before, the content would be posted on the official Instagram account of SeAMK. Besides that, the shorter video was to be uploaded to YouTube and the longer would be playable from a media player in the SeAMK intranet. Also, the videos would possibly be shown on screens in the campus hallways.

For the translation of the handbook the initial conditions were not overly complicated, keeping things straightforward. Despite this, the significance of the translation was notably high, primarily because its completion allowed the commencing of the marketing campaign and allowed the international members of the SeAMK community to join the cooperative. This would mark a start of a new age for the SeAMK Cooperative.

The analysis in this thesis will primarily be focusing on the production of the marketing content, as there is more to analyse and deconstruct about it. In the next section I will describe in more detail the planning and production phases of the marketing materials and do a brief analysis of competitors offering similar services.

6.2   Planning and production of the marketing content

6.2.1   Competitor analysis

During recent years many businesses offering invoicing services which enable people to work as light entrepreneurs have emerged. According to Kevytyrittäjäksi.com (2023), there are tens of different services like this in Finland. The services differ in their levels of commissions and insurance services offered among other factors. Some offer more premium experience by offering customer service answering the questions of the light entrepreneurs through chat, phone or with email. Light entrepreneurship offers a possibility to try out one's business idea and if there is enough demand, it is easy to move onto proper entrepreneurship from that.

Meri Raijas (2023) writes that the number of light entrepreneurs has grown fast in the recent years. From the year 2019 the growth has been over 60% and on the year 2022 there were around 60600 active light entrepreneurs. Among these light entrepreneurs three out of five are male and biggest age group is between the ages 25 to 34, which is the one third of the light entrepreneurs in Finland. One fourth of the light entrepreneurs are students.

In the marketing of light entrepreneurship services, low prices of commissions are often emphasised, or the brand image is built with customer testimonials. The invoicing services can't necessarily advertise the entrepreneurial work of the light entrepreneurs using their services, but they can use their stories like this in their marketing. Other popular trope in the marketing of these services is the telling of stories about situations or business ideas in which light entrepreneurship could be a good option. Examples of this could be doing some gig type of work beside studies or other work. Light entrepreneurship services commonly also try to embrace the ideal of working as a freelancer doing something one is passionate about and having the freedom to decide one's schedule of work. This ideal of freedom is also emphasised by reminding that working as a light entrepreneur saves you the trouble of accounting and paperwork, which entrepreneurs inevitably face. It is also often conveyed that the process of becoming a light entrepreneur is fast and easy, so when the business idea comes one can start to work on it soon as possible.

6.2.2 Production of the marketing content

In the case of SeAMK Cooperative, the target demographic of the services offered is quite different in comparison to other invoicing services. As only the members of SeAMK community can join the cooperative it partly affects the position of the cooperative relative to its competitors. SeAMK Cooperatives services are designed to be integrated to one's studies while still maintaining the light entrepreneur's freedom to decide on his/her work themselves. This is more evident when comparing SeAMK Cooperative to other cooperatives in educational institutions in Finland, of which many are work cooperatives where the cooperative decides more on what work the students do and acts more as their employer. The members of the SeAMK Cooperative also have the possibility to rent the equipment or spaces offered by SeAMK, which is a major competitive edge.

Even though SeAMK Cooperative has this particularly advantageous position, students can still end up choosing other businesses light entrepreneurship offerings. Whether the student works as a light entrepreneur using some other service and then wants to gain study credits with the work done the possibility of doing this is not necessarily limited. Other services can compete with the SeAMK Cooperative mostly with price and the efficiency of invoicing and customer service offered. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the members of the cooperative are to invoice their customers themselves. In the case of some other services in Finland this is not necessarily done to this extent by the light entrepreneur but though an app or website from which he/she prompts the invoicing service to do so. However, SeAMK Cooperative in a way can turn this into an advantage and emphasise on the learning aspect of working through itself. It is also noteworthy that when one leaves the SeAMK Cooperative, one gets the cooperatives light entrepreneur certificate. To my knowledge the competitors don't have anything like it and in this also additional weight to its value is added by its association with SeAMK.

With these differences and advantages in mind the conception of the marketing materials began. Selling arguments related to these had already been used in the print marketing brochures of the cooperative. These became to be in the core of the short from videos. The message was clear, and I needed to deliver it in a beautiful way which sit nicely in the flow of other posts in the official SeAMK Instagram account. I concluded that doing this as motion graphics was the best and most clear solution.

I had recently seen a particularly interesting post on New York Times Instagram stories where the clips flowed into the next ones seamlessly. It was quite magical and something you don't see in social media marketing very often. It is hard to explain in words, but the trick is to make the first frames of the next clip to be the same as the last of the one before. This causes the shift in content happen more seamlessly as it begins in the start of next clip. This was a major inspiration for the social media content I produced for the SeAMK Cooperative as one of the main channels for it would be Instagram.
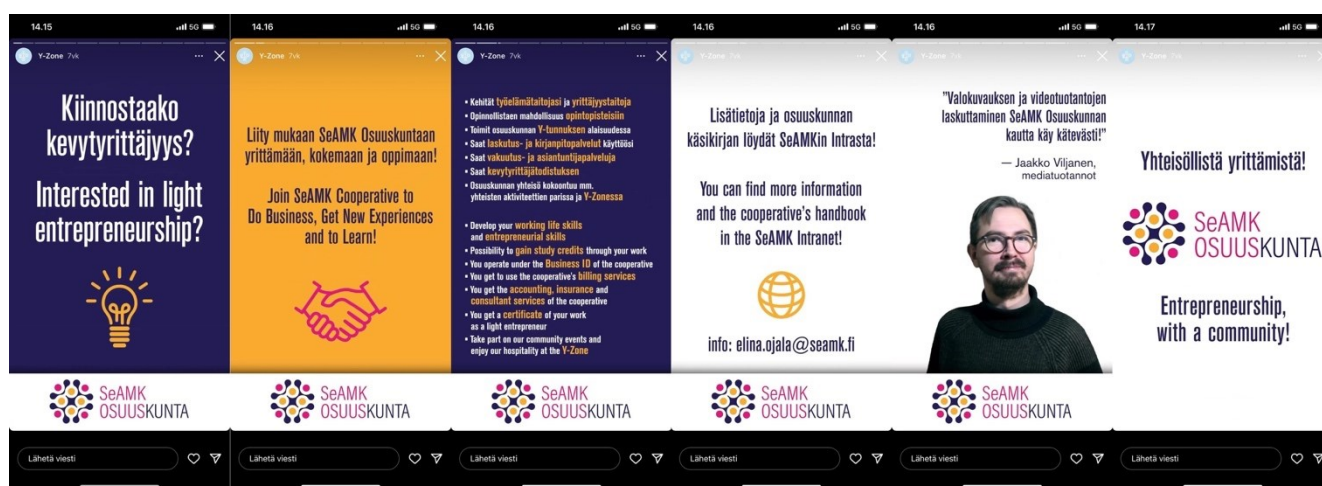
Picture 1. Screenshots of SeAMK Cooperatives marketing clips on Instagram.

In the picture above, you can see screenshots of different clips of the marketing materials intended for Instagram and similar platforms. The images are in the order in which the clips are to be presented. There are actually multiple clips featuring the testimonials, but I did not add all of them to the image for the sake of convenience. The vertical video is currently publicly available to be viewed on the official Instagram account of SeAMK (Viljanen, 2023).
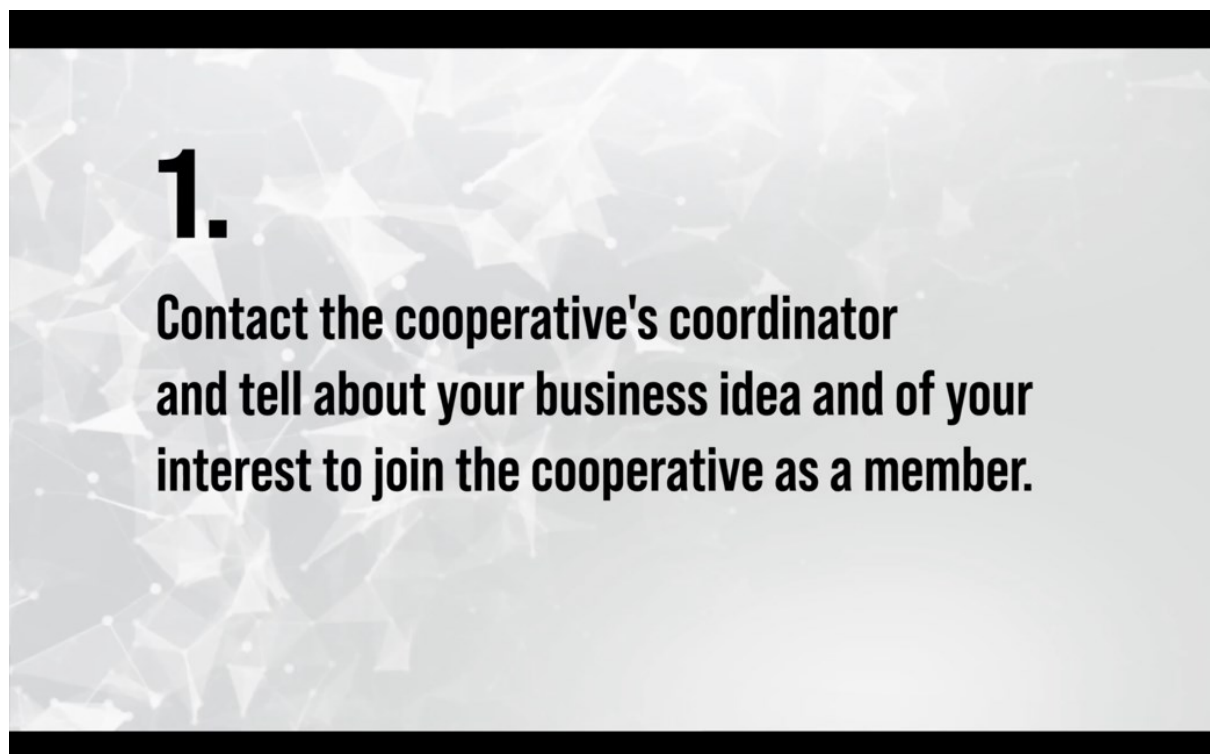
In the design of these I went for this minimalistic yet sleek aesthetic. The graphic look of the cooperative was utilised by using the same fonts and colours. The colours of the background and the other visual elements were the same present in the logo of the cooperative. These also go well together with the colours usually used by SeAMK. The text is presented both in Finnish and English at the same time, so the message is readable by both audiences with the same marketing material. The clips feature nice small animated features which create a pleasing flow of motion what I tend to call visual rhyme. When a new clip begins, the circular logo of the SeAMK Cooperative spins and while doing so the rest of the visual elements

appear to the frame in sync or with little delays. The rhythm guides the viewers perception when seeing the content.

Picture 2. Screenshot of the vertical short video on YouTube.

In the image above, you can see a screenshot of the horizontal short video. The difference between it and the vertical one is that in it the contents are displayed only on one language. Versions of both languages of this video exist for this reason. The horizontal video is also designed to loop seamlessly which can prove useful on exhibition settings or when shown on SeAMK hallway screens for example. The resolution of this and the vertical ones is Full HD, which is one of the most common resolutions for displays in the world. The horizontal video is currently publicly available to be viewed on the official YouTube channel of SeAMK (Viljanen, 2023).

1.

Contact the cooperative's coordinator and tell about your business idea and of your interest to join the cooperative as a member.

Picture 3. Screenshot of the longer video.

In the design of the longer five-minute video the focus was on efficiently introducing the SeAMK Cooperative and to do this with the accessibility of the content in mind while keeping it visually interesting throughout the video. In the picture above you can see a screenshot of the section describing the process of becoming a member of the SeAMK Cooperative. I narrated both the Finnish and English versions and in the videos the text follows accurately with the rhythm of the speech, appearing as the words are said. This is accompanied with photographs with some added movement, royalty free stock footage, music and animated graphic elements. The video describes topics including the introduction to SeAMK Cooperative, the introduction of its services, possible types of business one could do, how to apply for membership and about the benefits of becoming a board member to mention a few. The video is best suited for purposes of describing how the SeAMK Cooperative works to people interested becoming members or to stakeholder groups interested in the business. The longer videos are currently available to be viewed only in the SeAMK intranet.

6.3   Commissioners feedback

The feedback from the commissioner was good and the produced contents are now in use. The marketing campaign has been launched and the videos can be now seen in SeAMK In- tranet and the ones for social media can be found on the official Instagram page of SeAMK. The marketing materials have this far been also used in presentations introducing the coop- erative to stakeholders and on exhibitions. I designed them to be useful in these scenarios and I believe they can be in the future too. The handbook will guide new members from among the international students of SeAMK and I have heard the applicants have already come forward.

Criticism I got from the commissioner about the time it took for me to complete all this and I agree with it fully. I have always had some difficulties with time management and during this project I was juggling many other responsibilities as well, including board positions on multi- ple organizations and later fulltime day job. In the end all this still got completed and will hopefully inspire and inform many.

7 CONCLUSION

As this endeavour draws to its end I couldn't be more satisfied with the results. I took a huge challenge, of which's scale I did not at the beginning of it fully comprehend. I still wouldn't have had it any other way. It pushed me to learn many new things and allowed me to use creativity in the process. The purpose of this all was to create marketing content which represents the cooperative with glory and helps it gain recognition among the target demographics, and to provide the contents of the cooperative's handbook in an understandable way to them. Despite this, the success of this project is still just the beginning and the responsibility of maintaining the course is of the coming boards of the cooperative.

The importance of cross-cultural communication and communication in general will be high in the near future for the cooperative. As new international members get in touch with the cooperative for the first time, the cooperative has to be able to utilise this knowledge in its communication with them. I hope the research done here about the theory of these matters proves useful.

The opportunities that the SeAMK Cooperative can offer for the members of the SeAMK community are numerous and I believe they will make those reality in the years to come. Marketing plays an important role in all this and to make it efficiently, in my opinion the possibility of creation of cooperatives own social media page would be beneficial. This would enable more efficient tracking of the legitimate interest of the target demographics and serve also as a platform for direct communication with them. Then again operating it would need also work input from the board or someone doing their practical training for the cooperative.

As forming a community is important for the SeAMK Cooperative an emphasis on organizing interesting events in both languages will be one of the key areas of work in the near future. Besides events for the members, there could also be events which anyone could join, and the services of the cooperative would be introduced with the aid of the marketing materials and presentations. Business exhibition or networking events could be also organized in the campus area; these would benefit the members and also increase brand recognition by establishing more presence in the campus area. Emphasising on marketing in the campus has the benefit that the target demographic can be reached more directly. The current marketing materials can now be utilised for this purpose as well.

8 Bibliography

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9   Appendices